

QUEEN SIRIKIT

Glory of the Nation

QUEEN SIRIKIT : Glory of the Nation

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Her Majesty Queen Sirikit

Preface

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit has been performing royal activities for the benefits of the country and the happiness of the Thai people alongside His Majesty the King for more than 50 years. She is determined to follow His Majesty's resolution to make the country peaceful and happy. Whenever Their Majesties visit the people in the various regions of Thailand, His Majesty would initiate projects to help them while Her Majesty would give advice on supplementary occupations, education, health and sanitation. At present, Her Majesty's royal - initiated supplementary occupation project has met with tremendous success both at home and abroad, especially in the various fields of national art and culture. Her Majesty has also given her advice on the management of the environment, especially the conservation of animal and plant species, which has earned the praise of conservationists the world over. In her capacity as President of the Thai Red Cross Society, Her Majesty had seen to the health and sanitation of the Thai people and the refugees who had crossed over the

border to seek asylum in Thailand. She had provided them with shelter and a Red Cross Centre and also set up a school to train these refugees so that they might be able to earn their living later. Her benevolence is evident among the Thai people and all over the world. Organizations, private agencies, foundations and universities abroad have presented Her Majesty with numerous awards.

On the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's Birthday Anniversary on 12 August 2004, the National Identity Board has published a book in English entitled "QUEEN SIRIKIT : Glory of the Nation" as a tribute to her benevolence.

The National Identity Board hopes that the book "QUEEN SIRIKIT : Glory of the Nation" will be of interest to readers.

National Identity Board

Tribute to

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit

Glory of the Nation

The hot and dry weather
Sometimes water overflows
Oftentimes fierce storms
Sometimes the rice sprouts
This is the farmers' lot,
Poverty is their frequent visitor,
Then arrives Her Majesty,
Their sufferings abated,
She teaches them to realize
Growing food to feed the world,
She becomes their inspiration
Those whose farms yield no crops,
The callous and rough hands
Till every line they draw
Months and years it takes
And the silk strands are woven
Today the fruit of their toil
Thousands and thousands of lives
The Dawn of Art has begun,
Those fallen to the ground
Her Majesty has dedicated herself
Through her brilliant vision,
Whoever eyes the handicrafts
How diamonds are created

awaits the rain to cool down,
and floods the paddy fields.
rage heavily in angry blows,
are ruined by mice and worms.
never changing for centuries,
always abiding by their side.
and the farmers' grief is gone,
like being soothed by water.
the great value of farmers,
their task tiring and heavy.
and visits them everywhere,
she provides them with training.
are taught to do delicate work
is more curved than a scythe.
before the iron rod is beaten thin
into shimmering fabric.
results in numerous products,
will be far from poverty,
lighting up the sky above,
are revived to be joyful.
and a huge amount of assets
to create the Art of the Land.
will get a clear perception
by Her Majesty from earth.

Author : Khunying Uraiwan Svasdisant
Translator: Associate Professor Malithat Promathatavedi

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Chapter 1:
Born on the Cusp of Change

Once upon a time, as all intriguing stories begin, an Indian of whom little is known, went to visit his friend, a guard at the home of a noble family. As he was chatting with his friend, he saw a young girl in the grounds, perhaps also watching him curiously. The girl had a two-year old baby in her arms that seemed to engross the Indian such that he beckoned the girl and her young charge closer to the gate where he stood. For what seemed like a very long time, he stared at the baby. Finally looking up, he said,

"She shall be a great queen one day."

Later, the nanny told the child's grandmother and the rest of the child's family what had occurred and what had been said. Naturally, no one believed the story, but the incident nevertheless left an impression. Years later, as the girl was growing up, her two brothers teased her endlessly about the old prophecy and dubbed her *"The Queen of Abyssinia."* They even fashioned a flag out of an old curtain, saying it was the Queen of Abyssinia's royal banner. Things rarely turn out as one expects.[1]

So began the life of a child, a young girl named Mom Rajawongse (MR) Sirikit. The story has become a family legend, for in May 1950, she became Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand.

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[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue,** Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House. 1991, pp. 33 - 34.

Of Royal Descent

Her Majesty comes from an ancient and respected family. Her paternal grandfather, His Royal Highness Prince Kitiyakara Voralaksana, Prince of Chandaburi, was the twelfth child of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn (1868 - 1910) by a consort, Chao Chom Manda Uam. Queen Sirikit's father was his third son, with the royal title His Highness Prince Nakkhatra Mangala Kitiyakara, Prince of Chandaburi.

Her Majesty's mother Mom Luang (ML) Bua Snidvongse was able to trace her family line back to the time of King Rama II (1809 -1824). At the time of her first meeting with her future husband Prince Nakkhatra in 1927, ML Bua was a lady-in-waiting to Her Majesty Queen Rambhai Barni, the Queen of His Majesty King Rama VII (1925 - 1935).

ML Bua was to bear two sons and two daughters, Professor Dr Mom Rajawongse Kalyanakit Kitiyakara, (1929 - 1987), the late Privy Councillor, Mom Rajawongse Adulkit Kitiyakara, (1930 - 2004), Mom Rajawongse Sirikit Kitiyakara, later Her Majesty the Queen, (1932 -) and Mom Rajawongse Bushba Kitiyakara (1934 -). The title Mom Rajawongse, abbreviated as MR, is an honorific that denotes the child of a Mom Chao, a prince or princess, the grandchild of a king.[1]

[1] In Thailand, each generation of the royal family drops down one rank until reaching commoner status, although still able to show royal blood by adding "na Ayudhaya" to the end of the family name.



Prince Kitiyakara Voralaksana, Prince of Chandaburi and Princess Apsonsaman Kitiyakara.



General Prince Nakkhatra Mangala Kitiyakara, Prince of Chandaburi and ML Bua Kitiyakara.



ML Bua and MR Sirikit Kitiyakara.



MR Sirikit and MR Bushba Kitiyakara.

As in many noble births in Thailand, the naming of a child of royal blood was often the result of a request to the king or queen to choose an auspicious name. Thus, ML Bua requests Queen Rambhai Barni to name her eldest baby daughter. This wish was granted and the queen chose a name from a combination of two words, **Siri**, or glory, and **Kit**, or honour.

Depression Years

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit was born during the Great Depression, on 12 August 1932, a year she shares with several confident and strong-willed people like French President Jacques Chirac, former president of South Korea Roh Tae Woo, and New York's well-known former Mayor Mario Cuomo.

Her Majesty, who had been born in the house of her maternal grandfather General Chao Phraya Wongsanuprabaddha, father of ML Bua, and her

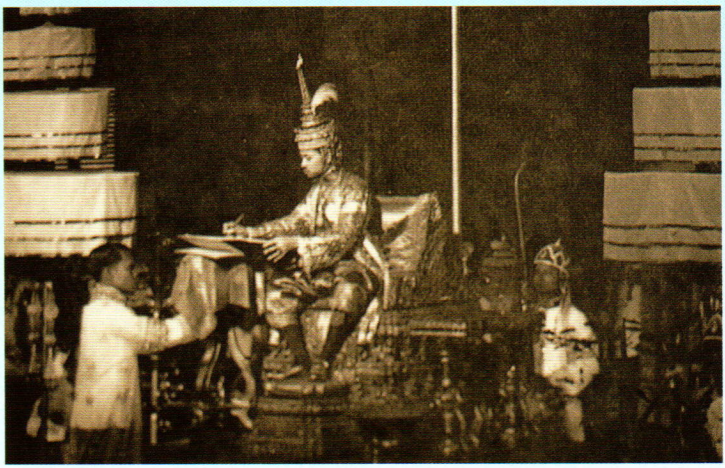


The home of General Chao Phraya Wongsanuprabaddha, in Pathum Wan District.



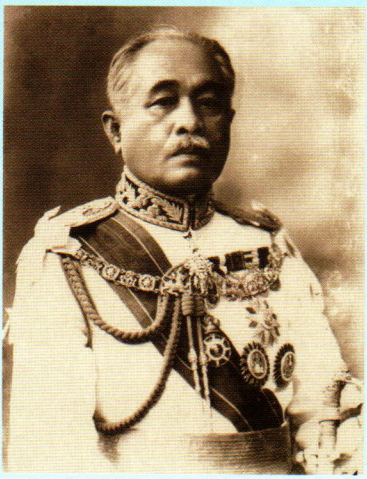
grandmother Thao Vanidapijarini, on Rama VI Road, Bangkok, continued to live with her maternal grandparents for the first eight months of her life.

The Great Depression that began in the US in 1929 affected the whole world. Britain's Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald, for instance, reported to King George V that there was little his coalition government could do to stem the financial crisis. President Hoover in the US lost the presidential nomination to Franklin Delano Roosevelt who succeeded in a landslide victory the next year to become President of the US by promising a "new deal".



His Majesty King Prajadhipok bestowing the first Thai Constitution.

Such was the severity of the economic crisis in Thailand, and the desire to speed up democratic changes that were gradually being introduced by the king, that on 24 June 1932, a group of people, many European educated, led a bloodless coup against absolute monarchy. King Prajadhipok, Rama VII, graciously consented to the change. The People's Party



General Chao Phraya Wongsanuprabaddha.

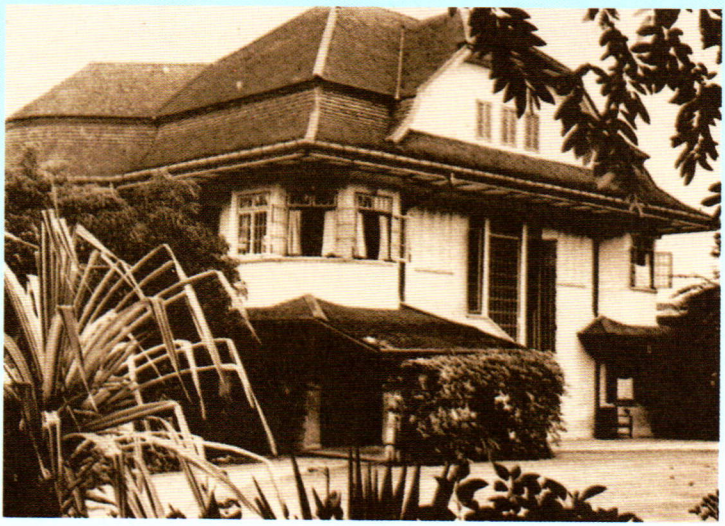
took control and converted Thailand to a constitutional monarchy. On 28 June 1932, Thailand's first Parliament, the House of People's Representatives, opened. On 28 August 1932, Phraya Manopakon Nitithada became the first Prime Minister of Thailand and on 10 December His Majesty King Rama VII promulgated a permanent constitution. For a time, things were peaceful. Baby Sirikit spent some more time with her maternal grandparents in Bangkok before politics became unsettled again in 1933. Her Majesty's paternal grandparents asked MR Sirikit's parents to allow her to stay with them as they were already taking care of her elder brother MR Adulkit.

For many Thais, naturally, the times were difficult and Queen Sirikit's family suffered from their shared uncertainty. Her father was detained briefly with about 20 others during the initial takeover by the new regime that established a constitutional monarchy for the first time in Thailand and released after about one month. When released, Prince Nakkhatra was transferred from military duties to the diplomatic corps. Among his earliest diplomatic duties was First Secretary of the Thai delegation in Washington D.C.

A successful coup d'état on 20 June 1933 against the government of Phraya Manopakon Nitithada saw Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena become the new

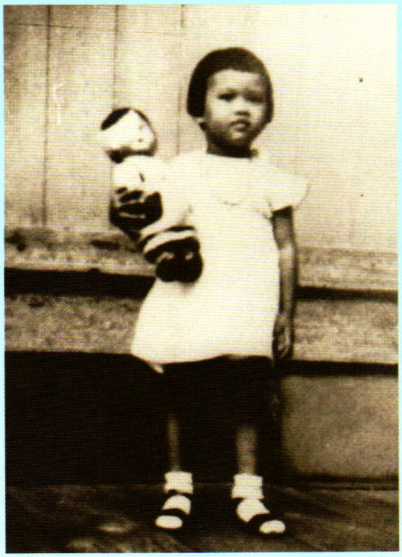


Prime Minister, followed by a brief revolt by sections of the army in October. With Bangkok unsettled, her paternal grandparents sent MR Sirikit to Songkhla, in the far south of Thailand. MR Sirikit was taken by her grandmother Princess Apson to stay near King Rama VII, who was also in the South. Her aunt, Princess Chitbanchong, took care of her along with a wet nurse and another lady and it was during this period that her first words were spoken. When the country was at peace, the family moved back to Bangkok to stay at Deves Mansion, her paternal grandparents' home.



Deves Mansion.

On 2 March 1935 King Prajadhipok, Rama VII, abdicated while in England. The king was childless, so Prince Ananda Mahidol, aged 10, was invited to succeed to the throne. The king's younger brother was His Royal Highness Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej. It seemed that an unstoppable force in Queen Sirikit's life had been set into motion.



Hardly in a position to know what lay in her future, MR Sirikit was getting on with childhood as a three-year-old in 1935, having commenced kindergarten the previous year at *Rajini School*.

MR Sirikit Kitiyakara aged three years.

School Years - War Years

On 23 May 1938 Her Majesty advanced from kindergarten to primary school at *Rajini*, but within a year, on 26 March 1939, her father took her out of the school and enrolled her in *St. Francis Xavier Convent School*, founded 1925, which was much nearer her home. It was in this year also that Thailand's third Prime Minister, Major General Luang Pibulsonggram, changed the country's name from **Siam** to **Thailand** (Land of the Free).[1]

Closer to the end of the year, on 3 September 1939, a war broke out in Europe that was later to affect Thailand. France's capitulation to Germany was followed by acquiescence to Japanese demands for use of air bases in Indochina.

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[1] David K. Wyatt, **Thailand : A Short History,** Chiang Mai : Silkworm Books, 1984, p. 253.

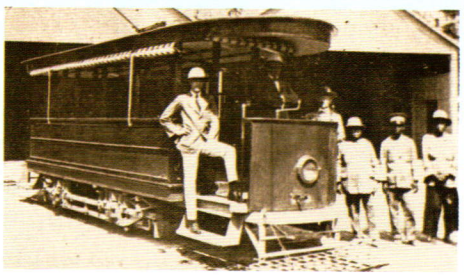




MR Sirikit Kitiyakara.

Her Majesty entered her second year of primary school on 23 May 1940. With no warning, on 7 December 1941, Japanese forces landed in Prachuap Khiri Khan, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Songkhla, each a major town in the South leading to Malaya and Singapore. After initial military resistance, followed by tense negotiations, Thailand agreed to allow the Japanese to advance through the country towards the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, and northward to Burma, which were all controlled by the British. Thailand was forced to co-operate with the Japanese by declaring war against the Allies on 25 January 1942 to avoid invasion and occupation. Soon, British and American planes began to raid Bangkok.

MR Sirikit continued her studies at *St. Francis Xavier Convent School* throughout the war until secondary level. MR Sirikit and her sister MR Bushba were no different from other schoolgirls at the time. Sometimes she walked to school, sometimes she took the tram, sometimes she



raced the tram. The tram driver obviously did not enter into the spirit of the event and was often to be seen plucking his whiskers using two coins, like tweezers, as the tramcar rattled and snaked its way through Samsen District, on the northern outskirts of Bangkok.

Due to the bombing and the lack of commercial products, Thailand began to tighten its belt, and MR Sirikit's family had to save on expenses like anyone else. This was a period when the children learnt how to take care of themselves, as servants were rare in the large houses of Bangkok during the war, many people having gone to the countryside because of the bombings. Both MR Sirikit and her sister MR Bushba made their own beds and cleaned their own bedrooms. When the drinking water was off for any reason, notably after a bombing raid on the capital, they went to the river to get more, using alum (potash) to purify the water in the Shanghai jars used by most Thai families as a backup supply of water.



HRH Prince Rangsit of Jainad, Chairman of the succession committee.

In July, a national crisis transpired that was to affect the young MR Sirikit many years later. Upon the untimely death of his elder brother, on 9 June 1946, King Bhumibol Adulyadej succeeded to the throne of Thailand. As yet uncrowned, the heir apparent decided to complete his university education in Lausanne, Switzerland, first, with a



change of subject from science to law and political science. His uncle, Prince Rangsit of Jainad, by then the last surviving son of King Chulalongkorn, or Rama V, was appointed Prince Regent on 16 June 1946, and was to serve in that capacity until His Majesty's coronation in 1950.

MR Sirikit was only 13 years of age, having just finished Mathayom 3 (grade 7) at *St. Francis Xavier Convent School*, when her father, Prince Nakkhatra, was requested to go to Britain as Minister to the Thai Embassy. By mid-year, he was promoted to Ambassador to the Court of St. James and decided to take his whole family there. On 21 July 1946, he flew to England with his son Kalayanakit while the rest of the family followed three days later by boat. They departed from East Asiatic Harbour by a small boat to Si Chang Island, off the east coast of Thailand where they transferred to the steamship *Selandia*.

At 7:30 a.m., they all boarded a small boat, which was to take them to deeper waters not far from the mouth of the country's artery, the Chao Phraya River, until they reached the sea, where the Selandia was anchored waiting for passengers. They had to reach Si Chang Island, towards the east of Bangkok, by one



The steamship Selandia.

o'clock to catch the ship, the only civilian passenger liner that made the journey to Europe in those days, based in Singapore, and operated by the East Asiatic Company.[1]

The ship was due to sail to Marseilles in France, then on to London and Amsterdam. ML Bua stepped aboard with her daughters, MR Sirikit and her younger sister MR Bushba, possibly feeling a little excited and yet apprehensive about the journey. There were four other first-class passengers, Father Broizat with his colleague, Father Victor Larque, returning to Europe for a rest from their work at Assumption Church in Bangkok, a Singaporean gentleman and another Thai who worked at the post office in Bangkok, Chiad Aphaiwong, the brother of a former Prime Minister, Khuang Aphaiwong.

There were more than 80 second-class passengers, but only a few in first class on the deck. MR Sirikit and her family stayed on deck most of the journey, first-class passengers being provided deck chairs with their names on them from which to view the passage. The other passengers played cards day and night in the bar.

It was a long and boring voyage, during which the ladies stared at the placid view, broken infrequently by the passing of other vessels. Conversation was bare, the people listless and the children frustrated. The crew allowed the children to play on a lifeboat to pass the time in make-believe. Meals, it appears, were the

[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue,** Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House. 1991, p. 42.



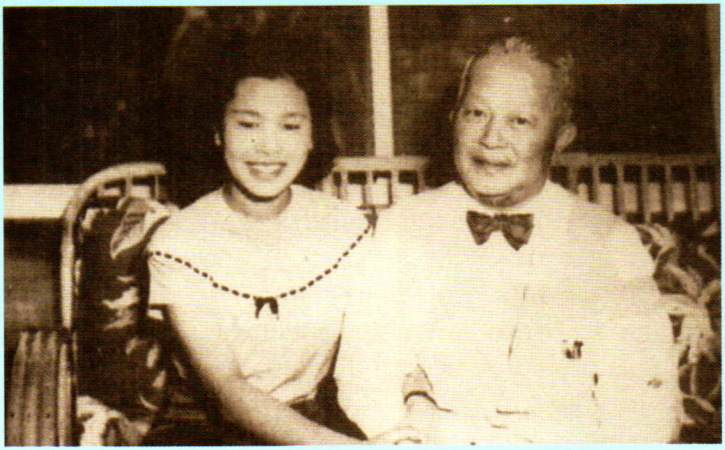
highlight of this enforced boredom. Fresh food was cooked daily, and in such quantities that the tables groaned under the dishes.

In the Red Sea, there was an electrical system failure and the ship halted once again, this time for a fortnight. With just a light bulb, the darkness may have made the journey look hopeless. It was incredibly hot, and another fifteen days on board must have seemed like forever while Amsterdam sent the requisite parts. Then, as if to provide stimulus after a dull voyage, at Port Said, Egypt, a crazy Arab came on board and the passengers were put in a state of fear and shock.[1] The crew eventually manhandled the misbegotten visitor off the vessel.

To make matters worse, when the ship arrived at Marseilles following a quick stop at Genoa, the authorities did not allow any Thais to disembark, as this was a period during which Thailand and France were having territorial difficulties in Indochina. Prince Sukhumabhinanda requested that they be allowed to disembark, as they could no longer stand to be on the ship. ML Bua and her family however, decided not to make a fuss and remained on board. The captain felt very sorry for them after the hardships of the journey, noted one of the priests who accompanied them on their journey. [2]

At last, they arrived at Tilbury near London. Prince Nakkhatra, MR Kalayanakit and MR Kitinadda Kitiyakara met them happily. The arriving relatives were not as cheerful as they could have been, however. It was October in England, the autumn. The weather

[1] Ibid, p. 43.
[2] Ibid, p. 43.



MR Sirikit Kitiyakara and Prince Nakkhatra Mangala Kitiyakara.

was cold, gloomy, changeable and they already missed their home.

MR Sirikit did not attend a school whilst in England but studied English, French and piano with private tutors. Although originally Her Majesty would have liked to become a concert pianist, she still plays the piano in her free time to relax. Although life as a diplomat's child may appear to be one of luxury, one must remember that times were hard after the war, and for Thailand, more so. The entire national budget in 1948, for instance, was only US $ 42,720,374. Perhaps for this reason, and perhaps also due to his ethical nature, Prince Nakkhatra strictly forbade his children from using the Embassy's limousines for private use. They were to be used for official work only. This was splendid from the children's point of view as they now had an excuse to use the city's bright red double-decker buses and cavernous underground railway, which was much more fun. This is not to infer that MR Sirikit's life was one of total freedom. In fact, for much of her life in England as the daughter of an



ambassador, she had to be uncommonly disciplined in her studies.

After a year, Prince Nakkhatra was transferred to be ambassador to Denmark. However, while waiting in the lobby of the hotel on his arrival to be met by Embassy officials, he received word to go to Paris to take up the vacant post there. Life was still hard work for the diplomat's child. MR Sirikit had to find time for not less than 7 - 8 hours a day for learning and practising the piano to prepare to enter the Conservatoire, the most famous music college in Paris at the time. Besides studying, she had to help with the housework also. When they had a party, a not infrequent occurrence in an ambassador's home, MR Sirikit had to help her mother prepare the room and organize things. They had not brought many people from Thailand to help them and therefore it was necessary to contribute something to her parents. When there were guests, she had to be circumspect in manner, appropriate to the daughter of an ambassador.

As Ambassador to France, Prince Nakkhatra's duty was also to take care of visiting members of the government or other dignitaries. One such visitor was the young King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The king at the time was living and studying in Lausanne, Switzerland. He visited Paris on one occasion as he wanted to buy



a new car and was to visit a factory to pick one out. As Paris was also the "in" place to be, it was not unusual for the young king to visit the Thai ambassador whilst there.

The first time that His Majesty met the 16 - year-old MR Sirikit was in 1947 at Fontainebleau, a huge palace on the outskirts of Paris. It was not altogether a good first impression. Both daughters of the ambassador went with their parents to meet the king. MR Sirikit wore a beige suit; her hair in a single braid down her back. Everyone stood under the shadow of a tree to keep out of the sun and waited.

Usually, the king was always on time, but this time he was late. As they shifted from one foot to the other, the family began to get very worried. Eventually, a couple of hours later, he turned up with the explanation that his car was rather old and had broken down. They ate at a Chinese restaurant called "The Golden Dragon." His Majesty left at 3 a.m. the following morning. No matter the awkwardness of their initial meeting, it turned out that the king liked MR



Sirikit's polite and reserved manners. The king had to visit Paris often, as he could not find a car that he liked. Whenever in Paris, he always made a point of phoning his mother to assure her he had arrived safely. She began to ask him whether he had seen the daughters of the ambassador. After more visits, his mother focused on the person that had drawn the attention of her son and asked him simply if he had seen MR Sirikit yet, to which he replied,

"Seen her already, and she is rather loveable."[1]



[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue,** Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House. 1991, p. 45.



Chapter 2: Royal Life–from Ambassador's Daughter to Queen

When the king regained consciousness he could not see and did not know where he was but he remembered two people who were perhaps among the most important in his young life, the Princess Mother and MR Sirikit.

It had been on 4 October 1948, in Switzerland, that His Majesty King Bhumibol was out with his brother-in-law Aram Rattanakul Seriroengrit for a drive from Lausanne, the capital of Vaud Canton, Western Switzerland, to Geneva, 52 km (32 miles) away. The University of Lausanne[1] where His Majesty studied science was well known in Europe for its professor of political economy Vilfredo Pareto. The town itself had previously hosted Edward Gibbon, one of England's greatest historians,[2] Swiss conductor Charles Dutoit,[3] and choreographer Maurice Bejart.[4]

From Lausanne the road led southeast, through the beautiful countryside of the Vaud. Normally, His Majesty would drive through Morges, down through Rolle, Nyon and into Geneva. As they were passing

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[1] Established 1891.
[2] The author of **The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.**
[3] Conductor at the Lausanne Conservatory.
[4] Bejart established the Bejart Ballet Lausanne.

Morges,[1] they were following a truck, and without warning the truck driver slammed on the brakes to avoid a couple of bicyclists, hidden from view of the king.

The accident was bad and news flashed around the world that the young king of Thailand had been in a serious automobile accident. No one knew the extent of His Majesty's injuries, and the Swiss doctors who first saw him believed the injuries to his eyes to be critical.

The Thai Government arranged for the Minister of Public Health to lead a delegation to visit the king and he took with him Luang Seriroengrit and Prince Chakrabandhubhensiri Chakrabandhu.[2] Things appeared grim, as for a time it looked like the king might lose his sight completely. Although people were told His Majesty had injured one eye, both were bandaged while doctors waited to see the extent of the damage.



MR Sirikit Kitiyakara.

At the right moment, ML Bua Kitiyakara took her daughters to visit the king, packing their bags and catching a train to Lausanne. Eventually, ML Bua had to return home to Paris, to her husband and sons. The Princess Mother requested

[1] Known today as the location of the headquarters of The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

[2] Later to become a Privy Councillor.





Villa Vadhana.

that MR Sirikit stay on in Lausanne and would ensure that she was taken care of. ML Bua gave her consent for her daughter to take leave of her family.

In order to carry on as normal a life as possible, the 16-year-old MR Sirikit continued her education at the Pensionnat Riante Rive Boarding School in Lausanne, a school for the education of young ladies. It was conveniently close to the Villa Vadhana. Since the succession of the king's elder brother, King Ananda Mahidol, Rama VIII, the family rented this three-storey building for use as a royal residence. The impressive building was near Lake Geneva and rested on about 32,000 square metres of land. Pine trees stood straight as soldiers at the end of the garden and were accompanied by a small orchard and a little vegetable garden that the Princess Mother had planted herself to supplement the family diet.

Princess Galyani Vadhana, the king's elder sister, assisted the young lady in any way possible during

this period. MR Sirikit once confided many years later to her closest companions that she was struck by the immense kindness of the Princess Mother and Princess Galyani Vadhana in taking care of her.[1]

After school, the Princess Mother frequently invited her to have tea together. When the school was closed she was permitted to return to Paris to see her family at the Thai Embassy, sometimes the embassy in London, depending on where they were in the performance of their duties. A certain amount of discretion was still required while in Lausanne. If anyone asked her suspiciously why she was studying in Switzerland, MR Sirikit joked that,

"If you can come to study, I can come to study."

This ended the questions in most cases.

During the period of her study at the school in Lausanne, whenever she had a chance to see the king, she would do so. When he had recovered, he requested Prince Nakkhatra and his family to visit him and arranged for them to stay at the Windsor Hotel nearby. He made every effort to ensure that the family would be comfortable while visiting him, checking on arrangements himself.

His Majesty then followed Thai tradition in these matters and arranged for Prince Chakrabandhu to act as his representative in the formalities.[2] On 18 July 1949, His Majesty King Bhumibol asked MR Sirikit directly for her hand in marriage. He offered her two

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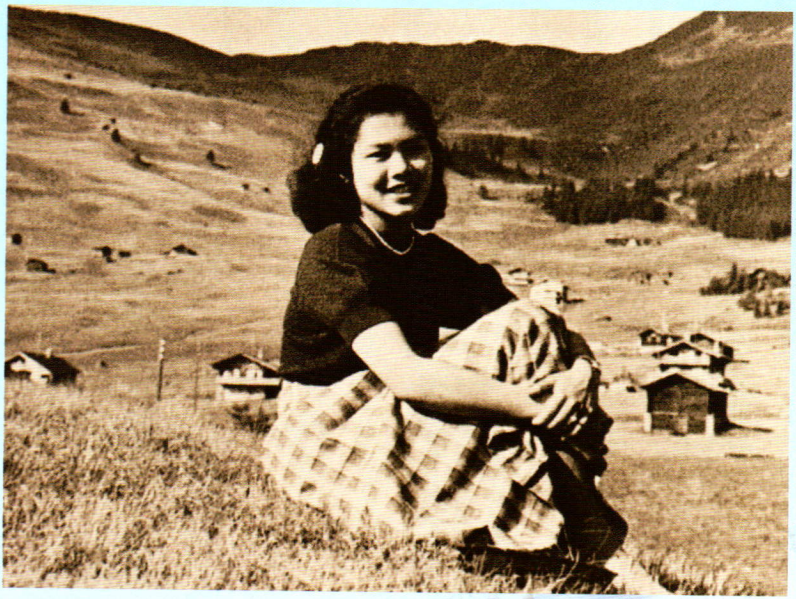
[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue,** Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House, 1991, p. 45.

[2] In asking for a lady's hand in marriage, a Thai man will request an intermediary, perhaps a close friend of the family or a respected elder to approach the woman's family on his behalf.









MR Sirikit abroad.



His Majesty the King and MR Sirikit at her birthday party at the Thai Embassy in London where they announced their engagement.

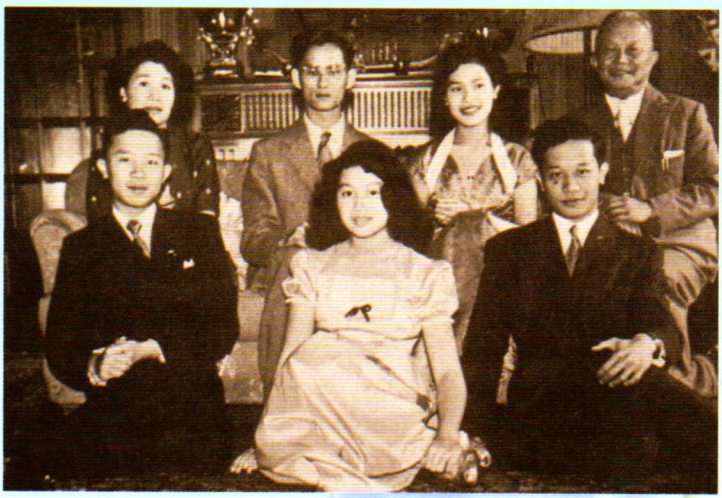


His Majesty the King and MR Sirikit abroad.



rings to choose from as her engagement ring. One belonged to Queen Savang Vadhana, a queen consort of King Chulalongkorn, and featured a ruby surrounded by diamonds. The other one, given by his father to his mother, was two carats, consisting of a diamond set with a circle of heart-shaped platinum mountings. MR Sirikit accepted the second.

On 19 July 1949, the royal couple held an engagement ceremony at Windsor Hotel for members of the family and close companions. MR Sirikit was 17 and His Majesty the King was just 22. As this was still a family affair, there was no official announcement of the engagement. At the auspicious moment, 10 a.m., 19 July 1949, the Princess Mother formally asked for MR Sirikit's hand on behalf of the king from Prince Nakkhatra. Within one month, on MR Sirikit's birthday, 12 August 1949, the couple announced their engagement officially. The engagement reception and dinner took place at the Royal Thai Embassy in London, where His Majesty the King now permitted the announcement of



His Majesty with the Kitiyakara family.

the engagement to the Thai public. It was not a large party, just a few small tables. Yet, the atmosphere was reportedly one of fun and joy that the king had found happiness with the right woman.



On the steamship Selandia.

Following the official announcement, the Thai people saw a picture of MR Sirikit for the first time. She was, some said, like a light in the darkness of Thailand at that time. After their engagement, MR Sirikit continued to study as before. When the time came for His Majesty to return to Thailand in March 1950 to attend the cremation of his brother, he took MR Sirikit with him. As before, the steamship used was the white-hulled East Asiatic Company steamship Selandia. The young uncrowned king of Thailand left Lausanne by train to the French town of Villefranche, from there to Marseilles where they boarded that familiar vessel. They were returning for a sombre reason, but they were also to be married at last. This time the voyage may have passed by too quickly. Gracefully gliding through the steep sided walls of the



Suez Canal at its northern terminus at Port Said they passed the Arabian Desert, watching the scenery and keeping each other company until out into the Gulf of Aden and swinging around Singapore for the last leg of the journey.



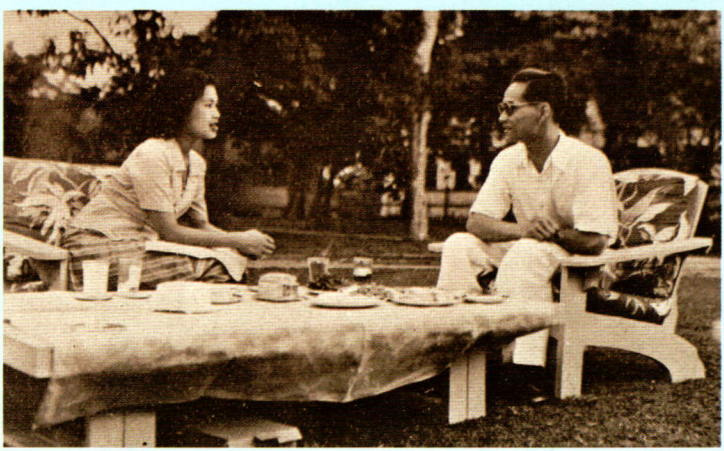


His Majesty returned to Thailand in 1950, the first time Thai people saw their monarch with his fiancée.

By the end of March 1950 the Selandia had brought its royal passengers safely home. The H.T.M.S. Sri Ayudhya awaited them at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River. PT boat then transferred the royal couple to the Sri Ayudhya. It was early morning of 25 March. Thais lined the river banks in their thousands, some in sampans for a glimpse of the royal couple. However tired from the journey, they must have thought it seemed extraordinary that so many people they had never met would come out to see them in such numbers. Every square inch of anchored boat space, every jetty and riverbank was filled with unabated joy. At 3:00 p.m. a jetty at the Memorial Bridge collapsed and its occupants got wet, but no one was hurt. Thousands

cheered as the launch approached. Above, three small aeroplanes flew about as the couple stepped ashore, strewing popped rice and petals over the crowds, which is the Thai version of a tickertape welcome.

MR Sirikit stayed at Deves Mansion, her father's home, until the day of her wedding. King Bhumibol took time out to meet her in the evening for tea at Deves Mansion regularly. Two days before their wedding, the king had bestowed on MR Sirikit the Order of Chula Chom Klao First Class royal decoration and regalia in honour of her favoured position. However, the ceremony itself was simple, held at **Sa Pathum Palace** in Pathumwan District of Bangkok. At 09:30 on Friday 28 April 1950, His Majesty the King went to sit in the reception hall of the palace, which belonged to Queen Savang Vadhana, his royal grandmother. Prince Nakkhatra led MR Sirikit in. She was classically dressed in a long-sleeved, ivory-coloured dress with a golden *kanok*[1] embroidered pattern.



Tea time at Deves Mansion.

[1] Kanok : a flame - like traditional Thai motif.



She wore a diamond necklace and on her wrist she wore an old diamond bracelet of Queen Savang Vadhana. Across her shoulder was the sash representing the Order of Chula Chom Klao First Class. MR Sirikit was followed by her sister, MR Bushba Kitiyakara, who was her maid of honour.[1]

Close members of the royal family, the Prime Minister, the President of the Senate and President of the House of Representatives and high-ranking government officers were there to witness the ceremony. Prince Nakkhatra took his daughter to the king, then the Minister of Interior presented the king with the royal marriage register. The king signed his name and requested that MR Sirikit, Prince Nakkhatra and ML Bua sign. This part was necessary, for the bride had not yet reached the age of consent, being still under 20 years of age. Prince Rangsit of Jainad and Field Marshal Pibulsonggram, the Prime Minister, witnessed the marriage. Following the registration of the marriage, the king then led his bride to another room where a traditional ceremony took place.

At 10:24 a.m., they offered ceremonial flowers, joss-sticks and candles to Queen Savang Vadhana when she entered the room. The king's grandmother, the dowager Queen Savang Vadhana, presided over the traditional ceremony, anointing their foreheads with three spots of paste perfumed with sandalwood and poured holy water on their heads from a conch shell. With her advanced age, Queen Savang Vadhana had trouble remembering things; however, this time she had no trouble with her memory and she said to MR Sirikit,

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[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue**, Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House, 1991, p. 50.



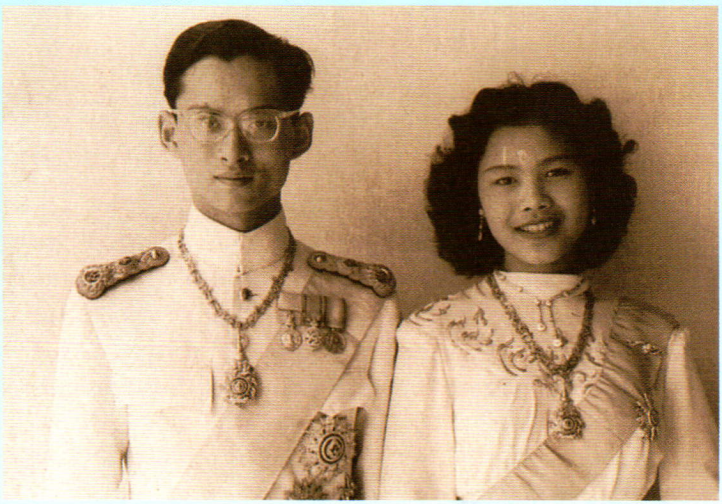
His Majesty the King signing the marriage register.



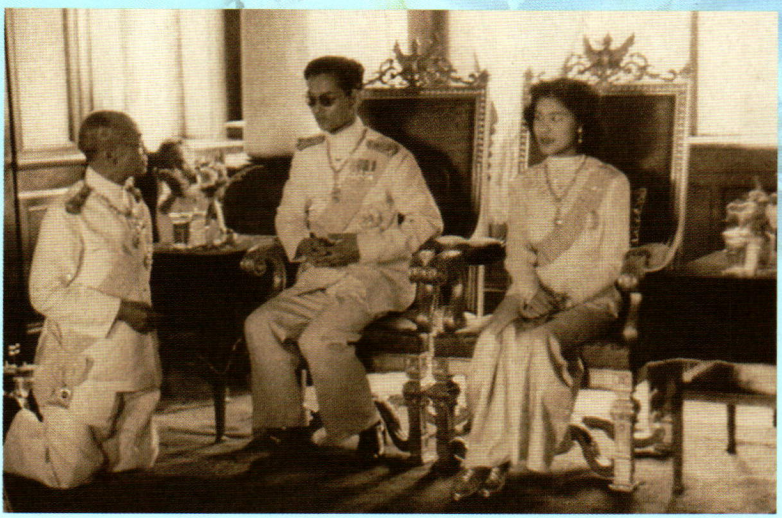
MR Sirikit Kitiyakara signing the marriage register.



Paying homage to Queen Savang Vadhana, His Majesty's grandmother.



Their Majesties King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit.



"Go out and smile at the people who have come to see you."

At 11 a.m., the king asked Luang Banchoet Aksonlak, the royal scribe and herald to read the announcement elevating Mom Rajawongse Sirikit to become Queen Sirikit. The announcement contained the words:

"By Royal Decree, it is announced that, as His Majesty the King has entered into a marriage ceremony with Mom Rajawongse Sirikit Kitiyakara, according to the law and royal tradition, royal permission is granted to appoint Mom Rajawongse Sirikit, the consort of His Majesty, to become Queen Sirikit henceforth. She shall take her place within the Royal House of Chakri from now on.

Announced on 28 April 1950, the fifth year of the current reign.

Acknowledged by Field Marshal P. Pibulsonggram Prime Minister."



After the royal scribe had spoken, Queen Sirikit was conferred the Most Illustrious Order of the Royal House of Chakri.

Following the ceremony, the couple granted an audience to a select group of wedding guests, who consisted of family members, relatives and close friends. Their guests offered wedding gifts. Other gifts were laid out for the happy couple to admire.[1] After luncheon, the couple presented their guests with souvenirs: a silver cigarette box inscribed with the initials Bhor Or and Sor Kor, the initials of the young couple in Thai, and depictions of a Chakra (discus) and Tri (trident), emblem of the Royal House of Chakri, on the cover.



At the Baisal Thaksin Throne Hall on 28 April 1950.

[1] President Truman and his wife, for instance, sent a radio-record player and his best wishes. King George VI of Great Britain and Queen Elizabeth, the parents of the current Queen Elizabeth II, sent some Worcester porcelain and their regrets for not being able to attend.

At 4 p.m., Their Majesties left the mansion to go to the Baisal Thaksin Throne Hall in the Grand Palace. They sat next to each other and allowed the members of the royal family to present them with their good wishes. Prince Rangsit of Jainad presented best wishes on behalf of other members of the royal family. At one point, the prince said he was glad that

> *"The King has found a suitable person to join in his happiness and sadness, to reduce his burden in the future."*[1]

His Majesty responded by thanking them for their good wishes.[2]



The royal banquet on the evening of the marriage.

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[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue**, Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House, 1991, p. 52.
[2] Khaneung Thaiprasit, **Ha Thanwa Maharat,** Watana Panich Printing House, Bangkok : 1985, p. 40.



The couple left Bangkok by train the next morning, Saturday, for their honeymoon at **Klai Kangwol (Sans Souci) Palace**, at Hua Hin. When they arrived there were many people waiting and as the couple moved through the crowd some were allowed to grasp the king's hand and place it on their heads, if they were close, as a type of blessing for special good luck. This was also the first time that both of them had met the local people. Over time, Her Majesty became more confident of the power of the people's love for her and the king and vowed to follow in the king's footsteps—the happiness and sadness of the people would be her own.[1]

The New Queen of Thailand

By the time the Coronation Ceremony on Friday 5 May 1950 had drawn to a close the king had completed two more ceremonies. One was to elevate Queen Sirikit to be Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the other involved the taking of a vow in front of the Supreme Patriarch and members of the Buddhist clergy to uphold religion. In Thailand it is not an automatic right of the royal bride to become queen; most were simply known as royal consorts after marriage. On this occasion, Queen Sirikit knelt in front of His Majesty the King and a court official read out the royal decree elevating her to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, *Somdet Phra Nang Chao Sirikit Phra Borom Rachini*. His Majesty the King presented her with Royal Regalia and anointed her forehead. Now they were tied by a special, unbreakable bond.

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[1] Thanpuying Kaenlong Snidvongse na Ayudhaya, **Pen Yu Khue**, Bangkok : Magic Production Printing House, 1991, p. 61.

Royal Decree

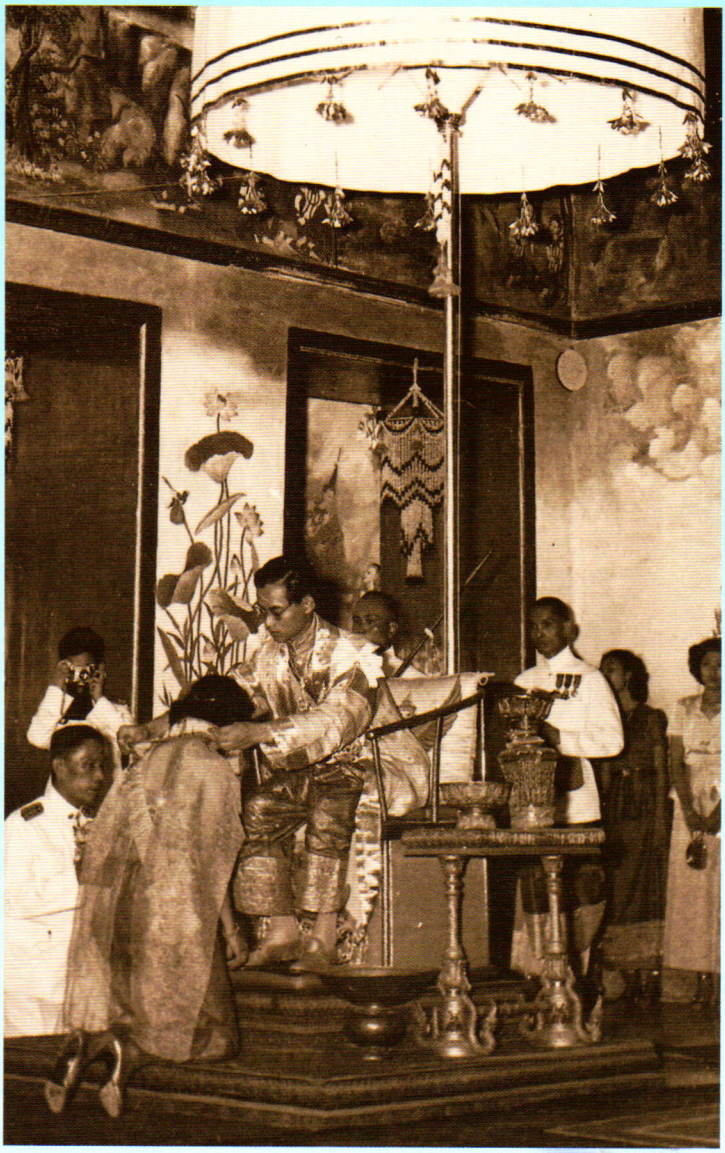
His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej is pleased to announce that having followed the ancient traditions, the monarch has ascended the throne in a royal coronation ceremony. Accordingly, his consort is elevated to the position of queen, in accordance with royal custom.

His Majesty is pleased to announce that Queen Sirikit *(Somdet Phra Rachini Sirikit)* is elevated to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit *(Somdet Phra Nangchao Sirikit Phra Borom Rachini)*.

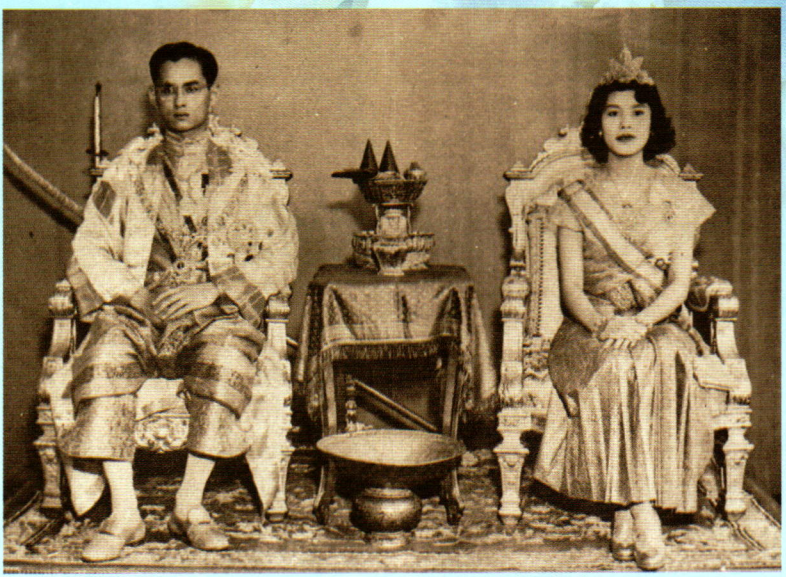
She is to have full honour with such rank and title.

May the blessing of the Triple Gems and all the gods watch over Her Majesty Queen Sirikit.

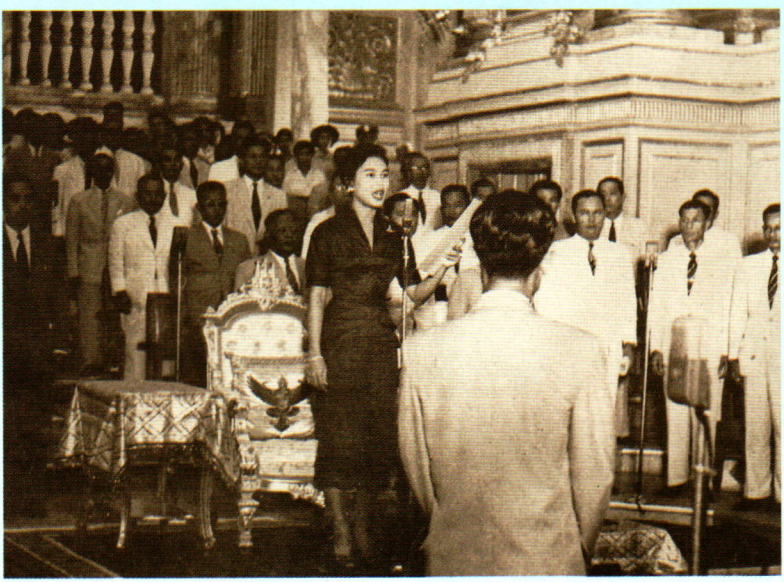
Official Announcement of Elevation of Rank, 5 May 1950.



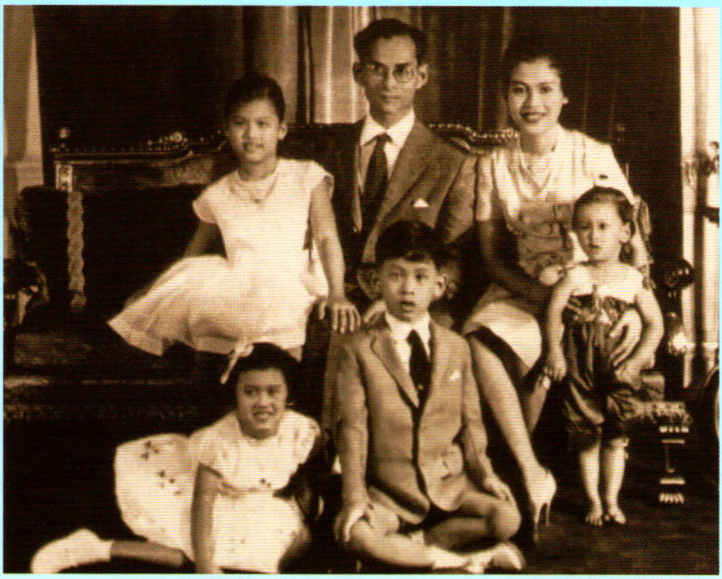
His Majesty conferring the title of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on his royal consort.



On Coronation Day.



Queen Regent.



The royal family.

Following the coronation both returned to their studies in Switzerland on 5 June 1950. Their four children are HRH Princess Ubol Ratana (born 1951), HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn (born 1952), HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (born 1955), and HRH Princess Chulabhorn (born 1957).

On 18 September 1956, His Majesty the King established Her Majesty Queen Sirikit as Queen Regent while he entered the monkhood for 15 days from 22 October - 5 November. The king was to place a lot of trust in Her Majesty over the years and certainly considered Her Majesty "capable of bearing responsibility." The Regent had to be approved by the House of Representatives and take an oath in the house under the Constitution. As we shall see in the next chapter, Her Majesty later also represented the king on several State Visits abroad.



Representing His Majesty the King on a State Visit to China.

Chapter 3: Thailand's Ambassador of Goodwill

"When I first married him, things were different. We attended only ceremonial functions."[1]

Her Majesty's observation in 1982 may appear wistful, but when Their Majesties returned to Thailand in 1950[2], they found that the role of the monarchy was ceremonial with little contact with the common people. Not long after Her Majesty gave birth in Lausanne to her first child, Her Royal Highness Princess Ubol Ratana, on 5 April 1951, there followed a series of proactive development projects, commencing near the seaside palace in Hua Hin in 1952, where the royal family spent their summers and were less formal than in Bangkok.

Soon, Her Majesty became an active participant in the king's development work, not only assisting His Majesty but also initiating projects that over time became distinctly her own.

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[1] Sylvana Foa, "Sirikit, Portrait of a Queen" **Hong Kong Standard Sunday Magazine**, 24 January 1982, p. 17.

[2] In support of democracy, Thailand had followed the United States into the Korean War in 1950, a rejection of Communist ideals that had a profound effect on the royal family's role in society as a unifying symbol.

"He didn't encourage me at all – he advised me. He said he would look after their land and I must look after their families."[1]

Her Majesty, while dutifully following His Majesty the King on visits to their subjects, also established for herself a role as a symbol of motherhood and caring.

Their Majesties commenced official royal visits outside Bangkok in 1953, the year President Eisenhower was inaugurated in the US, with wildly successful tours of Suphan Buri, Ang Thong and Sing Buri provinces in the Central Region of Thailand.

"It changed my life," said the queen. *"We envisioned a new role for the monarchy. Now we must really work."*[2]

On their 1953 - 1954 tour of the Central Region of Thailand, Their Majesties travelled together and stopped frequently to meet people. Queen Sirikit, a diplomat's daughter, had an armoury of knowledge about Thailand, its people and their culture. Few women were more fitting to stand by the monarch at that time. Their Majesties hosted visiting heads of state and dignitaries over the years, whose friendship was invaluable the more the region became unstable. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia visited Bangkok on his first State Visit from 15 - 21 December 1954. The relationship between both countries was to be a long one. Over two decades later, Her Majesty led efforts to relieve the suffering of Cambodian refugees fleeing conflict within their own land.

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[1] Sylvana Foa, "Sirikit, Portrait of a Queen" **Hong Kong Standard Sunday Magazine**, 24 January 1982, p. 17.
[2] Ibid.



Visiting the victims of a fire at Ban Pong District, Ratchaburi Province, 13 September 1952.



Providing necessities to the Karen hilltribe at Song Phi Nong, Suphan Buri Province.



Visiting the people of Suphan Buri Province.



Visiting the people of the Central Region.



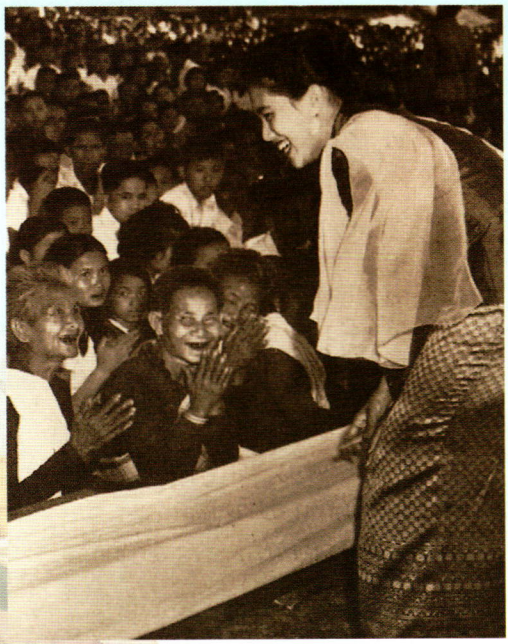
The world was changing, and the royal family had to change itself. The rural poor required more attention than the authorities in Bangkok were in a position to give. Within a year, in 1955, after completing the first tour of their realm, Their Majesties were off to the North of Thailand to see for themselves the conditions of the rural poor. The effect was profound and drove the royal family to find a solution for the plight of farmers. Their Majesties set aside approximately 200 days in a year for visits to rural areas. Keeping in mind the rough conditions outside of Bangkok, it was a difficult task.



Paying respects at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai Province, 5 March 1958.



The midday heat was intense during Their Majesties' visit to Li District in Lamphun Province, but people came from far and wide to seek an audience.



Northeasterners welcoming Her Majesty with delight.





Visiting the people in Udon Thani Province.

Also in 1955, Their Majesties officially visited the Northeast of Thailand — area of the country where some families make less than a thousand dollars a year. Nature was responsible for much of the people's poverty there. Not as fertile as the central plains, its sandy soil was prone to cause drought in the summer and flash floods and landslides in the monsoon.

> *"Once we were in the Northeast giving blankets and other necessities to the victims of a terrible flood and the King suddenly said* ***'what we're doing is nothing, it's just like trying to fill up the ocean.'***
>
> *"He decided then that Thailand was too poor to support a conventional monarchy," she said. "He decided we had to be able and ready to help the government solve our people's problems."*[1]

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[1] Sylvana Foa, "Sirikit, Portrait of a Queen" **Hong Kong Standard Sunday Magazine**, 24 January 1982, p. 17.





Visiting Wat Maha That, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, for a royal ceremony.

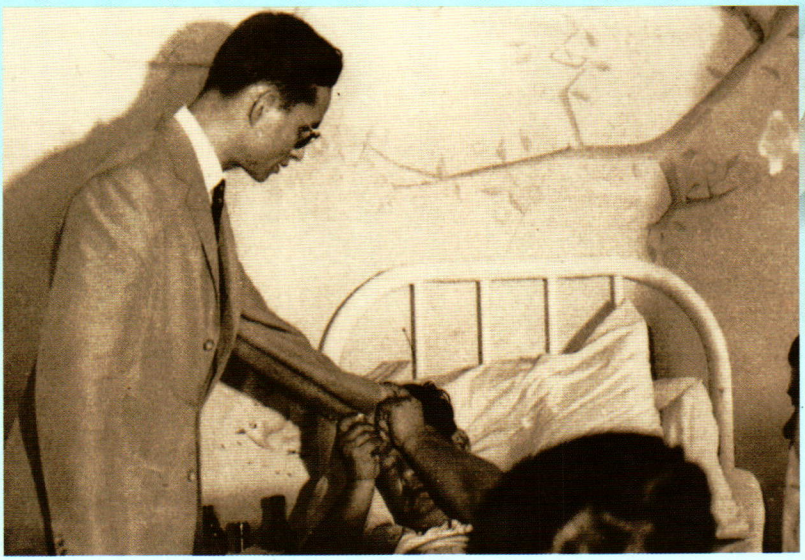




Visiting the people in the South.



Residents of Pattani Province arranged a procession to welcome Their Majesties. It is seen as the highest honour for them.



Visiting a wounded soldier.

Official tours to the different regions of Thailand play a considerable part in bringing together the nation during periods of social and political change, providing a sense of continuity. The sixties and seventies were a period of uncertainty, especially in Southeast Asia. Her Majesty the Queen played a pivotal role in ensuring that the Thai people knew that the royal family supported them both morally and physically, visiting sick and wounded soldiers in hospitals and inspecting conditions at the frontlines. What may have struck her with her firsthand knowledge of conditions in rural areas was that the people truly loved the royal family, yet were being seduced by the promise of better lives under the communists. As we shall see later, her projects were to open frontiers for the poor and dispossessed by offering them a way out of poverty, through education and training.



His Majesty the King entering the monkhood.

The birth of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn on 28 July 1952 and Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on 2 April 1955 in Bangkok did little to slow down the activities of Their Majesties. The following year, 1956, His Majesty the King entered the monkhood, a tradition among Thai males, for two weeks. Her Majesty became only the second queen in Thai history to act as Regent[1]. This was significant in that it was still unusual enough in Thailand at that time for a woman to hold any important position, let alone responsibility for a nation. Her Majesty's handling of the affairs of state in the king's absence was worthy and trouble free. Their Majesties' youngest daughther, Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn, was born on 4 July, 1957.

[1] The first was Her Majesty Queen Saovabha, Queen of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, Rama V.

The country was picking up a little. With a National Budget in 1956 of US$145,476,190,[1] the government was not in a position to help everyone, especially people in remote rural areas. Global politics were characterized by fast-moving and significant changes: the US conducted its first aerial test of a nuclear bomb at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific and Egypt seized the Suez Canal. The Thai Queen, meanwhile, was providing medical and educational assistance to the poor.

In Laos, right wing leaders objected to the inclusion of the Communist Pathet Lao Party in the government, and by 1959, the government coalition of moderate right wing and left wing parties collapsed, and a series of coups followed. Soon a full-scale civil war was under way in Laos and the Thai people became very nervous.



Her Majesty comforting a wounded soldier at Chiang Klang, Thung Chang District, Nan Province.

[1] The foreign exchange rate in 1956 was 21 baht to the US dollar.



Visiting the Chao Pho Luang Uppatham II School.

Her Majesty accompanied His Majesty the King in 1959 to visit frontier soldiers and to offer them encouragement as the Lao border became dangerous. It was at this time that His Majesty set up the first **Chao Pho Luang Uppatham School** near the Border Patrol Police Headquarters in Chiang Mai. Their Majesties were concerned about regional instability and wanted to do something to ensure that children were not overlooked.

Establishing Ties in Southeast Asia

Understanding the importance of friendly relations with neighbours at the time, Their Majesties visited **South Vietnam** during 18 - 21 December 1959. Arriving at Ton Son Nut Airport, Saigon, they were welcomed by President Ngô Dinh Diém, whom they had met when he visited Thailand two years previously. They visited the ancient capital of Hué and Dalat, as guests of the President.



Visiting South Vietnam, 18 - 21 December 1959.

Further to the southeast, **Indonesia** was emerging from Dutch colonization and Their Majesties visited the new government to reinforce ties. When they landed at Kemajoran on 8 February 1960, President Achmad Sukarno met them. Dr Sukarno (1901 - 1970) was the first president of independent Indonesia, a revolutionary against the Dutch colonists from 1945 -1949 and a



President Sukarno welcoming Their Majesties at the airport upon their first visit to Indonesia, 8-16 February 1960.



Their Majesties with President Sukarno of Indonesia.



At the return banquet hosted by Indonesian President Suharto and the First Lady during their visit to Thailand.

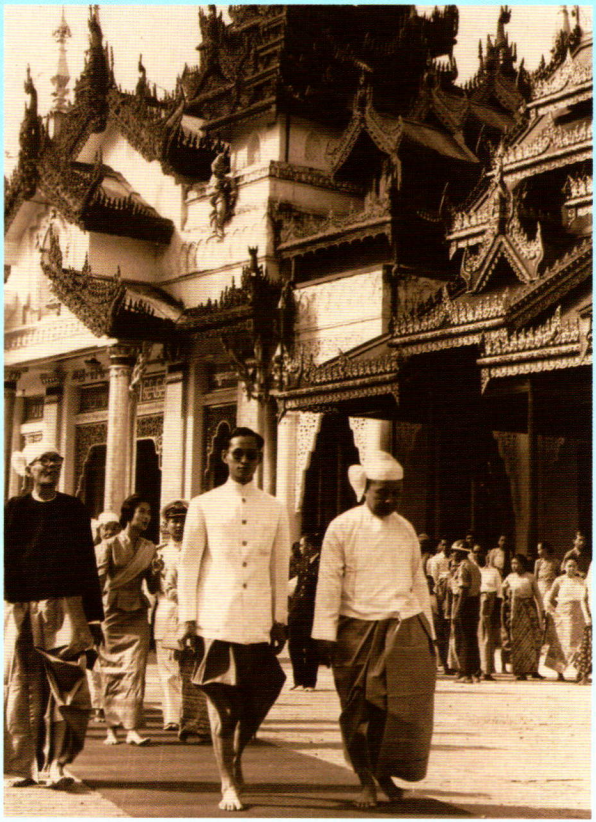
much-respected leader in Asia at the time. He had visited Thailand in 1958 and was later to visit again in 1961.[1]

Another important neighbour was **Burma**[2]. From 2 - 5 March 1960, Their Majesties' visit commenced with their arrival on a Royal Thai Air Force plane at Mingaladon Airport, where they were met by the

[1] Indonesia had a role in Southeast Asian affairs. Two Thai kings had made earlier visits, King Rama V (in 1871, 1896 and 1901) and King Rama VII (in 1929). Their Majesties' visit was to create a long-lasting relationship that the royal family has maintained, with later visits to Indonesia by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in 1985 and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn in 1986.

[2] Now called the Union of Myanmar.





The State Visit to Burma, 1970.



President of the Union of Burma and Madam U Win Maung. Their Majesties were also pleased to meet with Prime Minister General Ne Win. Burma was of great geopolitical importance as it created a path from India to the Malay Peninsula. The State Visit to Burma was therefore an important one for Their Majesties.

Paying homage at Shwedagong Temple, Union of Burma.

From the United States to Europe

Recognizing the significance of the West and its relationship to Thailand, Their Majesties decided to visit **the United States of America** and **Europe** to establish better relations, an act that was to have a long term effect on the future development of the nation. On 15 June 1960, Their Majesties commenced a year-long world tour for the purpose of meeting heads of state and establishing friendly relations between Thailand and the rest of the world. Their first stop was the US, commencing in **Honolulu, Hawaii**, where they were welcomed at the airport by Governor William F. Quinn, federal and state officials and, of course, by hula dancers. From there, after a brief rest, Their Majesties went on to **Washington D.C.**, where they were met by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, then in his seventh year of office.



Mr William F. Quinn, Governor of Hawaii, welcoming Their Majesties.



President Eisenhower at the airport to welcome Their Majesties to the US.



The residents of Washington D.C. welcoming Their Majesties.

American people, they discovered, were fascinated by their royal visitors and deeply impressed by Her Majesty's bearing and immense beauty. Her Majesty was conscious that few Westerners knew much about

Thailand. She made a deliberate decision to use Western-style clothes for daytime use as she wanted to show that Thai women could be as sophisticated as their Western equivalent.[1] Her Majesty came to realize that her status not only provided privilege but also the authority to promote issues that she believed would help her countrymen. As we will see later, this became crystallized as the promotion to foreigners of Thai culture and handicrafts. Her Majesty went on to establish several events and shows abroad that displayed the best of Thai arts and culture.

Newspapers in the US certainly appeared interested in her beauty, and the now famous "Thai smile" she gave to everyone. The Lowell, Massachusetts, **Sun**,[2] wrote on 18 June,

"Even the most non-observant foreigner would have trouble forgetting her smile."



On the State Visit to the US.

[1] Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, **Memoir of State Visits,** Bangkok : 1972, pp. 3 - 5.
[2] *By Jerry Bennett in a special report from Washington D.C.*





At a banquet welcoming Their Majesties to the US.

While the Sun's story elaborated on the extent of her wardrobe, it was true Paris designer Pierre Balmain created most of the clothes for the American tour. Balmain was Her Majesty's favourite designer at the time and created a Western-style wardrobe appropriate for a queen on a long journey. In addition, Her Majesty had a series of Thai costumes made by Thai designers for her to wear mainly on the European leg of her journey, and in the evenings while in the US. Her Majesty continued to use the same styles in Thailand and many people began to use them as casual and formal wear.

Queen Sirikit never appeared tired and even at the largest evening receptions she would speak to as many guests as possible, seldom forgetting a name or face.[1] Her Majesty became an important asset in Thailand's diplomatic foray into the world.

Wit was an advantage in royal diplomacy. His Majesty the King was famously quoted in American newspapers as having replied to a Thai villager who asked;

"Your Majesty, why don't you ever smile?"

with the rejoinder, while pointing to Her Majesty:

"The one who follows me smiles enough for both of us."[2]

From **Pittsburgh**, on 29 June, to **Williamsburg, Virginia**, on 2 July 1960, Her Majesty left an impression on the local people for her soft, well-modulated voice and perfect English. She never appeared fatigued, always just a few steps behind the king and smiling constantly. The queen spoke readily of her life and activities at home, confirming that she was an ardent jazz fan and liked all kinds of music. She appeared genuinely friendly to those who approached her. In the same breath that they told of her model-like figure and startling beauty, newspapers told of how she was also enthusiastic about improving Thailand's educational system.

Next, in **New York**, Their Majesties were celebrated with a tickertape parade down Broadway, a sign of the

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[1] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Indelible Impressions of a Royal Visit**, Bangkok : 1999, p. 13.

[2] Ibid.



The welcome and tickertape parade given to Their Majesties in New York were described by local newspapers as among the warmest ever given to distinguished visitors to the city.

importance America placed on Thailand, cheered by about 750,000 people. Their Majesties visited the Empire State Building, the Stock Exchange, the United Nations, and attended a performance of *My Fair Lady* before flying out on 8 July for a two-day visit of **Boston** and **Cambridge**. While in Boston, they were guests of the Fellows of Harvard University. His Majesty the King, the only monarch in the world to have been born in the United States of America, visited the place of his birth, **Mount Auburn Hospital** in **Cambridge, Massachusetts.**

For the royal couple, the trip was the start of a long and enduring friendship with US leaders over the

years, from Eisenhower to George W. Bush. **Time** magazine, on 11 July 1960, noted the warm reception given by President Eisenhower at the **White House** when the royal couple returned to Washington D.C., referring to Her Majesty the Queen as the "svelte, 'archfeminist' Queen Sirikit, 27." While not the terms one usually uses to describe a queen, Her Majesty's efforts to promote the cause of women, as we shall see in a later chapter, had reached the attention of the US media.

Capturing the Hearts of Europe

Their Majesties commenced their European tour in **Berne, Switzerland**, in July 1960 after flying in from the United States, where Swiss President Max Petitpierre met them. Switzerland was not only the first step of their European tour but the Thai government had also arranged for it to be their base for both the European and North American tours, enabling them to leave



Their Majesties the King and Queen with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh at Victoria Railway Station.



At Victoria railway station.

their children in a secure place, an estate named **Flonzaley,** whilst away on State Visits. Flonzaley was on a mountain near Lausanne, in a district called **Puidoux-Chexbres.**[1] Their Majesties could easily return to visit them from almost any European country.

From 19 - 20 July 1960, Their Majesties paid an official visit to the **United Kingdom**, where Princess Alexandra, with whom they were already acquainted, met them at the airport, accompanying them to Victoria Railway Station to be greeted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Distinguished witnesses to the arrival included the British Prime Minister, Mr Harold Macmillan, Richard Austen (Rab) Butler[2] and Mr Selwyn Lloyd.[3]

[1] Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, **Memoir of State Visits,** Bangkok : 1972, p. 2.
[2] Home Secretary.
[3] Chancellor of the Exchequer.



The Duke of Edinburgh accompanying Her Majesty to Buckingham Palace in a royal carriage.



Her Majesty Queen Sirikit and HRH Princess Alexandra of Kent at the Guildhall, London.

Thousands of excited people lined the Mall to catch a glimpse of the Thai king and queen. While the King rode in the first carriage with the Queen of England, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit rode in the second carriage with Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. During her toast to King Bhumibol that evening at dinner, Queen Elizabeth II graciously noted that,

> *"It is appropriate to remember, too, that His Highness the Prince of Chandaburi, the late father of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, was no more than 10 years ago a distinguished ambassador at my father's court."*



Their Majesties with Mr Selwyn Lloyd, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, at Lancaster House.



At Westminster Abbey.



Their Majesties hosting a banquet in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her State Visit to Thailand in 1972.



Presenting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with products from the SUPPPORT Foundation, 1996.

During this visit, Her Majesty was able to develop the warm friendship she had with Princess Alexandra. The princess became a regular visitor to Thailand as a guest of the royal family. Later, in 1972, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was also to visit Thailand as the guest of His Majesty King Bhumibol and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, and visited Thailand again for five days in October 1996.

Royal visitors such as Princess Alexandra, are invited to visit branches of the **SUPPORT Foundation** that Her Majesty set up to promote supplementary occupations. Not only do these visitors take home good memories of Thailand, but also receive gifts from **Her Majesty's SUPPORT Foundation** and thereafter mention to others the wonderful things they have seen, encouraging more people to discover these hidden arts for themselves.



HRH Princess Alexandra on a visit to Cha-am District, Phetchaburi Province, 24 November 1971.

Following the United Kingdom, Their Majesties visited what was then **West Germany** from 25 July - 2 August 1960. The Federal President, Heinrich Lübke,



Their Majesties visiting the municipal offices in Bonn on the occasion of their State Visit to Germany.

elected the previous year, accompanied by Frau Lübke, met Their Majesties at Bonn Station as they stepped off a train from Switzerland. The German Government had sent a train to Basel to pick them up. Upon arrival, they drove off for breakfast at **Hammerschmidt Mansion**, the presidential residence at **Petersburg**, outside Bonn. Their Majesties made time to speak with Thai students at the University of Hamburg on 29 July. Many Thai students, including members of the royal family, have been to Germany to study over the years, especially the military school at **Lichterfeld**. It was a tradition started by King Chulalongkorn, Rama V that many of the royal children were sent abroad for their education, often a military education.[1]

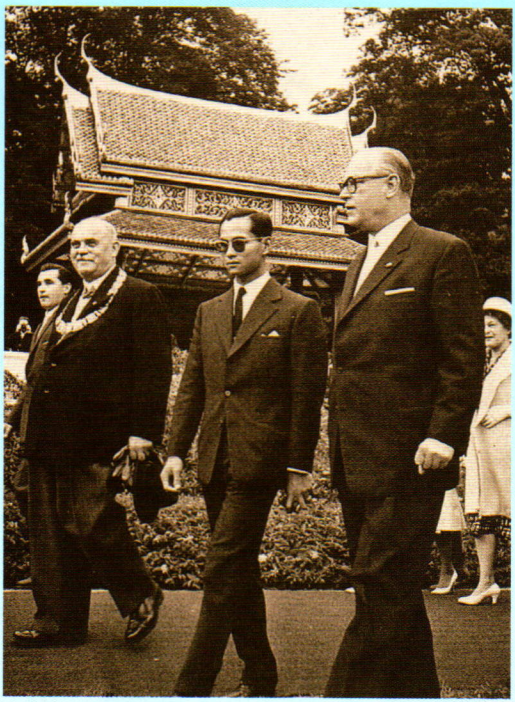
[1] Germany and Thailand had had cordial relations since the Seventeenth Century; however, official contact was not made until 1862 when Count zu Eulenburg presented his credentials to the Thai court. By coincidence, the first foreigner ever visited at home by a Thai king was Count Seldeneck, the German Minister in Bangkok.



On 26 August 1960, President Lübke and the First Lady hosted a banquet in honour of Their Majesties, attended by various ministers of state.







Their Majesties visiting a Thai pavilion presented by HM King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, to the town of Bad Homburg in 1907.

The royal couple later visited **Bad Homburg** in **Hesse** to view the *Sala Thai*[1] built by **King Rama V**, who made two tours of Europe himself, visiting Germany twice, in 1897 and 1907, and meeting Kaiser Wilhelm II.

As was their custom, Their Majesties were particularly interested in modern industry and visited the Leitz works at **Wetzlar**, well-known for its optical lenses for everything from cameras to microscopes. On 29 July 1960 Their Majesties stayed in **Hamburg,** then

[1] An open-sided Thai-style pavilion.



Conversing with Madam Lübke, wife of the President of Germany, at a banquet in Nuremberg.



Welcoming a guest at the return banquet in honour of the German President.

went down to **Nuremberg** and **Bayreuth**, where Their Majesties viewed Wagner's opera *Lohengrin*. There follows the apocryphal tale that Her Majesty endeared herself to her German hosts when offered Thai food by declining it and requesting sauerkraut, beer and



sausages, typical German fare.[1] Far from the common stereotype of a queen, Her Majesty took great pleasure in meeting and conversing with local people wherever she went and remained very natural in their company.

Before returning to **Switzerland**, Their Majesties visited the famous Krupps works, the epitome of German heavy industry for many years, and the Daimler-Benz factory, taking a ride in a vintage 1894 Mercedes-Benz there. As the President of the Thai Red

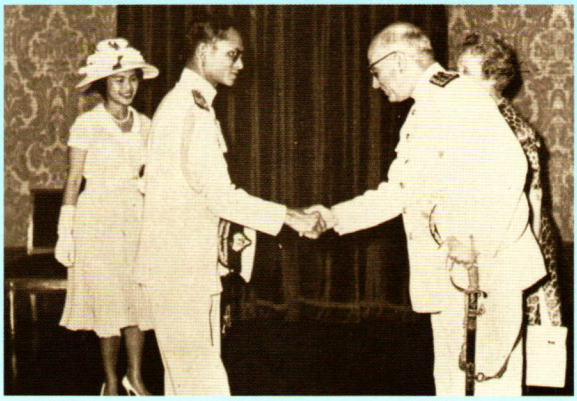


Her Majesty the Queen accompanying Madam Lübke to visit the Thai Red Cross on 22 November 1962.

Cross, Her Majesty was delighted that the company presented her with a hospital van for the Thai Red Cross to take back to Thailand. Such was the success of this visit that the President of West Germany and his wife would later visit Bangkok and Their Majesties from 21 - 26 November 1962 to renew their friendship.

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[1] It should be noted that Thai beer is based on a German recipe and their tastes are therefore very similar.



President and Madam Américo Tomáz of Portugal greeting Their Majesties.

Following another break with their children, Their Majesties visited **Portugal**[1] from 22 - 25 August 1960. In **Lisbon,** they met with Portuguese Head of State, Admiral Américo Tomáz and Prime Minister Professor Dr Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. Accommodated in the Pavilion D. Maria I, at the **Palace of Queluz**, Admiral Tomáz gave a banquet in the **Ajuda Palace** in their honour on their first evening in Portugal. The Portuguese were very impressed by the Thai king and queen and turned out in large numbers to catch a glimpse of them.

They then returned to **Switzerland** from 29 - 31 August where they were met once again by President Petitpierre on a station platform covered in carpets. While in Berne, they took the time to visit the Omega watch and clock factory to observe Switzerland's premier industry.

Within a week they were off again, from 6 - 9 September, visiting **Denmark**, where they were

[1] Portugal has one of the longest relationships of any European nation with Thailand. The Santa Cruz Church in Thon Buri is a symbol of the descendants of the early Portuguese who settled in the country.





Welcomed by Max Petitpierre of the Swiss Confederation, in Berne, 1960

greeted by King Frederick IX and Queen Ingrid who introduced them to the Prime Minister Mr Viggo Kampmann. Denmark offered Their Majesties the opportunity to visit an experimental dairy outside Copenhagen. Whilst there, Their Majesties also visited the East Asiatic Company offices, the owner of the steamship Selandia, with its royal association to Thailand. The queen visited a hospital in nearby Glostrup. Patients' rooms were adorned with bouquets of *Fa Mui* orchids imported from Chiang Mai. A year later, from 10 - 15 January 1961, Her Majesty was to visit Denmark at the invitation of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Denmark. From 12 - 24 January 1962, the King and Queen of Denmark reciprocated with a visit to the Thai royal family in Bangkok. Such exchanges of visits have enabled Their Majesties to demonstrate to world



The Fa Mui orchid (Vanda coerulea GRIFF.)



Welcoming Her Majesty the Queen of Denmark on board the ship Jutlandia.



Exchanging gifts with Her Majesty Queen Ingrid of Denmark while visiting Denmark, 6-9 September, 1960.



Admiring the gifts of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Norway, during the State Visit to Norway in 1960.

leaders the friendship and warmth of Thai people to guests and strengthened the bond between them.

Whilst in Scandinavia, Their Majesties paid a State Visit to **Norway** by ship from 19 - 21 September 1960. They were met by HM King Olav V and Princess Astrid on the pier at **Oslo**. Mr. Einar Gerhardsen, the Norwegian Prime Minister was also on hand to welcome their Majesties. In Norway, they were able to visit the ship of the explorer Nansen and the famous balsa log raft of Thor Heyerdahl, the **Kon Tiki.** On 21 September, they travelled to **Sweden** where they met with King Gustav Adolf VI and Queen Louise, and were welcomed by Prime Minister Mr Tage Erlander. Their Majesties later visited the Upsala-Ekeby factory, where they observed the production of fine ceramics.



Arriving at Rome Airport, the Republic of Italy.

From 28 September - 1 October 1960, Their Majesties visited **Italy** and were met in **Rome** with great ceremony by Head of State President Giovanni Gronchi and Prime Minister Mr Amintore Fanfani. The Italian government had arranged for them to stay in a 400-year-old **Quirinale Palace**, which impressed Her Majesty, as she recorded in her memoir of the visit. While in Rome, they visited the Italian Red Cross and presented gifts to the orphans. Their Majesties then met with His Holiness Pope John XXIII at the **Vatican** on 1 October 1960. To do this, however, Their Majesties moved first to the 17th century **Madama Villa**. This was necessary as the Vatican is a sovereign state, and the protocol meant moving out of Italian government accommodation to accommodation belonging to the Vatican. Following their meeting with His Holiness Pope John XXIII, Their Majesties returned to Switzerland briefly before going on to **Belgium**.





Their Majesties the King and Queen attending a banquet at the Grand Hotel, Italy.



At the Italian Red Cross.



Visiting the Vatican on 1 October 1960.

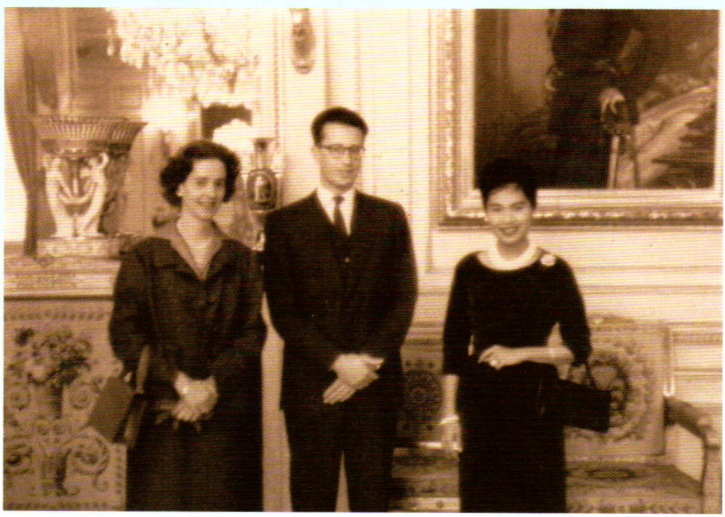
As the guests of King Bauduoin for their State Visit to Belgium from 4 - 7 October 1960, Their Majesties were given a civic reception at City Hall in Brussels, with a welcome procession to the Grande Palace. They stayed at **Château de Laeken**,[1] later visiting **Brugge**[2] to observe Flemish weaving at a textile factory. Her Majesty recalled in her memoir of the visit that the king and herself admired and felt close to King Bauduoin from the first time they met.[3] Throughout their four-day stay, they were able to get to know the Belgian king well, and were to meet each other on several occasions thereafter. Their Majesties were also able to become friendly with the consort of King Bauduoin, Doña Fabiola, Countess of Mora y Aragon, with whom they continued to remain in contact after King Bauduoin passed away in 1993.

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[1] Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, **Memoir of State Visits,** Bangkok : 1972, p. 40.
[2] Or Bruges.
[3] Loc. cit.



With King Bauduoin of the Belgians while on a State Visit to Belgium, 6 October 1960.



With King Baudouin and his fianceé, Doña Fabiola.



French diplomats led by Chevalier de Chaumant presenting a letter from King Louis XIV to King Narai the Great.



Chief of the Thai envoy presenting a letter from King Narai the Great to King Louis XIV.



For their next State Visit, to **France**, Her Majesty may have remembered that her father, the Prince of Chandaburi, had gone to the French military school at Saint-Cyr, in 1918. The school later became famous on account of another student, Charles de Gaulle. A visit by the Thai royal family was to bind the countries closer, having crossed several political hurdles in the past. Friendly ties between the two countries had existed since the early seventeenth century in the reign of King Narai the Great.

President de Gaulle met them at Orly Airport in **Paris** on 11 October 1960, and accompanied them to the **Elysée Palace** where they were given a banquet in their honour. Prime Minister Michel Debré was introduced to Their Majesties. His Majesty was pleased to note in his arrival address that he considered France a land of freedom led by a person of distinction like



With President and Madame Charles de Gaulle while on a State Visit to France, 11-14 October 1960.

de Gaulle and recalled pleasant memories of his own with Queen Sirikit in Paris.[1]

Whilst in Paris, Their Majesties stayed at the **Quai d'Orsay**, on the left bank of the River Seine. The next day, 12 October, Their Majesties visited the headquarters of UNESCO and kept busy with official duties. The morning of 13 October, the king visited the Célestin Barracks of the Republican Guard for a display of horsemanship, while the queen attended a specially arranged fashion show in her honour. Familiar as they may have been with several of the cultural attractions from their period of courtship, they were then able to visit also the **Château de Versailles,** accompanied by perhaps France's most senior tour guide, the Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux.[2] In Malraux's company, lunch was served in the gallery of Louis XIII on the dinnerware of Emperor Napoleon I. Among the many items that Their Majesties were to view whilst in the company of Mr Malraux were royal gifts presented to earlier French kings by Siamese monarchs, part of an exhibition of French-Siamese mementoes. The evening of 13 October, they received official guests and held a dinner in honour of General and Madame de Gaulle. The President awarded them on this occasion with the Légion d'Honneur.[3]

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[1] From His Majesty's official speech, 11 October, 1960.

[2] A French writer, art critic, and politician, Malraux was the author of the novels *La Condition Humaine (Man's Estate* 1933), and *L'Espoir (Days of Hope* 1937).

[3] Created in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte, the Légion d'Honneur is the highest award given by the French Republic for outstanding service to France, regardless of the social status or the nationality of the recipients. The President of the Republic is the Grand Master of the Order of the Légion d'Honneur.



The same evening, Their Majesties attended the Paris Opera to see a ballet performance of Chopin's *Les Sylphides* at 10 p.m. President de Gaulle graciously escorted them up the grand staircase of the Palais Garnier. Queen Sirikit, wearing a white evening gown studded with jewellery and a diamond diadem, attracting much attention from the audience of 1,200 people.

After France, Their Majesties spent two days visiting the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg from 17 - 19 October 1960, meeting with that country's ruler, Prince Felix of Bourbon. The royal couple were guests of Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Charlotte, who was then 64 years of age and had been reigning for 41 years.



Her Majesty the Queen photographed with Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg.



With the Dutch Royal Family while on a State Visit to the Netherlands.



Accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Juliana while visiting the Hague, the Netherlands.



Their Majesties then visited Her Majesty Queen Juliana of **the Netherlands**, from 24 - 27 October 1960. Dutch-Thai relationships began in the Seventeenth Century. Queen Juliana herself noted the long relationship between the two countries in her official speech, and the kindness of the Thais to Dutch prisoners of war during the Second World War. The visit was significant for the friendship struck between the two royal families, including Prince Bernhard, Princess Beatrix[1] and Princess Irene. Their Majesties visited the Sint Bernardus milk products factory in Bergeijk, the Philips Factory at Eindhoven and the water engineering laboratories in Delft. During the visit to the Philips Company, Her Majesty was presented with an x-ray machine and an image magnifying equipment for the Thai Red Cross, while the Dutch Red Cross also donated some packed red cells.

Following the Netherlands, Their Majesties returned to their children in Switzerland briefly. Her Majesty noted in her memoir of the European tour that when she saw Geneva at last she was very happy to see her children again.



With President Francisco Franco of Spain, on the occasion of Their Majesties' visit to Spain, 3 November 1960.

[1] Now Her Majesty Queen Beatrix.



Accompanied by the Queen of Spain, Her Majesty presiding over the ceremony to launch "H.T.M.S. Chakri Naruebet" in El Ferrol, Spain, 20 January, 1996.

They left once more, however, on 3 November 1960, to visit **Spain** until the eighth. The fog was so thick that they had to wait a long time for their plane to circle before landing.

They met with Generalissimo Francisco Franco, then went on to visit Seville, where they were able to see the art of the Moors, the Muslim invaders who had left Spain with a rich heritage, which Her Majesty found particularly interesting. In Barcelona, the municipal government arranged for them to stay in a 500-year palace that served as a museum. Following their first dinner in the city, they were invited to a ballet.

Spain was the last country on Their Majesties' itinerary of official State Visits in Europe. Her Majesty was pleased to admit that they never once were late for an appointment in all 15 countries they visited, noting that punctuality was of the essence in travelling abroad. Their Majesties ended their European tour with a visit to their former home, in the canton of



Vaud, Switzerland, in November 1960, where they were pleased to attend a brief ceremony at the town of Puidoux given by the local people in their honour.

Finally, on 18 January 1961, the king and queen descended from an aeroplane to Thai soil once more. As Their Majesties stepped onto the ground, a band played the Royal Anthem and there was a 21-gun salute. They went directly to the **Chapel Royal** in the Grand Palace to pay homage to **the Emerald Buddha,** while that evening there were fireworks around the city.



Their Majesties the King and Queen at the grand audience at the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall.



People attending an audience on the lawn of the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall.

Never Ending Duty

Within a year of returning, Her Majesty was to follow the king abroad once more. The State Visit to **Pakistan** took place from 11 - 22 March 1962. Their Majesties were greeted by President Field Marshal Mohammed Ayub Khan in **Karachi**. Her Majesty, always interested in the culture of other countries, attended an exhibition of national costume at the State Guest House, then later, Their Majesties visited the Khyber Pass and Jamrud Fort, nearby the Tomb of Emperor Jehengir Khan, where tribal Maliks presented them with three lambs, a traditional offering. Pakistan and Thailand have a bond of friendship that later strengthened due to the humanitarian concerns of the Thai monarch, as about seven years later, His Majesty the King was pleased to permit the Department of Fisheries to donate 500,000 Pla Nil *(Tilapia nilotica)*, which he had bred in Thailand, to be donated to Pakistan during a famine.



His Majesty with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Syed Putra Jamalullail of Malaya.



A few months later, on 20 June 1962, Their Majesties' DC-6 touched down at 2 p.m. on Malayan soil.[1] To meet them was **Malaya's** King, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Syed Putra Jamalullail, and his queen, the Raja Permaisuri Agong. The welcome in **Kuala Lumpur** was the most lavish ever for a visiting dignitary. His Majesty attended an informal dinner as the guest of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Syed Putra Jamalullail, and at the request of Prime Minister Tengku Abdul Rahman Al-Haj famously joined a jam session with the Radio Malaya Orchestra at the hillside resort, Tanah Rata.

Within a couple of months, the Queen joined His Majesty on a royal visit to the **Dominion of New Zealand** (as it was then titled), from 18 - 26 August 1962. They were welcomed by the Governor General, His Excellency The Right Honourable Viscount Cobham. Her Majesty was quick to note that the country had one of the best standards of living in the world and that in all their time in the country, they never once saw a poor person.[1]



On 20 August, the Governor-General of New Zealand hosting a banquet in honour of Their Majesties.

[1] In 1963, Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak formed Malaysia.



Welcomed by Maori people, the natives of New Zealand.

Their Majesties showed great interest in the Rotorua Maori Cultural Centre, which they saw on their fourth day. After that, they visited Hamilton and Auckland on the North Island. The schedule was quite tough, as they had to go by car each day to a different town, with hardly any time to rest in between visits. Due to the large number of people who lined the route wherever they went, the then Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Sir Keith Holyoake, who was in the royal limousine, suggested that they open a window so that the people could see Their Majesties. Unfortunately, the pouring rain caused the queen to catch a cold. On returning to their residence, they were supposed to go straight to a dinner engagement and Her Majesty, with no rest to recover, found her cold

[1] Her Majesty the Queen, **Memoir of State Visits**, Bangkok : 1972, p. 62.



turning to fever. Despite her high fever, Her Majesty preferred to perform her duty so as not to disappoint people.



Leaving New Zealand for Australia, 26 August 1962.

Their Majesties went by boat to the South Island, to Christchurch and Dunedin. Their Majesties visited Wellington Dental Nursing Training School, then, upon returning to Christchurch, Her Majesty inspected local Red Cross activities. Their Majesties then crossed over to **Australia** for the second leg of their journey, to **Canberra**, its capital, on 26 August 1962. At a state banquet held in their honour on 29 August, His Majesty expressed gratitude for Australia's willingness to fight communist aggression. Their Majesties were welcomed by the Administrator of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency General Sir Dallas Brooks, who was representing the Governor-General, the Right Honourable Viscount De L'Isle, who was absent at that time. They were later welcomed by the Right Honourable Sir Robert G. Menzies, the Prime Minister

and Mr Gough Whitlam, Deputy Leader of the Opposition. In **Melbourne**, the Royal Couple again planted two Eucalyptus trees, the symbol of faith in the future, before visiting the Victoria Red Cross and Girl Guides Association. Afterwards, the king and queen gave an audience to 40 World War II veterans who had been prisoners of war in Thailand.



With the Governor-General of Australia.

In May 1963, Their Majesties the King and Queen paid a State Visit to **Japan**, calling on Emperor Hirohito on 28 May in a carriage. The Thai royal family today has a close relationship with the Japanese imperial family and has hosted several members of the imperial household over the years. While in Japan, 27 May to 5 June 1963, the Japanese Government, led by Prime Minister Mr Hayato Ikeda, granted a set of telephoto transmitter-receivers to the Thai Government so that Thai people would be able to follow pictorial news of Their Majesties in Japan. In June, Their Majesties visited **Kyoto**, an ancient capital, and **Nagoya**, where they



paid their respects at the Buddhist Nittaiji Temple. By this time, Her Majesty's interest in the condition of women, especially at work, was becoming a strong point of her focus. On a visit to the Matsushita Factory in **Osaka**, for instance, Her Majesty paid particular attention to the women workers.



Greeted by Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako of Japan.

From Japan, next on Their Majesties' agenda was the State Visit to **Taiwan** from 5 - 8 June 1963. Their Majesties met with President General Chiang Kai Chek, the political and military leader of the island, and visited the Agricultural Land Reform Project Centre in Taoyuan.



His Excellency President and Madam Chiang Kai Chek greeting Their Majesties at Sungshan Airport, Taipei.



Chinese citizens and students waiting to greet Their Majesties on their arrival.



Their Majesties with President Macapagal of the Philippines and the First Lady.



Queen Sirikit Don'a

During a State Visit to **The Republic of the Philippines**, 9 - 14 July 1963, the Philippine Government, asked for royal permission to name a flower in honour of Her Majesty the Queen. *The Queen Sirikit Don'a* was a new species of shrub that reaches a height of about three metres and bears flowers almost all the year round. A hybrid between *Mussaenda Luz* and *M. phillippica'Aurorae'*, the *Queen Sirikit Don'a* has five pale pink petals bordered by a darker pink.



With the President of Austria, Dr Adolf Schärf.



At Schönbrunn Castle, Vienna.

With the friendships earned by the Thai royal family by their State Visits in 1960, Her Majesty was to make several private visits to the crowned heads of Europe over the years. Of importance was the royal wedding of King Constantine in **Greece**, in September 1964, and the Royal Visit to **Austria** as the official guest of the Governor of Vienna. Here, Queen Sirikit visited an SOS Children's Village at Hinterbruhl, a community for orphaned children. One child presented a



heart-shaped sweet to the queen, while other children performed 'insect' and 'local folklore' stage shows. Queen Sirikit took great delight in the shows and later made a donation to the orphanage.



Attending the Vienna opera in Austria, 30 September 1964.

In Salzburg, Queen Sirikit accompanied His Majesty the King to visit a museum that kept a piano once owned by Mozart. There, a famed Austrian pianist named Hans Zurich played *Mozart's Sonata in C Minor* in the queen's honour. The young queen then surprised all the guests there when she played a romantic Thai classical song "Lao Duang Duean" on the 200-year old piano belonging to Mozart. The performance earned her a wave of admiration as well as a standing ovation.



With His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Aryamehr Shahansha.

In her travels during these early years, Her Majesty's visit with His Majesty the King to **Iran** as guests of His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Aryamehr Shahansha, the Shah of Iran, from 23 - 30

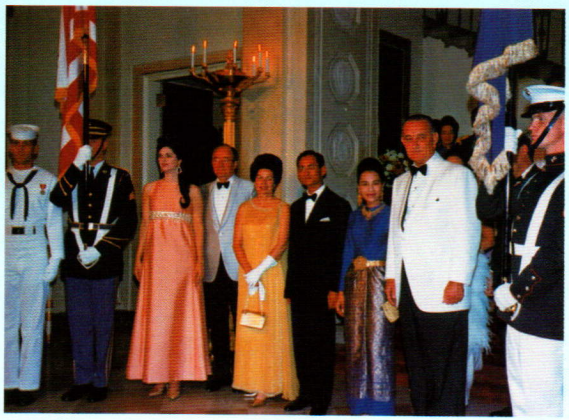


Visiting a handicrafts factory where camel bones are pressed into wood to create a beautiful design.

April 1967, is an example of a State Visit where Her Majesty paid close attention to the local arts and crafts. While in the capital **Tehran**, which Her Majesty described as similar to Bangkok in size, she also mentioned in her memoir of State Visits how fascinating she found the ancient arts and crafts there.

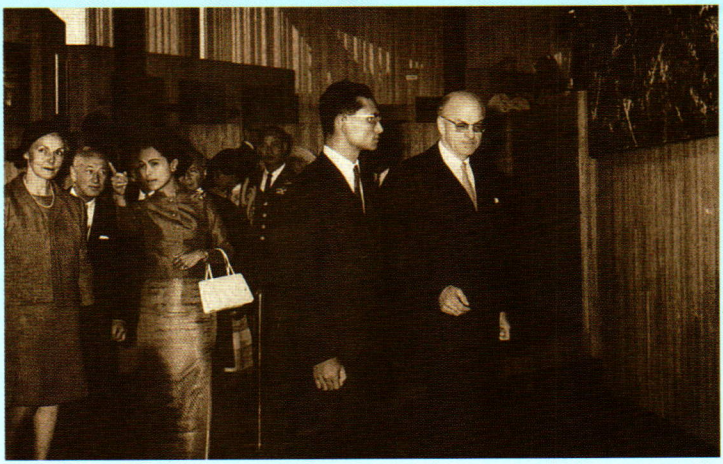


Thai students in the US were given an audience with Their Majesties.



Greeting Their Majesties in Washington D.C.

Two months later, from 6 - 29 June 1967, Their Majesties were to pay a three-week visit to the **United States** and **Canada**. The queen noted in her memoir that though it was a State Visit, it differed a lot from previous visits in being a "people to people" visit. The queen was pleased to be able to meet a wide range of people, often accompanied by Mrs Dean Rusk, the wife of the Secretary of State which, Her Majesty hoped, would increase the understanding and relationship between the two countries.



At the Expo'67.



Visiting the Thai pavilion at the Expo '67 in Montreal, Canada.

Their Majesties crossed the border to visit **Montreal, Canada,** to visit the Expo '67. The 22 June was called **Thai Day**, one of the highlights of which was a full sized replica of a Sala Thai or Thai Pavilion. Their host and guide was Mr Pierre Dupuy, the Commissioner General of the Exposition.

After the early overseas tours in the sixties to garner the support and understanding of foreign nations, His Majesty the King rarely ventured outside Thailand. When asked about this, Her Majesty once remarked that His Majesty does not go abroad because:

"He would like to stay close to his subjects, to help the poor."



Her Majesty began to support her Thai arts and crafts projects with visits to other countries, like the **United States, Japan** and **Europe,** where she would arrange for exhibitions that drew attention to them. In this way, she was able to create an interest in Thai handicrafts and arts. It could be said she played an important part in the Thai export drive of the eighties. This was to create long-lasting friendships for Her Majesty. In the United States, Her Majesty was able to make the acquaintance of people who were appreciative of her work, like Mrs Rosalyn Carter, the First Lady, whom she met on an extended visit to the United States from 25 January - 25 March 1980.

Besides Her Majesty's role in promoting Thai arts and crafts abroad, she has also played a part in strengthening the relations that exist between Thailand and the people of other countries as a royal representative of Thailand, Japan being one example.



The Empress of Japan inspecting a Yan lipao basketry.

Her Majesty visited **Japan** informally from 7 - 20 April 1993, to publicize the work of *the SUPPORT Foundation* and yet was nevertheless warmly greeted by Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. The Empress herself cordially welcomed Her Majesty on her arrival and invited her to a private luncheon at Akasaka Palace, while Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino invited Her Majesty for afternoon tea. The Empress herself paid a visit to the exhibition accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, who explained each exhibit's origin and the techniques involved in its production. On the final day of the exhibition in Tokyo, Her Majesty led Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino through the exhibition also.



During a visit to the Phra That Luang Stupa, Vientiane, on the occasion of Their Majesties the King and Queen paying a State Visit to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 8-9 April 1994.



At the opening ceremony of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, 8 April 1994.



Granting an audience to the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Madam at Chitralada Villa during their State Visit to Thailand, 14 - 19 February 1995.

Her Majesty accompanied His Majesty the King on what was to be his latest visit to a foreign country to date, 8 - 9 April 1994, when they went on a State Visit to open the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge at the invitation of the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.



Her Majesty, accompanied by His Excellency Mr Hu Jintao, Vice President of the People's Republic of China, inspecting the Guards of Honour during the welcoming ceremony of Her Majesty's State Visit to the People's Republic of China as His Majesty the King's Designated Representative at the Great Hall of the People, 16-31 October 2000.

Her Majesty was also pleased to represent His Majesty King Bhumibol and the people of Thailand on a State Visit to **the People's Republic of China** in 2000, following an invitation by President Jiang Zemin during his stay in Thailand the previous year. The visit significantly marked the 25th anniversary of the re-establishment of Sino-Thai diplomatic relations. President Jiang Zemin at the time regarded Her Majesty's visit as a demonstration of the special relations between China and Thailand, underlining the importance of meetings between leaders of both countries.



Perhaps the highlight of the visit was a demonstration of the diplomatic skill with which Her Majesty was able to bridge the gap between cultures. Following dinner, the Chinese President sang a song called "Huang Ho," then requested Her Majesty to play the piano. Her Majesty gracefully performed a piece by Chopin and President Jiang responded with "O Sole Mio."[1]

While Her Majesty continues to make private visits to other countries in order to promote **the SUPPORT Foundation**, the most recent royal visit was 25 - 26 October 2004, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Sultan of Kelantan's reign, in **Kelantan, Malaysia.**

[1] As recounted by the **Rern Min Reu Pao Newspaper** at the time.



Chapter 4: Royal Support for Thai Arts and Crafts

Thailand has a distinctive, rich and varied culture. Every district in every region of the country has its own style of handicraft or art that is unique to that area. Each area has a different style of cloth weaving indigenous to a village, a town or the whole region. Clothing is one of the necessities of human life and weaving is a handicraft resulting from a combination of topography, settlements, race, customs, religion and culture that embodies a group of people's lifestyle. Such a mélange establishes the people's choice of material, designs and colours for the cloth. The texture and pattern of each kind of cloth can tell of its creator's origin and race. Descendants of the same race, despite different settlement areas and ways of life, may be related through the style and design of hand-woven cloth; *chok* weaving is an example of one style found in many parts of the country.

Among the four regions of Thailand, the Central Plain is the fertile genesis of the nation, from its earliest nation state, Sukhothai, down to the current metropolis of Bangkok. The Northeast Region, the cradle of ancient civilization, is a culturally significant part of the country that Thais call *Isan*. It is an agricultural heartland subject to extremes of flooding and drought. The North, green and mountainous, is where hilltribes used to practise a form of slash-and-burn agriculture that is unsustainable as the population grows and the forests dwindle. The South is famed for its fishing industry, large rubber plantations, idyllic coastline and islands.

New ideas from abroad, and the influence of the West, once pushed Thailand's elaborate home-grown arts and crafts to the sidelines. Villages in all parts of the country lagged centralized urban Thailand in the fifties and sixties, due to their dependency on agriculture for their income. Agriculture, being prone to interruption by the elements, meant that in a bad year, farmers had little or no income. Farming alone was often to prove insufficient for the needs of people already living on the poverty line. Her Majesty was to introduce supplementary occupations and methods of creating additional income that would get farmers through the times between harvests. She saw that there was a chance that these people could fend for themselves and gain a better way of life with a little help.



Her Majesty perceived that the rural poor were in fact rich in artistic and cultural heritage, which could be used to produce saleable articles and supplement their normal occupations. Realizing the significance of recording their cultural heritage using one common material, cloth, she encourages the people in the areas where she visits to continue their traditions. In terms of textiles, the variety extends to a *phikun* flower pattern in the South, hand-woven brocade in the North, *khit* cloth of the Northeast and *chok* cloth in the Central region.



Her Majesty's keen eye for crafts deserving further development has led to the revival of Thai handicrafts, beginning with hand-woven textiles.

"I am invariably proud that all Thais have craftsmanship in their blood, not just farmers but those in other occupations everywhere. Thais are careful and quick to grasp all arts. If they have a chance to learn and practise then they will show their ability."[1]



"I myself have witnessed that villagers in the rural areas of Thailand have long been a civilized race. I mean they are civilized in terms of culture and mentality. It is evident from the patterns of the cloths they weave – the colouring and the use of natural colours from tree roots – that show that their ancestors – their grandfathers and grandmothers – were well cultured and very highly educated."[2]

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[1] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Healthcare,** Bangkok : 1995, p. 93.

[2] Royal address at Dusitdalai Hall, 11 August 1979, **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** April 2003, p. 58.

Khao Tao

One of Her Majesty's first projects to stimulate this revival of Thai handicrafts began to take shape in March 1965. Her Majesty paid one of her customary visits to **Khao Tao,** a poor village near Klai Kangwol Palace, Their Majesties' summer palace, where she normally donated money and food. She knew from conversation with the villagers that their main occupation was fishing, a job undertaken by the men only. Women and children augmented this income by collecting shellfish along the beach.



A royal visit to Khao Tao, 21 April 1963.



Her Majesty's exposure to Khao Tao where women made her aware of their need for a better life.

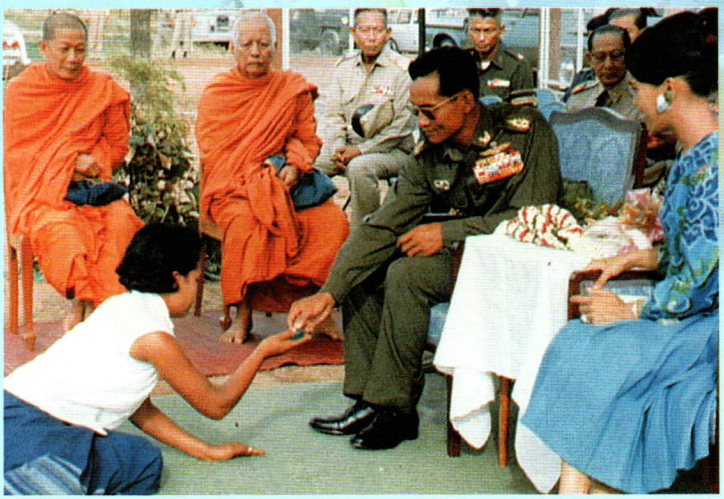


In April 1965, Her Majesty decided that she should implement a supplementary income programme for the villagers of Khao Tao so they could use their time more productively whilst waiting for their husbands to return from fishing. She therefore requested Lieutenant-General Prince Prasertsri Chayangkura, Her Majesty's Royal Guard, to go to the nearby province of Ratchaburi, which was well-known for its cotton weaving factories, to request weaving instructors to teach the villagers of Khao Tao.[1] Weaving looms were set up in the grounds of the nearby Klai Kangwol Palace under the supervision of Lt. Gen. Prince Prasertsri. Women recruits were offered free lunch and wages if they were prepared to work on the handlooms.



Visiting Khao Tao weaving workshop, 29 May 1966.

[1] Uraiwan Lerdsrisantad and Kemtat Visvayodhin, **SUPPORT Foundation,** Bangkok : 1992, p. 102.





The gold medal awarded to outstanding weavers in 1966 bears the inscription "Conferred on the Hard-Working" on one side and "May 1966" on the other.

As the village women often brought their children with them, since they could not leave them alone in the village during this period, Her Majesty's ladies-in-waiting took care of the children whilst the women worked. At the beginning, they wove simple cloth for everyday use, such as *pha sin*, a tube skirt common to Thai women, and *pha khao ma*, a loincloth worn by men. When Her Majesty returned to Bangkok, the activities were moved into the compound of Khao Tao Temple, where the abbot supervised the project.



The Renaissance of Thai Textiles

In 1972 US President Richard M. Nixon made his historic visit to China. In Thailand, the start of the country's silk export drive to the West was not yet born but was none the less destined to open the cultural doors between East and West. Her Majesty was inspired to launch several more projects, aimed at providing women with continuous income in the face of adversity. Together with His Majesty the King, Her Majesty visited the severely flooded areas of Nakhon Phanom in Thailand' s Northeast on 27 November 1972 to distribute relief supplies to the villagers.



As many of the villagers came to offer their thanks and receive emergency supplies, Her Majesty, as mentioned earlier, paid particular attention to the colourful *mudmee* silk fabrics that they wove for their personal use, but did not sell to anyone. Her Majesty explained, on 11 August 1980, why she went ahead with her promotion of silk weaving in impoverished villages,

> *"Every place I visited, it was common to see the Northeastern women wearing mudmee silk skirts. When I asked them whether they could give me one, they doubted why I wanted an item that was out of fashion and only worn by the rural people, not the rich. I confirmed that their mudmee skirts were pretty, and this was not just*

a flattering remark. Mudmee is very beautiful. They were glad and said that if I really wanted to wear one, they could make it for me. Therefore, I told them to make one and I will wear it. At last, they all helped to prepare one for me"[1]

All the materials required for making *mudmee* were found locally and the villagers really did not require any additional assistance other than to find someone to open the markets for them.

About a week after Her Majesty's first visit, her office called a villager, Mr Prasarn Kittisriworapan, and requested him to collect silk cloth from all areas affected by the flooding. He was to send them to the royal residence at Chitralada Villa with price tags set by the villagers themselves. Prices were around 80-130 baht per piece, which may appear inexpensive by today's standards, but *mudmee* was not at that time of a standardized quality. Her Majesty bought everything that was delivered and committed herself to buying all that she could get in the future.[2] Prasarn toured Isan, visiting 40-50 villages at a time, and delivered pieces to her every one or two months. Her Majesty continued with her purchases during this initial period, which lasted for two years.[3]

Near the end of 1972, Her Majesty asked her late Private Secretary Thanpuying Suprapada Kasemsant and one of her assistants, Khunying Charungchit Theekara, together with a small group of colleagues, to

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[1] Ibid, p. 56.
[2] Ibid, p. 103
[3] Sahat Bunyawiwat, **Report of the Meeting Held in Honour of H.M. Queen Sirikit : Her Nature Conservation in Thailand, Advisory Body to Her Majesty the Queen**, Prime Minister's Office, Bangkok : 2001, p. 22.



Inspecting some pieces of textile.

go to Isan to observe the villagers' standard of living and study the silk textiles woven for their own household use, and to purchase them so that Her Majesty could inspect them.

Her Majesty personally inspected each piece of material regardless of where it was made. The royal staff identified the most interesting pieces in the provinces of Nakhon Phanom, Roi Et, Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, Buri Ram, Surin, Sakon Nakhon, Udon Thani and elsewhere, though notably in the Northeast. As we have seen, Her Majesty encouraged the people to weave silk textiles as a supplementary occupation. These she purchased with funds from the Privy Purse and from the Crown Property Bureau. At the same time she gave advice and encouraged them to weave cloth of a higher, more standardized quality. Seeing now a market for their textiles, the people joined together and formed groups to grow mulberry trees, raise silk worms, spin silk and weave textiles.

Sericulture itself has a long history in the Northeast. In the nineteenth century, King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, sent his son, Prince Phichai, who had just

returned from the United Kingdom where he was educated, to Buri Ram Province in the Northeast to promote sericulture there.[1]



From Ubon Ratchathani Province.



From Surin Province.



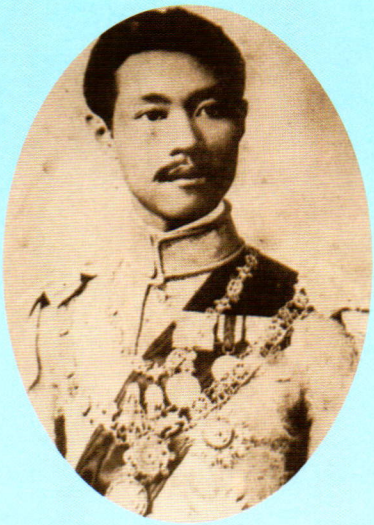
Mudmee from Roi Et Province.



From Khon Kaen Province.

[1] It is said that in order to while away the time while journeying on a bullock cart, he wrote songs, one of which became known as *Lao Duang Duean* and remains famous today.





Prince Phichai.

As noted, Her Majesty the Queen personally inspected the *mudmee* textiles that had been bought and encouraged the weavers to increase the amount of their work. Her Majesty also gave recommendations on silk worms, dyes, patterns and quality of *mudmee* textiles to the weavers. It is a measure of Her Majesty's forethought that prescription eyeglasses were given to the weavers, in addition to weaving instruments, reflecting her concern for their well-being.

Her Majesty sets herself as an example of how fabrics woven by villagers can be used. Regardless of whether the fabrics are woven in the *mudmee*, *phrae wa*, or the *chok* style, Her Majesty has them fashioned into both international and traditional Thai style costumes which she wears on occasions, whether visiting the people in rural areas, attending royal ceremonies, receiving royal guests or when travelling abroad. Today Thai women are turning more and more to Thai textiles. This helps to publicize the beauty of the handwoven textiles of Thailand's rural population and make them better known among foreigners. It also helps to preserve and develop the textile industry, giving it greater value.

Her Majesty explained her interest in promoting local textiles and her mission in preserving and developing Thai textiles as cultural heritage,



Her Majesty in Thai silk dress.



Her Majesty in phrae wa silk dress.





Her Majesty in mudmee silk dress.

"I initiated handicraft activities primarily to find supplementary occupations for poor farmers so that they can sustain themselves. From decades of accompanying His Majesty the King to visit rural people, I have found that the majority of the people are farmers who have to work very hard and face numerous natural disasters such as droughts, floods and outbreak of pests. Consequently, a large number of these farming families are reduced to a life of poverty. Assisting them with supplies in times of difficulties is merely a short-term alleviation of their plight. His Majesty the King has told me that we should try to find a more lasting solution by making it possible for them to stand on their own feet. When I remember that the world, according to experts, has a grain shortage while Thailand has adequate supplies of food and is even able to export enough to qualify as a major rice exporter, I feel very grateful to our farmers and think that



they deserve more care and attention from all of us. His Majesty the King has devoted himself to this task by concentrating on improving water supplies and soil conditions and I look after the welfare of the farming families." [1]

"It is heartening that handicrafts have become increasingly popular among Thais and foreigners, especially hand-woven textiles. If all of us co-operate to study, conserve and develop our textiles, these handicrafts will surely provide us with a cultural heritage of great beauty for our future generations." [2]

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[1] Royal address at the opening of the meeting and exhibition entitled "Asian Textile Heritage : Craft and Industry" at Sala Tham, Chiang Mai University, 30 January 1992.

[2] The National Identity Board, **Thai Textiles : Threads of a Cultural Heritage,** Bangkok : Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Company Limited, 1994, p. 19



Mudmee



Perhaps the most famous of Her Majesty's textile successes in Isan is *mudmee*, or *ikat*, a silk made by a tie-dyed process. It cannot be determined definitely when and from which country this type of weaving originated. *Ikat* is found in Indonesia, the Philippines, India and China. Silk weaving has long been practised among Thai villagers, especially those indigenous to the Northeast. The Northeasterners have drawn inspiration from their natural environment in designing exquisite patterns for their *mudmee*, such as pine trees, spiders, waves and other designs.[1]

[1] Silk comes from silkworms, or caterpillars, that feed on mulberry leaves. After five days, with special feeding, cleanliness and temperature, they begin to produce cocoons of silk. The ancient Isan people coloured their thread with natural dyes, such as those derived from the fruits of native plants. Skeins of silk thread are bleached before being dyed and woven. Bleach is often made from leaves, stems or the wood of local plants like *hom*, different parts of banana trees, *palmyra palm spadixes*, Siamese cassia wood and *pheka* leaves. The silk thread is soaked in lye and then boiled with the bleaching agents. After being sun-dried, the thread is tied (*mud* in Thai) with strings to poles, called *lak mee*. Hence, this step is referred to in Thai as "*mudmee*." Then it is dyed, tied, and dyed several times over to make patterns. The ikat style, commonly used in the Northeast, varies in method from warp to weft ikat, allowing for longer pieces of the same design to be woven.

"It is clear to me that these people are born artists. For instance, they can weave mudmee silk in ancient designs of exquisite beauty or they can invent new patterns in a combination of attractive colours. I merely give them moral encouragement and support while at the same time finding ways to show their beauty to the world. This is how I have had the pleasure of playing a role in conserving and developing the arts and crafts in Thailand." [1]



Today, people frequently resort to using chemical products, which is much easier and quicker. Nevertheless, the prices of lye and dyes rise, just as most commodity prices rise over time. Her Majesty understands that the villagers can minimize their costs and maximize their profits by using natural products.

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[1] The National Identity Board, **Thai Textiles : Threads of a Cultural Heritage,** Bangkok : Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Company Limited, 1994, p. 19



Phrae wa[1]

Centuries ago, Lao tribes migrated into the central area of Isan and the Mekong River Basin, bringing knowledge of silk *ikat* and supplementary weft weaving



Visiting members of the Phu Thai ethnic group at Phon Village, Kham Muang District, Kalasin Province. Her Majesty encouraged the women folk to weave their traditional colourful patterned silk cloth called "Phrae wa", which she has popularized both at home and abroad.

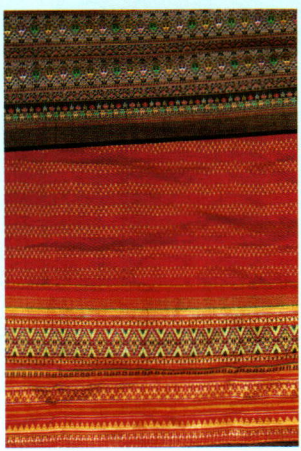


[1] *Phrae wa* means a piece of silk cloth of one *wa* in length. One *wa* is two metres.

called *khit*. The *Phu Thai* people were one group who settled in Kalasin and Mukdahan provinces. *Phrae wa* is a handicraft of *Phu Thai* descendants in Kalasin. Her Majesty visited Kalasin in 1977, where she met many *Phu Thai* villagers and was impressed by their *phrae wa* shawls. *Phrae wa* is the most intricate style in weaving and embroidering. It is made into a sort of bodice wrap or shawl with a mixture of different patterns and colours on a dark red background. The patterns are made by raising threads of different colours, known as *khit*. The art is a family legacy. It is said a *Phu Thai* woman will make only one piece of *phrae wa* cloth in her entire life. A traditional piece has ten patterns woven into it, but many villagers were weaving only one pattern to save time and the art was in danger of being forgotten. Her Majesty encouraged the elderly to teach the younger villagers. Eventually, and with continual royal support, *phrae wa* is well-known to urban Thais and the foreign tourists, and there were more varieties of colours and sizes to enhance sales until an export market built up.

Chok

One of the major achievements of Her Majesty's work concerning textile was that she literally introduced a revival of the *chok* style of weaving. The word *chok* means 'pick,' implying that the weaving also includes embroidering. This type of cloth is typically used to decorate the lower border of a larger piece of cloth, usually a *pha sin* or



Chok motif from Ratchaburi Province.



Chok motif from Sukhothai Province.

women's traditional skirt. The *pha sin* decorated with a *chok* is called *pha sin tin chok*. During the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851), Lao migrants of the Phuan tribe were allowed to settle in Hat Siao Sub-district, Si Satchanalai District, Sukhothai Province, and the Tai Yuan, settled in Tambon Khu Bua, Mueang District, Ratchaburi Province. These people have since intermarried with the local people and are indistinguishable from indigenous Thais except for their particular skill at *chok* weaving.

Every female descendant of *Thai Phuan* must master how to weave diverse types of cloth, especially the *chok*, which is regarded the most complicated of all, as it uses a discontinuous supplementary weft. The designs of *chok* are made by using a porcupine's quill to pick or raise certain threads. They are usually composed of intricately overlapping geometrical patterns, such as quadrangles, alternating with horizontal bars or stripes. Unfortunately, attempts were made to change its designs, patterns and colours, to make it simpler and brighter. Her Majesty the Queen

established a *Chok* Weaving Section in the SUPPORT Foundation[1] in order to preserve the original methods of weaving *chok* so that it may not die out. Moreover, SUPPORT is involved in the encouragement of local weaving villages at Ban Mi in Lop Buri, Mueang District, Ratchaburi, and at the villages of Ban Rai and Thap Than in Uthai Thani.[2]

Silk



Silk fabrics from the Northeast or Isan are beautiful in their own way since each shows exquisite patterns produced from diversely unique methods. In Isan, it has become a natural part of everyday life. Most importantly, silk weaving is a cultural record that has been passed down since the very beginning of the nation. Cognisant of this distinguished cultural heritage, Her Majesty the Queen believes that local-style silk weaving can provide extra income for her subjects if standardized and marketed.

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[1] The Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniqus, established on 21 July 1976.

[2] The National Identity Board, **Thai Textiles : Threads of a Cultural Heritage**, Bangkok : Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Company Limited, 1994, p. 114



Hand-woven Thai silk of all kinds and styles have become chic both at home and abroad, promoting silk industry globally. Many rural people who used to spend some of their free time weaving superb silk for their own use now spend more time producing silk fabric in the same traditions as those handed down to them by their forefathers. A great number of people are thus engaged in silk-related businesses.

Phikun Flower Design in Textiles

Flowers enter the picture of royal-initiated projects in the South in a different way. As in other regions, Her Majesty has always promoted textiles as she believed that weaving would always be a supplementary occupation to gain income during those lean times when an inadequate amount of rice could be produced, or fish were harder to find. One royal visit to the South in 1974 coincided with a drop in rubber prices. Desperate villagers found themselves on short notice that their income might not pay for the basic necessities. Stepping into the breach, the queen supplied looms and the Department of Industrial Promotion instructors set up a fabric-weaving group at Wat Choeng Khao, Bacho District, Narathiwat. As the *phikun* flower[1] was a symbol of Narathiwat, Her Majesty suggested using it as a design for the cloth. Experienced weavers from Lamphun were sent to the province to teach and in April 1975, two more cotton-weaving centres were set up at Mueang and Tak Bai districts.

[1] The Bullet Wood flower, *Mimusops elengi* Linn.





Fabric with phikun flower design.

Based on Her Majesty's advice, the women made beautiful bodices on fine designs emulating local flowers such as the *phikun*. In addition, on one of Her Majesty's visits to Chiang Mai, the same programme was introduced to the people of several districts in the North, including Om Koi District. In Ban Mae Takhrai Village, the purpose of the project was to preserve the fine art of embroidery.

Her Majesty advises the villagers to weave as a supplementary occupation. In this way, the nation's economy can be so much stronger. As she noted later, in 1996:

> *"The people in each region have their own skills and ability, that can contribute towards the prosperity of the country. To my delight, I have witnessed this fact and it has inspired me to carry on with my work."*[1]

[1] "Job Training Centre (Wat Chang Hai)", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 1996, p. 25.



The rural people had arts and crafts that were largely ignored by urban Thais in the sixties, but which were becoming attractive to Westerners in search of a fresh and colourful East. The fact that mass production in the West at the time would also have the effect of making handmade products more attractive made the timing excellent. When Her Majesty started the trend to use Thai products, the Thais then realized the value of their own culture. Her Majesty envisaged a renaissance of Thai handicrafts that would capture the imagination of Westerners and stimulate demand for Thai crafts.

> *"I would like to see the farmers engage themselves in supplementary occupations so that they can raise their income and use their free time more constructively, in order to preserve Thailand's beautiful ancient art forms forever more."* [1]

Due to Her Majesty the Queen's involvement, the standard of living of farmers has certainly improved and they have been able to expand and develop silk weaving activities. This also resulted in home woven silk textiles receiving wide acceptance in both Thailand and abroad.

Sisal Jute Weaving

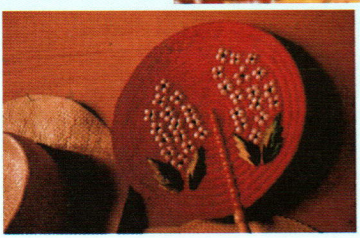
One of Her Majesty's earliest non-textile weaving projects came about in April 1972, when she observed that *sonnarai*, or sisal jute was a common and easy to grow plant generally found near Hup Kraphong in Phetchaburi, the Upper South of Thailand. Sisal jute

[1] Ibid, p. 22

can be used to create many fine and useful objects, such as bags, hats, fans and sandals, among others. Her Majesty requested the late ML Maniratana Bunnag, one of her ladies-in-waiting to implement a training project for local villagers.[1] A co-operative was eventually established there to use this free natural resource to create a little bit of supplementary income for local women. Participants made good use of the long plant, and many of their products were successfully put on sale to the public.

The programme was expanded to include housewives in the Central Region four years later, in 1976. Her Majesty thereafter garnered the support of the government and in this new expansion of the project, women learnt techniques from teachers provided by the Ministry of Industry.







[1] Uraiwan Lerdsrisantad and Kemthat Visvayodhin, **SUPPORT Foundation,** Bangkok : 1992, P. 105.





Artificial Flowers



Following Her Majesty's early success with cotton weaving programme to create a supplementary income for the villagers of Khao Tao, the women of Ao Noi in Prachuap Khiri Khan requested royal advice on how to earn more income themselves. Her Majesty was concerned that there should be no competition for sisal jute, which was needed for Hup Kraphong villagers, so she advised them to make artificial flowers. Artificial flowers are universal in their appeal and the demand for them is great in urban areas, where fresh flowers are expensive, and in other countries where both fresh and artificial flowers are costly. Training was provided and

equipment supplied by the Sai Panya School Association. As there was no competition for natural resources, other villages were later included in the project, in Phetchaburi and Samut Sakhon provinces.

Her Majesty the Queen had an idea that native Thai flowers were quite scarce and little known among the younger generation. She decided their natural beauty should be made wider known. The queen, therefore, initiated the project using Thai flowers, such as *angkap* (*Barleria cristata* Linn.), *saraphi* (*Mammea siamensis* Kosterm) and *chankapho (Vatica diospyroides)*, as the models, emphasizing natural similarities of colour, size and form. Initially, the completed work was submitted for royal approval. Today, the Foundation's artificial flowers are well-known and accepted.





SUPPORT Foundation

"I started by looking into the health, education and general living conditions of the farmers and their families. I was glad to observe that these farmers have been handed down great handicraft skills from their ancestors. Most of the products are associated with their daily lives such as the growing of mulberry trees to raise silk worms in order to produce silk in the Northeast of Thailand. This gave me the inspiration to start promoting silk weaving so that the farmers could utilize their native ability to improve their standard



of living, while at the same time achieving a sense of dignity and pride in their work. This finally led to the establishment of the ***Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques."*** [1]

"At that time, the SUPPORT Foundation had no name," recalled Her Majesty. *"We gave it a name after it had been operating for five years, and later established the foundation."* [2]

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[1] Royal Address, Chiang Mai University, 30 January 1992.
[2] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Healthcare,** Bangkok : 1995.

Products for the Preservation of Thai Arts and Crafts as Supplementary Occupations

Pa Mok Dolls

Although silk weaving is the handicraft that brought Her Majesty's SUPPORT Foundation to fame, the queen herself has been responsible for many other interesting and diverse arts and handicrafts being revived in each of the major regions of the country and the products sold locally or exported. For instance, following a severe flood in Ang Thong Province toward the end of 1975, the people at Pa Mok District were unable to continue with their normal occupations of making bricks and joss-sticks as it was just too wet. The flood would not allow their products to dry. Her Majesty obviously knew that the area had good clay soil for brickmaking and thus she suggested the revival of the manufacture of miniature dolls, a product that had disappeared from the world of Thai arts many years ago. The delicate, yet exquisite, dolls are fragile and eminently collectible. There followed a revival of doll making centred on Wat Tha Sutthawat, in Pa Mok District, in January 1976. The first batch was not suited for commercial sale as the people were really starting from scratch, yet the queen purchased them all to help get the project started.[1] Later, as they improved the colour and design of the dolls, the villagers were able to sell them to other people and tourists, creating new found income for the people, come rain or flood.

[1] Uraiwan Lerdsrisantad and Kemthat Visvayodhin, **SUPPORT Foundation**, Bangkok : 1992, p. 107



Pa Mok Cotton-weaving

In order to provide the villagers with another source of income, Her Majesty set up a cotton-weaving workshop at Pa Mok on 27 August 1976. Cotton weaving then became a boon to people in the Central Region, becoming more valuable for being handmade, so on 5 November 1976, Her Majesty set up a workshop at Bang Pahan and Bang Ban Districts, in Ayutthaya Province on 19 January 1977. These projects came in rapid succession and helped to ease the problems of some poor villagers in the Central Region.

It is the hands-on attitude of Her Majesty that meant SUPPORT Centres were often set up within the grounds of palaces where she stayed. Naturally, Her Majesty had to spend considerable time in Bangkok early on as she had royal duties to attend to that required residence in the nation's capital. Thus, while the training she provided was needed largely for the poor in rural areas, it was more efficient to set up a centre for training in Bangkok so that Her Majesty could see for herself what was necessary and what did not work.



Yan Liphao

Her Majesty initiated *yan liphao* manufacture with the idea of providing training programmes that could revive the local handicraft market. *Yan liphao* is a fern-vine abundant in southern Thailand due to the humid climate and sandy soil.[1]

As time went by, the popularity of *yan liphao* gradually waned and, almost a century later, the expertise would have been lost had it not been for Her Majesty the Queen's vision. She considered it a cultural heritage that should by no means be left to extinction. She believed the irresistible attractiveness of *yan liphao* basketry would make it a profitable supplementary occupation for the people in the areas where the plants grow in abundance. Her Majesty's decision came when she found out, on a stay at Daksin Palace in Narathiwat, that *yan liphao* grows profusely in its vicinity. Following the initiation of the project in Narathiwat, experienced instructors were brought from Nakhon Si Thammarat Province and Her Majesty formed a weaving group. Several other weaving groups were established and met with great success, and in September 1974, the art of *yan liphao* was promoted in Yi-ngo, Ra-ngae, Bacho and Mueang Districts in Narathiwat as its popularity took off. The art was further developed by adding precious metals and gems as decoration. For instance, *yan liphao* betel

[1] *Yan liphao* weaving has existed for more than two centuries, and is assumed to have originated at Nakhon Si Thammarat during the early Rattanakosin Period, gaining popularity under the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Considered one of the highest forms of art, *yan liphao* weaving requires great skill and artistry as it is very difficult and time consuming. Household goods made of *yan liphao* are durable and resistant to the climate and able to maintain their shape for centuries.



baskets are decorated with gold, diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Sometimes *yan liphao* is decorated with silver or gold niello, which is a different branch of Thai fine arts in itself.

Despite all the difficulties, Her Majesty was sure that the ingenuity of the Thai people would see them through. Those few people who had some knowledge about the art were invited to teach members of the SUPPORT Foundation. A decade later, the almost-lost art has been successfully revived. Today, *yan liphao* basketry is popular both in the country and abroad, creating much needed supplementary income for the poor villagers in the South and even further afield. In 1978, following a plea from the Phra Pradaeng Home for the Disabled in Bangkok for Her Majesty to provide them with an occupation so that they could earn a living, the queen decided to let them try *yan liphao* weaving. Her Majesty reasoned that, as many were incapacitated and could sit for hours weaving this difficult set of products, they were well-suited for an occupation that takes patience and perseverance. A lot of them have demonstrated a feeling for the skill, and some weave products which come close to those made during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.





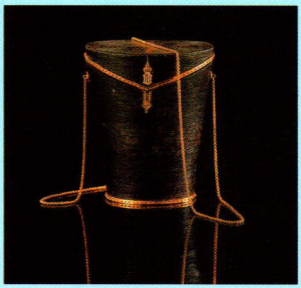
As the SUPPORT Foundation's greatest marketing asset, Her Majesty uses items made of *yan liphao* herself on many public occasions. It would be unusual not to see the Queen of Thailand carrying a small *yan liphao* bag when welcoming foreign dignitaries to Thailand, or at an exhibition of SUPPORT products abroad.



Opening the Suep San Sombat Sin Exhibition, Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel, Bangkok.

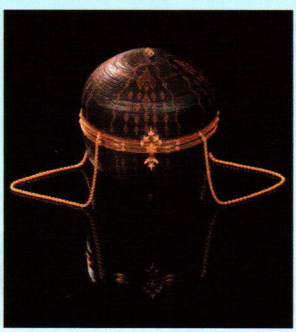


















Her Majesty's yan liphao handbags.

Krachut

Another forgotten art that was revived by Her Majesty is *krachut*, or reed mat weaving. An ancient craft of the South, it had almost been forgotten by the younger generation. The *krachut* reed (*Lepironia articulata*



Krachut products.

Domin.), a type of bulrush, grows abundantly in *phru*, or peat swamp in the Deep South. After they are gathered, the reeds are soaked in mud to toughen them. They are dried in the sun and then flattened before being dyed and woven into mats.

In 1977, Her Majesty decided to establish a project to revive and develop the weaving of mats made from jute in the Lower South. The project was set up at Sala Mai, Tak Bai District, Narathiwat. Her Majesty's advice to the people was to keep their traditional patterns and develop others using plant motifs and brighter colours. Over the years, *krachut* mats in bright colours and



distinctive patterns have become much sought after by people as far away as Bangkok.

Her Majesty has encouraged local people to weave large mats as they can be used instead of carpets and are therefore more in demand in local and foreign markets. This is also part of an attempt to make such traditional articles more modern. Her Majesty has tried to find something that each region of Thailand can produce that may be sold locally and abroad in order to help the home economies of villagers.

Bamboo Basketry

The SUPPORT Foundation became more famous, not only for its supplementary occupations but also for its conservation of traditional arts and crafts. As a result, people inform the Foundation whenever a Thai craft is dying out, as in the case of *khit* basket-weaving. Basket-weaving with *khit* patterns is also a part of the cultural traditions of the Northeast. The handicraft requires great skill and patience, yet truly skilled craftsmen are almost non-existent.





When the Maha Sarakham campus of Si Nakharinwirot University stated that there was only one family in the country that could produce *khit-patterned* basketry, the Foundation requested that the family teach the craft to its members. The family willingly accepted the request as they would have an opportunity to pass on their knowledge.[1] Originally,

[1] Uraiwan Lerdsrisantad and Kemthat Visvayodhin, **SUPPORT Foundation,** Bangkok : 1992, p. 115



Her Majesty's handbags.

there were only a few types of *khit-patterned* baskets and containers, but through Her Majesty the Queen's promotion, a few more products, like vases and handbags, have been made for distribution.



Khit-patterned utensils.

This handicraft represents fine, impressive artistry of which Thai people can be proud. At present, young members of the Foundation are capable of producing baskets and other items and through them, this Thai art treasure may continue for a long time to come.

Khram

As a race, the Thais pay a great deal of attention to the fine quality of articles that in other cases may be quite mundane. Iron as a material is not universally recognized as a particularly useful basis for fine art due to its unfortunate tendency to oxidize over time. However, with typical Thai ingenuity, the texture of even oxidized metal can sometimes be the basis of something more beautiful. This insight revealed itself in the art known as *khram*. The art of making *khram* most likely originated in ancient Persia and spread to China, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and southern Thailand, most notably Pattani Province. The *khram* process involves embedding hair-sized gold or silver wire in the iron surface of an item. Normally, a special sharp-edged chisel is used to create a rough surface by cutting tiny grooves in a filigree pattern. The gold or silver wire is then hammered into the grooves, producing ornate designs that are later enhanced by the natural oxidization of the ageing metal. However, the whole process must be completed before oxidization occurs. Many of the outstanding pieces still in royal collections include royal swords that are comparable in design with the finest engraved swords produced by the sword makers of Toledo in Spain.

Although the exact period of its introduction to the country cannot be established, it is known that Khun Saraphatchang, an official at what is now called the Department of Fine Arts, had learnt the art from a master-teacher of Khmer origin. His son, Mr Saman Chaisukuman, inherited that knowledge. Her Majesty, always watchful for teachers of cultural heritage to a new generation of people, found in 1977 that Mr Saman, then 80 years of age, was one of the few skilled craftsmen still alive at the time. Her Majesty persuaded him to pass on his skills to younger people.



Gold khram products.



Gold khram egg-shaped vessel in the Fabergé style.

Nielloware

A traditional, yet outstanding, use of graphic design encouraged and revived by Her Majesty the Queen is called niello, or *Khrueang Thom* in Thai, the applied art of ornamenting metal objects by cutting groove patterns into the surface and filling in the patterns with black lead alloy. Nielloware is evident both in Europe and Asia, particularly Portugal, England, Russia and Italy in Europe, and Iran, India and Thailand in Asia. The Thai art has something in common with niello from Persia and India.

Initially, designs on silver niello were simple, with adequate space for filling-in of the black lead mixture to give bold effect to the intaglio patterns. Later, however, people favoured a denser pattern, and there was a development of combined silver and gold nielloware. This also meant that the masters who created this art had to have the patience and time that today's artisans rarely have. The dual silver and gold form is primarily silver niello with sections of the designs plated with gold. The plating is by the archetypal process of painting the patterns with a gold-mercury paste and subliming the mercury with a hot flame leaving only a plating of gold on the patterns. Nielloware is generally made of silver or gold since the lead alloy will not cleave to other metals such as copper or bronze. This also makes it rather expensive to produce and purchase.

Most tourists in the past were familiar with Thai nielloware in its silver version only. Her Majesty,



Silver Nielloware.



A silver niello vessel.

however, has chosen to focus on the revival of gold nielloware as this was in danger of becoming extinct.[1] For the totally gold niello, the material for the object can be either gold or silver. If it is silver, the designs can be wholly gold plated.

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[1] The SUPPORT Foundation, **1985 Queen's Collection**, Bangkok: 1985, p. 72.



Gold nielloware.



A combination of gold niello, gold and silver khram, metallic-beetle collage and embossed diamond techniques were applied for this hand-crafted junk.

Wood Products

More basic crafts, that of wood carving and furniture-making, have never really been under threat of extinction. However, Her Majesty did notice that the craftsmen have to work against time, producing objects that are sometimes simplistic and not really a high form of art. Wishing to conserve this traditional knowledge, Her Majesty the Queen has sought highly-skilled woodworkers to teach the young, inexperienced people from the countryside. They were able to learn the ancient traditional forms in SUPPORT centres without having to worry about earning a quick return.

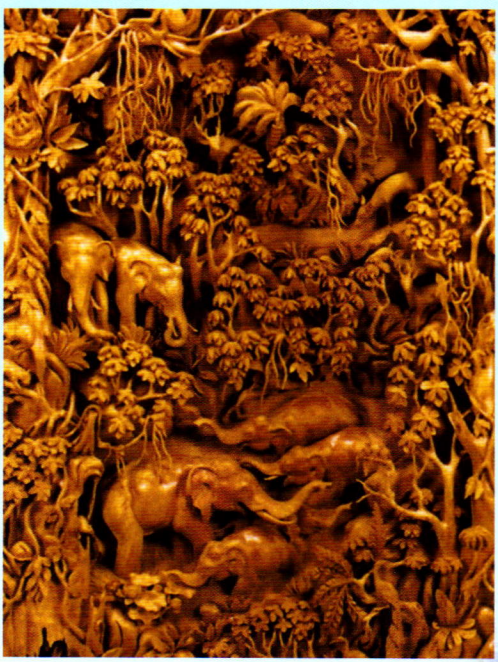
Wood sculpture is taught by the SUPPORT Foundation. Teak was used in the past, when it was found in abundance. Over time it became more difficult to find and some substitutes, such as ivory wood, which can be found in abundance, were used. Wood sculpture, such as bas-reliefs or free-standing pieces, require similar iron tools, a chisel and a hammer. The material is cut to the desired shape requiring great care and patience as it is easy to damage a piece at the very beginning. The next step is to rive smaller, more detailed patterns with smaller tools. The completely carved wood may then be painted, lacquered or gilded as desired. The result has been that wood carving has achieved a renaissance in Thailand. Under Her Majesty the Queen's tutelage, ordinary Thai farmers are becoming renowned for producing works of great beauty that are promoted by the queen around the world and derive for the artists not only reputation but considerable income.

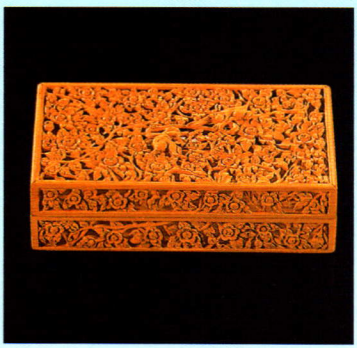














Carved wood.

Gold and Silver

Gold and silver are prized and used as ornaments and in the manufacture of certain implements. Gold normally is not tainted by mixture with any other metal or exposure to the air. Silver, on the contrary, oxidizes very easily, a process intensified by the degree of the purity of the metal. However, a skilled Thai silversmith makes use of this dark coating of oxidization on silver by embossing ornamental patterns on it, executing shiny raised designs against the grey or dark background.

Making gold and silver objects consists of hammering, welding, beating and heat-blowing. This done, the metal is carved and embossed, polished and sometimes decorated with precious or semi-precious stones. The whole process requires great artistic skill. While the values of gold and silver have increased, the number of fine gold and silver craftsmen has decreased and certain regional or local variations of handicrafts have completely disappeared in Thailand. Therefore, Her Majesty knew that effort must be made to conserve Thai arts and crafts.





Gold and silver utensils.

Painting

Thai arts are based on certain traditional patterns or designs considered the salient characteristics of Thai art. These patterns appear on all kinds of objects: gold and silver items, nielloware, wood-carvings or sculptures. Around the middle of the twentieth century, Thai traditional painting began to die out when Western oil paints, and the introduction of perspective[1], were introduced. Her Majesty the Queen wished to see the traditional styles of Thai arts conserved for the future, and thus the SUPPORT Foundation's apprentices are trained to draw Thai-style patterns before going on to other fields of arts. Thai decorative designs originate from nature, for instance flame-like patterns or arabesques based on floral shapes.



A physically handicapped trainee at work on a painting.

[1] Traditional Thai painting did not use perspective in the Western sense.



Sculpture

Sculpture is one of the best examples of the training carried out in **Chitralada SUPPORT Centre.** At the Centre, many sculptors diligently practise the art, first with plasticine of various colours, such as green, which is soft and suitable for beginners, grey which is a little tougher, and dark grey for those with more advanced skill. Though most of the Centre's members are young, they can create amazingly attractive sculptures, which will be used as models for many types of handicrafts. Some silversmiths have undergone training in sculpting for anatomical accuracy.

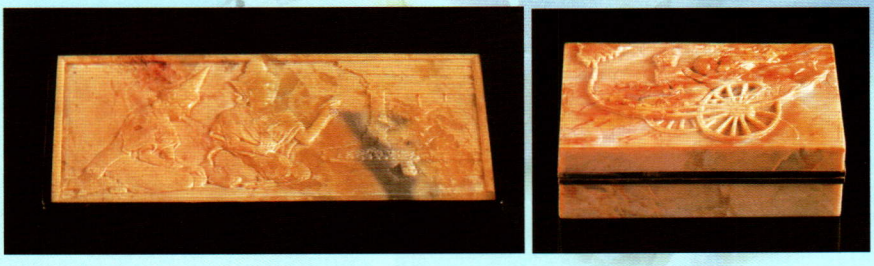


Carving

From high art using precious metals and gems, the Chitralada SUPPORT Centre teaches the more fundamental handicrafts that are more noticeable around us each day. Marble and soapstone, with their moderate hardness, are suitable for carving and polishing to create beautiful figures. Stone sculptures are found in every part of the world. In



Soapstone carving



Marble carving.

Thailand, artisans of the past contrived soapstone carvings with traditional patterns for building decorations, as they were more beautiful and durable than stucco. The front and side gates of the Amarindra Vinichaya Throne Hall in the Grand Palace, for instance, display carved soapstone decorations. Besides stone, Chitralada craftsmen and women were taught to be adept at carving wood and leather also.[1]

Just as importantly, the **Chitralada SUPPORT Training Centre** emphasizes crafts that will earn a living — those that can be said to be more "common" crafts, such as ceramics and enamelware, woodwork and rattan ware, collage and artificial flower making. However, the uniquely Thai arts and crafts, such as Thai dolls, *krachut* weaving and *yan liphao* basketry, are also included so that Thailand will never lose its creative heritage.



Artificial flowers in a carved wooden vase.

[1] The Chitralada SUPPORT Centre also teaches wickerwork, silver and gold inlay, *yan liphao* basketry, *khit* plaiting, silk weaving, embroidery and artificial flower making.



Malaeng Thap Collage

One of perhaps the strangest, yet most beautiful, of Thai arts chosen by Her Majesty to teach involves using the wings of the *malaeng thap* beetle, genus *Buprestis*, with its hard, translucent blue-green and copper-yellow covering. These are used to beautify other handicrafts, such as the Thai traditional bodice













Her Majesty's evening gown embroidered with malaeng thap wings.

wrap. This short-lived insect may be found dead in large numbers under the *makham thet* (camachile tree), the leaves of which it feeds on. Its durable wings are cut to shape and attached to metal or other materials to form brooches or parts of other designs, for instance, to adorn wood-carved birds where they represent the feathers.

The success of this project led to another royal initiative in basketry work: smaller pieces of the insect's wings are interwoven with delicate *yan liphao* vine, resulting in an intricate design. This fine art requires great effort and skill to create, making it an important and original contemporary work of art.

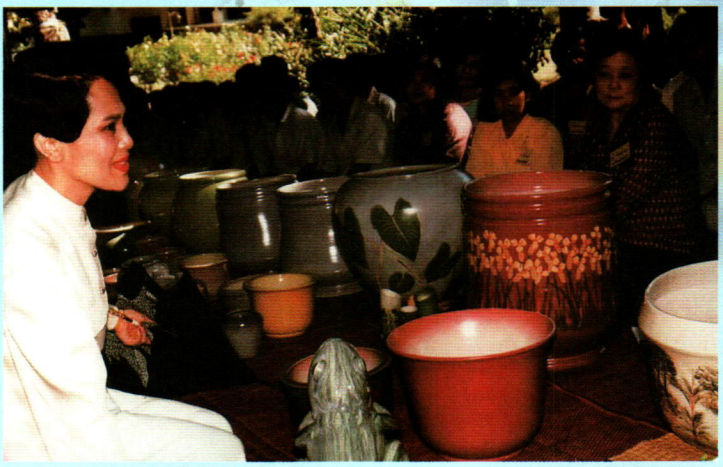


Embroidery

The Grand Chamberlain and SUPPORT Treasurer, Dr Chirayu Isarangkun na Ayuthaya, notes, "Over the past three or four years, embroidery has found great success in the South but has been introduced with little success in other regions." Used for chair covers and other home items, embroidery from the South is now world class. "Her Majesty has encouraged that local colour be added to the designs, particularly Southern



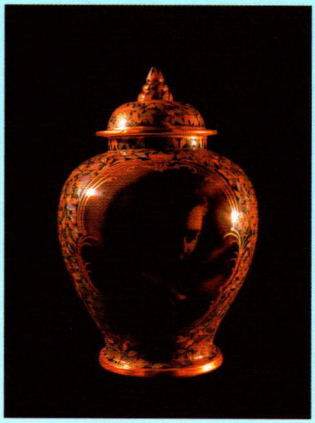
motifs." The art of embroidery requires a combination of expertise and creativity. Every nation in the world has its own embroidery style and technique and Thailand is no exception. Although modern technology has revolutionized the art of embroidery, hand embroidery is still highly regarded and treasured by all. It is a handicraft that can earn satisfactory income for those with patience and time on their hands, and as such needs to be preserved.

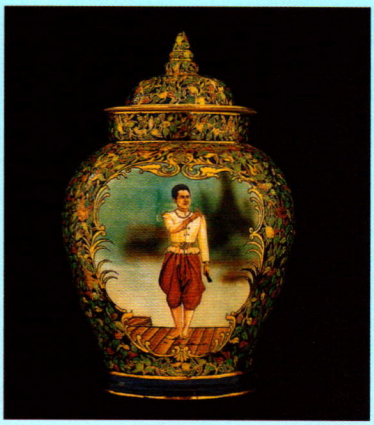


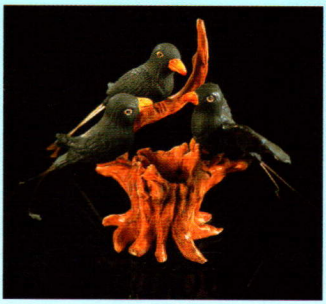
Ceramics

This same effect was seen with ceramics, which worked in some areas where they were part of the local tradition, but not in areas that had no history of making ceramics. The Grand Chamberlain surmised that it is difficult to transplant arts — they appear to be in the blood.

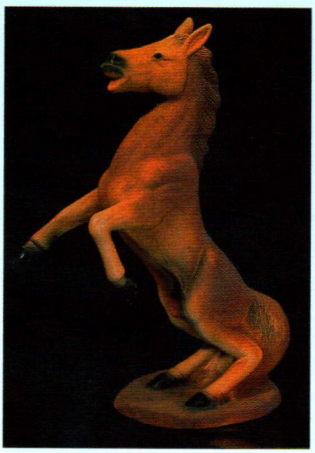














Ceramics

Leather Carving

One art that is surely in the blood of Southerners, and in fact most Thais could not imagine an art so coupled with a region, is the Shadow Play. This is a distinctively Thai theatrical entertainment from the Ayutthaya Period for which shadows are cast onto a white screen.

The Shadow Play has become less popular and the art of making leather cut-outs has been on a steady decline. Her Majesty the Queen is now trying to preserve this art with courses on sculpting leather cut-outs. Several of the SUPPORT centres train people in leather carving and many are now becoming popular for home decorations while the smaller ones are popular among foreign visitors as souvenirs from Thailand.





SUPPORT Centres

The very first SUPPORT Foundation unit was established at Hup Kraphong, in Cha-am District, Phetchaburi Province, near Hua Hin. Her Majesty's wish to preserve and ensure the continuity of Thai arts and crafts, which were in serious decline at that time, led her to establish arts and crafts centres in every region of the country. There are examples such as the Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Centres in Bang Sai District of Ayutthaya Province and Charoen Sin District of Sakon Nakhon Province. A Royal Folk Arts and Crafts Training Centre was set up within the grounds of the royal residence, Chitralada Villa, to serve as a centre for training artisans and promoting extraordinary arts and handicrafts.

A large number of these projects were initiated by Her Majesty and financed from her own resources. A number of people who had faith in Her Majesty's projects contributed funds towards her small foundation. This was later to change its name to the **SUPPORT Foundation of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand**. She has also set up handicraft centres for products made by farmers trained by SUPPORT. Since July 1976, Her Majesty has acted as an arts ambassador, successfully promoting Thai handicrafts overseas as President of the Board of Trustees of SUPPORT.

Chitralada SUPPORT Centre

The queen founded the **Chitralada SUPPORT Centre** on 25 June 1977 and commenced operations with ten students, the children of palace staff. A tent was put up near Her Majesty's Private Secretary's office as a workshop, but eventually this proved to be inadequate due to the increasing number of people



SUPPORT workshop in Chitralada Villa.

who desired training. A two-storey building was set up in 1980, but the sale of products outstripped the building soon after it was built and a third storey was added. Trainees with potential were sent to Chitralada Villa in Bangkok, which became the main and largest of all training centres. Twenty-six handicrafts are taught at **Chitralada SUPPORT Centre**, including gold and silver handicrafts, like gold and silver nielloware and *khram*, with many of the traditional handicrafts of which the public is more aware, such as bamboo basketry, wood carving, *phrae wa* and *chok* silk weaving.

Bang Sai SUPPORT Centre

Bang Sai SUPPORT Centre, the first one established outside of Bangkok, is in Ayutthaya, just to the north of Bangkok. It was started on 3 June 1980 and completed on 7 December 1984, though it opened to teach formally for the first time on 1 May 1981. The Bang Sai Centre accepts three batches of trainees a year. Each class lasts four months, from January to April, from May to August, and from September to December. The Centre caters to an enormous amount of trainees each year, with up to three to four hundred trainees admitted in each period. To acknowledge the



performance of those who graduate from the Centre, certificates are given to those who meet a basic standard. Those performance is exceptional receive awards as an incentive. The four-month course work is actually a special intensive short course required for those who cannot afford more time, due to their need to return home and actually commence earning money to support their families. However, many courses, such as carpentry, sculpture and metal casting, take more than a year, whereas needlework and basic engine maintenance and repair require no more than four months.

Each product must meet the specifications set by the Centre. A trainee whose product is accepted and sold by the shop run by the Centre will get 25 to 30 percent of the sale price. The rest of the price goes to the Centre for the cost of raw materials, to replace tools and as marketing expenses. Gifted trainees are often offered the position of teaching assistant after completion of their training, with regular pay and a 35 to 40 percent share of the price of their finished products when sold. Some of the work that can be considered of very high quality can command prices of more than ten thousand baht.

Ko Koet SUPPORT Centre

The central plains of Thailand also contain another interesting example of Her Majesty's projects, the **Ko Koet Handicraft Vocational Centre Project,** Ko Koet, Bang Pa-in District in Ayutthaya Province. This was set up by royal initiative on 15 December 1997 with the intention for the Centre to serve as a national collection of traditional arts and culture. The Centre, which is now under construction, was funded by the SUPPORT Foundation.



The main concept was for the Centre to gather handicrafts from all other centres for public display. An advisory board was appointed and a working group set up to manage the project. The facilities at the Centre will include a handicraft products exhibition building. An area of 11.34 hectares was allocated to the handicraft products exhibition room, a museum and a training centre including training rooms with different sections. A four-region handicraft vocational village is an interesting and unique part of the Centre's design. The village, which will cover 17.81 hectares is being set up to show ancient lifestyles and traditional agricultural practices, along with an area for accommodating foreign visitors.

Another 52.79 hectares were designated for agricultural lands and green areas. Since only 24.29 hectares are being used for rice farming, the other 28.50 hectares are "green areas". To promote some agricultural demonstrations on the land, Ko Koet Centre will also contain a water retention pond covering 21.86 hectares, capable of holding 648,000 cubic metres. There is also an irrigation ditch 4 metres wide and 1.5 metres deep stretching 4,760 metres, with a storage capacity of 21,500 cubic metres, to help distribute water throughout the whole area more effectively.

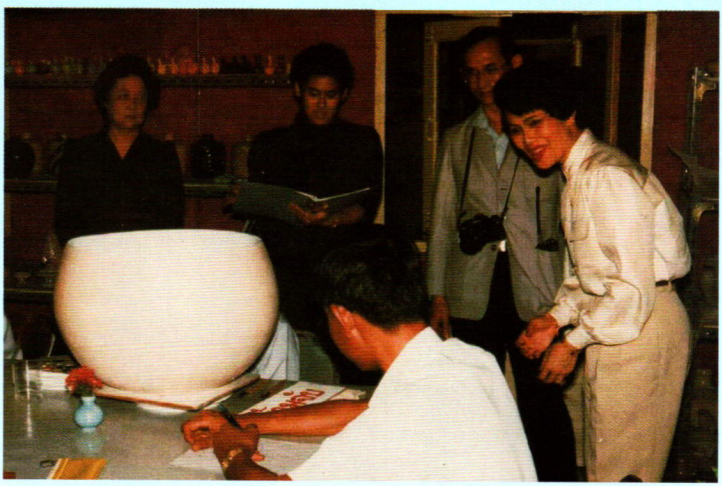
On-site training will be arranged for 50 handicraft vocational students from different regions to learn



drawing and sculpture. Rice farming is to be carried out to ensure sufficient yields for feeding the handicraft vocational students, with the surplus for sale and to raise funds for the "SUPPORT" Foundation. The Centre will also teach how to cultivate vegetables and how to raise animals, like ducks to provide protein from eggs, Gunther's walking catfish, and snakeskin gourami.

Ban Kut Na Kham SUPPORT Centre

Situated in Sakon Nakhon Province, in the Northeast of Thailand, Ban Kut Na Kham, Charoen Sin District, was visited by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on 15 December 1982. Her Majesty advised that the local people preserve the forest, realizing that the villagers could obtain forest products and make more income. She suggested that the villagers take the responsibility



Observing pottery making at the Kut Na Kham SUPPORT Centre.

for forest conservation upon themselves and made a donation to assist them. The villagers in turn responded to her initiative by donating 6.88 hectares of land for conservation.

A year later, 1 May 1983, Her Majesty visited the area to inspect one of her Forest Loves Water *(Pa Rak Nam)* projects and discovered that a reservoir in the area had caused a problem for some of the villagers as it had flooded their land and thereby decreased their ability to gain a living from that land. Her Majesty then decided to set up a SUPPORT Foundation Centre in the area to stop emigration and the destruction of the forest. The Foundation purchased 8.09 hectares of land for this purpose; however, when the villagers found out what she intended to do, they immediately donated the land to the Foundation for free.

As the district was near the ancient site of Ban Chiang, a 2,500 year-old archaeological site famous for its distinctive pottery designs, a part of the local people's cultural heritage to be revived, made pottery the first choice for training. Some villagers were sent to the **Chitralada Training Centre** to learn about other handicrafts. The **Kut Na Kham SUPPORT Centre** trains



Inspecting various products made by the members of the Kut Na Kham SUPPORT Centre, Sakon Nakhon Province.



Inspecting woodcarving products at the Kut Na Kham SUPPORT Centre.



At Rangsan Pan Taeng Fair, Government House.

villagers in several handicrafts, notably ceramics, wood carving, furniture-making, brick-making, artificial flower-making, food preservation, silk weaving, and cotton weaving. From the year prior to the Centre's foundation, the villagers who had been trained to produce handicrafts have increased their income by at least four times and also drawn the interest of villagers

in other districts to learn supplementary occupations.[1] The result is that most of the people are now fully employed. The government recognized the success of the **Kut Na Kham SUPPORT Centre** in 1990 and organized an exhibition of SUPPORT products from Kut Na Kham Village between 30 April and 2 May at the Santi Maitri Building at Government House, coinciding with the 40th wedding anniversary of Their Majesties the King and Queen. The project received tremendous promotion by the government in radio spots inviting people to attend.

Ban Chan SUPPORT Centre

Her Majesty established an environmental project at Kham Chuang Reservoir, in the northeastern Province of Sakon Nakhon on 20 December 1982. As in the case of the Ban Kut Na Kham villagers, the local people of Ban Chan Village donated 32.39 hectares of land to the project for reforestation. However, when on 15 November 1983, Her Majesty visited their village and learnt of their generous donation, she chose twenty villagers to receive training in supplementary occupations. The returning villagers set up a supplementary occupation group to grow mulberry trees and raise silkworms. Her Majesty knew that the villagers had been felling trees excessively and wanted to provide some other occupations to stop them, so she sent *mudmee* weaving and dyeing instructors on 20 November 1984 to ensure they had some other form of income.

[1] Uraiwan Lerdsrisantad and Kemthat Visvayodhin, SUPPORT Foundation, Bangkok : 1992, p.118.





Two years later, on 28 November 1985, whilst visiting the Forest Loves Water Project near Huai Wang Khen Reservoir, she initiated agricultural and other supplementary occupations in the district. Her Majesty wanted Ban Chan Village to be an example to others in the area of how people could make a living without cutting trees. By 1986, the new project was underway, with a 64.78 hectares donation of land by the village to build a centre. The people were provided practical courses that would aid them to sell items to other villagers in other districts, as opposed to purely tourist oriented handicrafts. Thus they learnt furniture-making, dressmaking and earthen jar-making among other skills. Her Majesty also set up a rice bank and a cattle bank in the district. These are important as they are a way in which rice can be stored for use as seedlings following a disaster. The cattle could be borrowed for breeding purposes and returned later.

Naturally, as Her Majesty had planned, other villagers became very interested and came to the **Ban Chan Centre** for training. For administrative purposes, the centre is now a subsidiary of the Kut Na Kham Centre.

Ban Huai Duea SUPPORT Centre



Ban Huai Duea is situated in Mueang District, Mae Hong Son Province. Significant parts of its population are Thai highlanders, who practise slash-and-burn agriculture. They would cut down trees, burn the forests and damage watershed areas. Many of them were engaged in growing opium poppies. Mae Hong Son Province, moreover, borders Myanmar where ethnic minority problems exist together with illegal smuggling. His Majesty the King initiated agricultural development projects while Her Majesty the Queen launched supplementary occupation development projects as alternatives to growing opium, slash-and-burn agriculture, illegal logging and smuggling.

In 1982 SUPPORT surveyed the area around Ban Huai Duea to set up a SUPPORT Centre. When a piece of land of 1.62 hectares was donated, the first project was launched to promote mulberry trees growing for silkworms. Government agencies also offered valuable assistance. The Royal Irrigation Department constructed a building. The Mae Cho Mulberry Experimental Station provided sericulture experts to serve as trainers. Villagers were then selected for training.

In 1984, when Her Majesty encouraged the villagers to grow mulberry trees, they could keep more silkworms at home with the Mae Cho Mulberry Experimental Station providing silkworms, mulberry seedlings, and giving technical advice on silk thread



producing. The villagers who had been trained at Chitralada Centre later returned home to train their fellow villagers.

Mae Hong Son SUPPORT Centre

In 1985, SUPPORT purchased land and constructed a building near the Mae Hong Son Town Hall in order to build a SUPPORT Centre.[1] Her Majesty wished to engage the local population in activities designed to







[1] Ibid, p. 120.

prevent deforestation and the growing of opium poppies. This was a difficult task as the people there were very poor and knew of no other occupations beside swidden farming. Thus, with the construction of the Centre, Her Majesty was able to train many of the villagers and hilltribes new occupations that could still earn them a decent income, such as wickerwork and silk-weaving.

Ban Mae Tam SUPPORT Centre

On 17 January 1984, during a visit to Soem Ngam District, Lampang Province, a senior monk of the area informed Her Majesty of a village called **Ban Mae Tam**, situated on mountainous terrain, with very limited area for cultivation. Further, the villagers were poor, earning their living by slash-and-burn agriculture and logging. The monk wished to see more secure occupations provided for these poor villagers. Her Majesty decided to visit the village that very same day.

Ban Mae Tam Village is in a forest reserve, which used to be one of the largest teak forests of the country. Nevertheless, the villagers had cut the trees for sale and conducted swidden farming until the forest was badly degraded. The villagers lacked both land and farming skills.

Her Majesty requested the late Thanpuying Suprapada Kasemsant, her private secretary at the time to survey the area thoroughly on 27 January 1984, with the intention that SUPPORT projects could be set up to enable the villagers to earn their living without resorting to deforestation. The first SUPPORT project to be set up was cotton-weaving and a workshop was constructed in March 1984. As the villagers could not expect to live by one industry alone, a ceramics



project was set up soon after, which received assistance from the Ministry of Science and Technology. The ceramics workshop was completed by July 1984. The Ceramics Industrial Research and Development Centre lent its support to the project and provided instructors. The villagers also learn how to model clay by hand. It can be noted that ceramics made by students of the SUPPORT Foundation are popular because of their quality. The work provides the students with a regular income of approximately 2,400 baht a month.



In addition to the SUPPORT projects, Her Majesty initiated a reforestation project to replace the degraded area and an agricultural extension project to create arable land. All Ban Mae Tam villagers have joined these projects. They are also now adept at wood-carving, silk-weaving, sericulture, and bamboo basketry. The current supervisor of the project notes that with over 80 villagers patrolling the forests to protect them from forest fires, and with an income to stop them from exploiting the forests, that destruction may one day cease.

Ban Wat Chan SUPPORT Centre

The **Ban Wat Chan SUPPORT Centre** is in Ban Chan Village, Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai Province. There was very little flat land for rice farming. As the majority of villagers are Karen hilltribes, they grow rice and keep animals high up on the mountains. Their lives had little quality and they not only worked for other tribes to grow opium poppies in the monsoon season, but also in the dry season to gain whatever income they could scratch out for themselves.

Though the local Karen people are Christian, they use Wat Chan, a nearby temple surrounded by 13 villages as a centre. Her Majesty had a Sala Ruam Jai pavilion built in the temple. This was completed on 10 March 1979. The pavilion kept a collection of books and medicines for the villagers. There was an attendant at the pavilion who later received medical training and was able to give advice on first-aid and basic sanitation as well.



Conversing with Karen hilltribe people, Chiang Mai Province.



On one of Her Majesty's visits, she noticed that the Karen's locally woven cloth had attractive patterns. Her Majesty thereafter instructed that a SUPPORT Centre be constructed near the pavilion in 1984 to teach cotton-weaving. A weaving workshop was built and instructors sought from nearby Lamphun Province. Her Majesty donated cotton thread and weaving equipment to the villagers. A weaving group was set up to make the local type of cloth and Her Majesty promised to purchase their products. Later, groups of Karen were put in charge of new mulberry trees and silkworms. In 1987, Her Majesty sent Karen children to learn about keeping silkworms and spinning silk at the Ban Huai Duea Centre, Mae Hong Son Province. Other occupations continue to be taught in order to ensure that the hilltribes are better off than they once were. Her Majesty placed a trusted assistant in charge of the Ban Wat Chan Centre to coordinate the delivery of the villagers' products to the Foundation and select members of the Centre for further training at Phuping Palace whenever Her Majesty is in residence.

SUPPORT Centre at Wat Ratburana

Her Majesty's devotion to the development of additional incomes for people motivated the people of Pattani to set up a job training centre at a temple called **Wat Ratburana** (known locally as Wat Chang Hai), with the support of the former governor of Pattani, Mr Palakorn Suwannarat, in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to the Throne in 1996.[1] The project was set up on over 8.10 hectares of land in the temple area, in Tambon Thung

[1] "Job Training Centre (Wat Chang Hai)", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 1996, p. 25.

Pla, and Tambon Na Pradu. Money was also provided from the provincial development budget for 1994-95. Not only is the Centre used to train and hold local handicraft exhibitions, but is also used as a plant research centre.

Apart from selling handicrafts and training people in the art of handicrafts, the job-training centre also trains people in other professions, especially those needed in the local job market. The Centre accepts all applications, but gives special consideration to the rural poor, the handicapped and the disabled.

The Daksin Palace SUPPORT Centre

Her Majesty the Queen intended to promote ceramics as a supplementary occupation for the people in the South, and in 1985, donated her personal fund to start the project. The Centre was set up within the outer precincts of **Daksin Palace** in Narathiwat Province, which is on the Narathiwat-Tak Bai Road, approximately seven kilometres outside Narathiwat.





Subsequently, various government agencies lent their support.

The number of trainees varies, depending on the agricultural season, as many people need to help with harvesting or preparing rubber latex, which is one of the largest industries today in the South. On the whole, the centre usually has at least about 40-50 trainees, both the highly skilled who are paid monthly and the moderately skilled who are paid daily. Each earns about 1,500-2,000 baht a month from their ceramics, which is considered satisfactory as supplementary income for those still primarily engaged in agriculture. The Foundation has three staff members and volunteers stationed at the centre.

The Promotion of Thai Products

Silk Festival

To ensure continuity in her efforts to create markets for Thai fabrics, Her Majesty arranges for a Silk Festival to be held annually, since 1990, at Bhuphan Palace in Sakon Nakhon Province. The Northeast is the only place that grows silk worms throughout the region. Her Majesty had once received a suggestion from her assistants that a silk competition be held as young people no longer saw any attraction in producing silk. Taking up the suggestion, the competition initiated by Her Majesty was held for, and attended by, VIP guests.

The festival attendants evolved considerably over the years, commencing with ambassadors and close friends of Her Majesty, like Mrs Esther Coopersmith of Washington D.C., who brings, among others, the wives of Washington's senators. The 2003 Silk Festival was the first where Her Majesty promoted the use of Thai





Thai Silk Festival at Sakon Nakhon.



silk for interior decoration. *"To bring Thai silk back into use in everyday life again, we have shown how it can be used as part of our lives, not just fashion,"* says Smitthi Siribhadra, a Thai cultural expert who talked at the Festival on Living Culture.[1]

Dr Chirayu, SUPPORT's Treasurer, recalled a wonderful atmosphere at the 2003 Festival. A bazaar in front of the palace allowed local people to sell their wares to the visitors from Bangkok and abroad, all of whom were there by invitation only. The visitors were provided with translators and encouraged to dive into the fun of bargaining with the locals. The exhibition itself was held in a wooded area to the rear of the palace. There, wooden houses were set up to provide a rural setting. The trees were draped with silk, flowing and billowing in the breeze. A colourful and fun atmosphere was created that excited everyone who walked through the garden, stepping around the crowing cocks that were allowed to roam free.

On this occasion, the designer Valentino stayed for three days as a guest of Her Majesty, a fashion show being one of the highlights. The festival saw hundreds of Northeastern people enter over 2,700 pieces. At the end of the festival, Her Majesty herself placed a gold chain with a Buddha image around the necks of the competition winners.

"This is an ongoing movement,"

Dr Chirayu comments on the continuous development of the festival by Her Majesty. However, his words also illustrate his firm conviction that Queen Sirikit's role is the key to the success of Thai crafts, concluding succinctly,

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[1] **The Nation,** Bangkok, 27 November 2003. p. 17A.



Greeting a group of foreign guests who participated in the event at the Thai Silk Festival in 2003.



"Lotus Pond" made of silk cloth at the Thai Silk Festival.





"We can't be complacent. Her Majesty sustains mobility and can't allow inertia to set in."

Chitralada Shops

The SUPPORT Foundation purchases textiles woven by the members of each SUPPORT centre and helps to find retail outlets for them, both at home and abroad. Her Majesty set up outlets, called Chitralada Shops, for the products of her trainees. The first Chitralada Shop was set up in the grounds of Chitralada Villa, Their Majesties' residence in Bangkok. Its products were often bought first by those staff living or working in Chitralada and later becoming popular with outsiders. There are now 13 branches of Chitralada shops throughout the country. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn opened the first public



At Chitralada Shop in Chitralada Villa.

Chitralada shop at the Oriental Plaza Shopping Centre, a part of Bangkok's world famous Oriental Hotel, on 20 December 1977.

Branches were also placed at major tourist attractions, such as the Rose Garden, in Nakhon Pathom, an adjacent province to Bangkok, at the Pearl Hotel in Phuket and in Pattaya, the eastern city in Chon Buri Province, and at the airports in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. One branch is found in the environs of the Grand Palace, on the ground floor of the Royal Decorations Pavilion. Another may be found within the Bang Sai SUPPORT Centre in Ayutthaya Province. Many of the products are now available through department stores and are proving to be well-known to foreigners for the quality and beauty of their products.



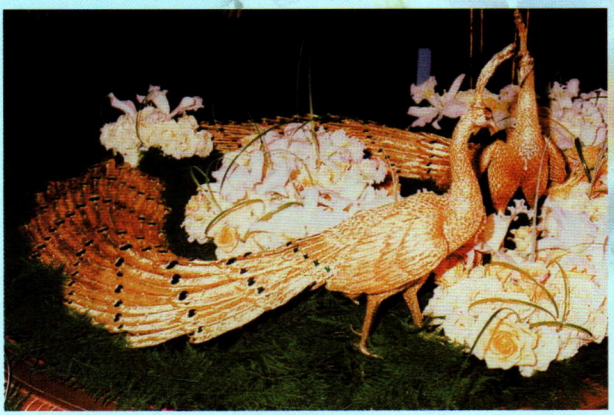
The **SUPPORT Foundation's** most successful exhibition of *mudmee* in Thailand, called *Mudmee Mai Thai Sai Yai Chonnabot* (*Mudmee* Thai Silk : the Rural Connection), was held at the Saha Thai Pavilion in the Grand Palace in 1990. Originally scheduled to last from 6-10 August, the exhibitors were amazed at the number



At Mudnee Mai Thai Sai Yai Chonnabat Exhibition.

of people who attended, much more than expected. The exhibition had to be extended to 12 August to allow everyone an opportunity to see a complete range of *mudmee* dresses worn by Her Majesty, an explanation of how *mudmee* is used in the present together with documentaries on its manufacture.

It is not always through the initiative of a SUPPORT Foundation Centre that Her Majesty finds ways to encourage and promote local arts and crafts.



The First Arts of the Kingdom Fair *at the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall during 8-13 August 1992, featuring gold peacocks.*





Visiting ***the Second Arts of the Kingdom Fair*** *during 12-22 December 1996, featuring gold nielloware bowl and the Ananta Nagarat Royal Barge.*



The Third Arts of the Kingdom Fair *during 23 July - 13 August 1998, featuring the gold nielloware model of Buddha Footprint.*



1

The Fourth Arts of the Kingdom Fair *during 3 July - 8 August 2004, featuring the gold bussabok (1), gold vessel (Suwannaphetra) (2), gold nilloware howdah (3), and diamond-studded handbags (4) and (5).*



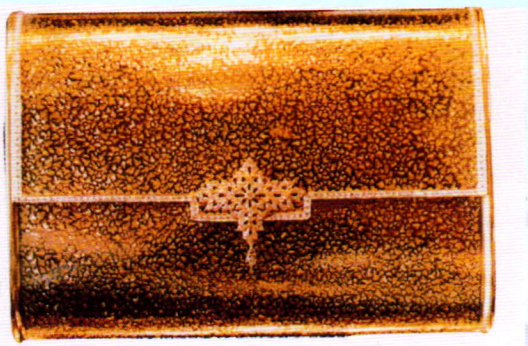
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Presenting SUPPORT products to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Explaining the Thai folk wisdom reflected in SUPPORT products to foreign guests.



Take as an example the case of Mr Thonglor Sorndee,[1] a resident of Rayong Province in the East of Thailand, who felt that he ought to show his gratitude to Her Majesty for her effort to assist the people. He felt the work of the Chaipattana Foundation, set up by His Majesty the King but now often assisted by other members of the royal family, was worthy of his support. He therefore presented a piece of land covering an area of 2.43 hectares, at Ban Non Salao, Chaiyaphum Province to the Foundation on 8 January 2001 to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, President of the Chaipattana Foundation.

The Chaipattana Foundation considered its options for making use of the land. A meeting pointed out that Ban Khwao District was famous for its high quality silk, especially *mudmee* silk with the *kho noi* pattern. This colourful and fairly priced material is not only well-known to Thai people but also to foreigners. Ban Khwao District was facing a big problem at the time, a lack of raw silk. Villagers were forced to buy silk thread from factories at a high price, and sometimes found that the silk thread was either artificial or of low quality.

The working group assigned by Her Majesty to find a solution agreed that it should set up a demonstration plot for mulberry cultivation, propagating good varieties of mulberry plants and promoting the villagers to cultivate mulberry. Moreover, recommendations on technical expertise were required to be taught to the local villagers. Government agencies then proceeded to survey the area donated in order to design a demonstration plot and adjust the land

[1] "Ban Khwao : Demonstration Plot on Mulburry Cultivation and Silk Worm Raising.", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** April 2003, p. 56.

accordingly. A pond covering an area of around 0.65 hectares, with a depth of three metres, and a storage capacity of 19,000 cubic metres, was also dug to store water. The villagers were encouraged to grow mulberry plants of the *Buri Ram 60* variety as well as the type that grows locally by nature. The District Administration Organization of Ban Non Daeng, selected approximately 120 farmers from eight villages when initiating the project.

Next, the project set up a demonstration area for sericulture. It acted as a centre for collecting silk thread for the whole district. Farmers were taught how to develop patterns, designs and the quality of the silk they made to meet the demands of the market. The place was also promoted as a tourist site and a silk products centre to enable the people to bring the market to their area rather than have to journey to Bangkok to sell their wares for the best price.

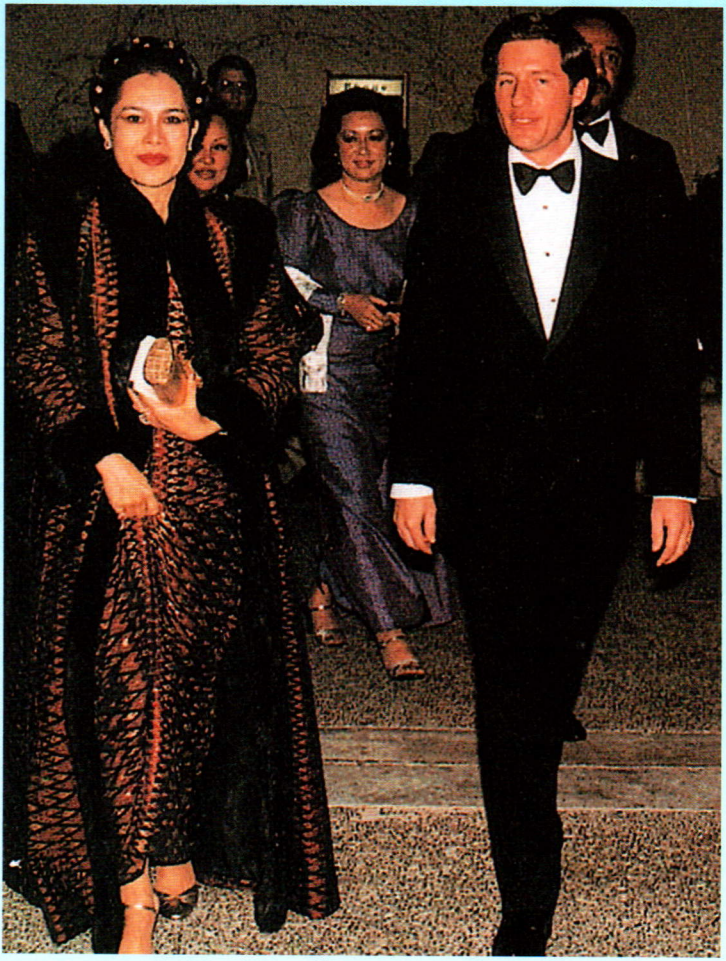
Finally, from the gift of a small parcel of land, Her Majesty was able to care for the well-being of hundreds of villagers, creating a sustainable source of future income and promoting her people's skill.

It was one of Her Majesty's earliest inspirations, to use international designers to promote Thai products.



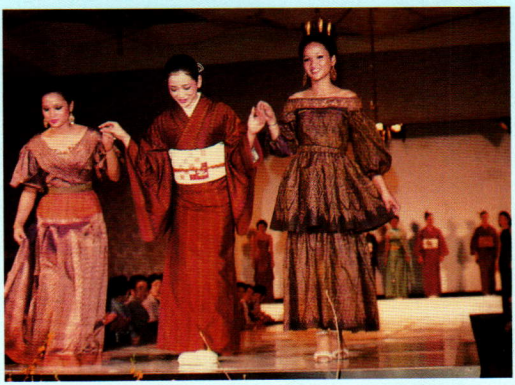
On her birthday, 12 August 1978, Balmain, one of her favourite designers at the time, viewed a fashion show using *mudmee* silk and purchased a large quantity of it to take back to France, returning in April 1979 with his own collection. This not





only gave international recognition to the use of Thai silk for high fashion but stimulated demand locally and abroad. Closer to home, a Japanese entrepreneur, Mrs Takako Kanomi, working closely with representatives of Her Majesty, introduced kimonos made of Thai silk to the Japanese. Her Majesty paid a private visit to Japan from 10-22 March 1981 during which she organized a fashion show of Thai SUPPORT products to great success.







Exhibition of Thai arts and crafts in Japan, 1981.





Exhibition of SUPPORT products in Japan, 1993.

"Since the start of the SUPPORT project, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit has always worn or carried in public the clothes and crafts produced by the farmers under the SUPPORT project,"

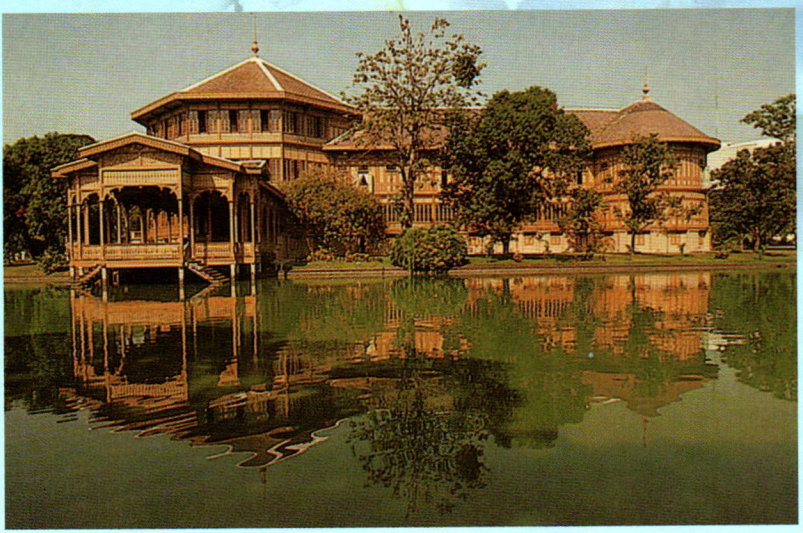
noted Mainichi Daily News in 1992.

"And that the queen regularly uses the SUPPORT products has truly encouraged the farmers and raised their morale."

Of Fabergé and Golden Teak

In 1982, Bangkok's Bicentennial Year, Her Majesty discovered many old buildings to the rear of the Grand Palace full of items stored by earlier generations.[1] Her Majesty invited Prince Bhanubhand Yugala, an expert in Thai antiquities, to assist with the identification of objets d'art, many dating from the reigns of King Rama II to King Rama V, including a significant

[1] As related by Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, currently of Her Majesty's Secretariat, who had assisted in the clearing and cataloguing of items discovered there.



Vimanmek Mansion.

collection of Fabergé eggs belonging to King Chulalongkorn, Rama V.[1] Later that year, a golden teak building called Vimanmek Mansion,[2] the largest golden teak building in the world, was discovered to have fallen into neglect. Her Majesty the Queen initiated its restoration for the Bicentennial as a contribution to the conservation of Bangkok Thai arts and culture. When the restoration was complete in 1985, the mansion was turned into a public museum. Most of the artefacts on display, such as the blue and white porcelain, silverware, ceramic ware, together with some of the above-mentioned Fabergé pieces were items Her Majesty had saved from oblivion.

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit decided to hold a fashion show there with a difference. On the evening of 12 December 1994, a gala dinner with the theme

[1] Some made to order in Russia, others gifts from Tsar Nicholas II.
[2] A residence of King Rama V.



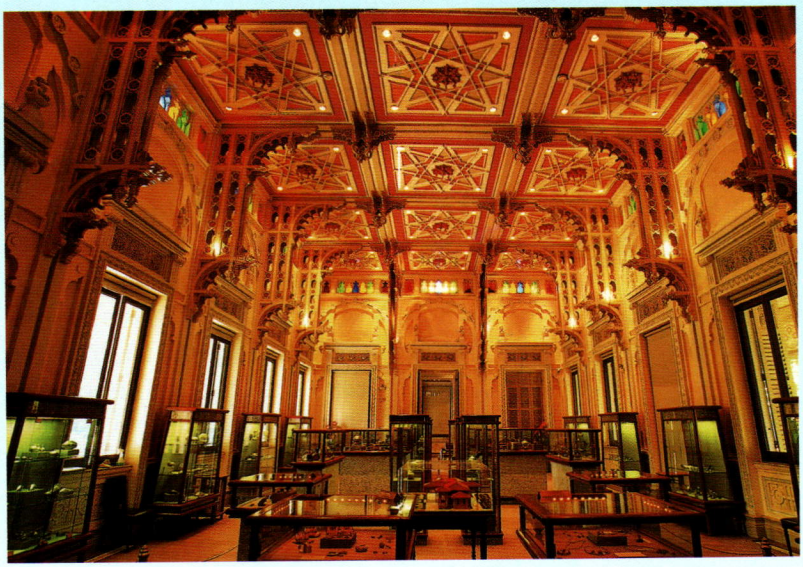
Vimanmek Mansion by night.

Suep Sai Yai Phra Metta (Carrying on Her Majesty the Queen's Compassion) was held at Vimanmek, revealing a mix of old Thai and modern Western designs by up-and-coming Thai designers. Her Majesty initiated similar ideas for her later visit to China in 2000. This, however, was the first time that a fashion show was permitted in Vimanmek, presided over by the queen. The outfits were presented by 40 professional models and well-known local personalities. Thai and foreign dignitaries and leading business people attended. Every single piece of clothing for the fashion show was made out of traditional Thai fabrics from the SUPPORT Foundation. The outfits were functional, with both Eastern and Western influences. The Vimanmek exhibition was a glorious exhibition that garnered much appreciation from potential customers.





Abhisek Dusit Mansion housing the SUPPORT Museum.



SUPPORT products on display at the Abhisek Dusit Mansion.



Objets d'art in the Abhisek Dusit Mansion.

Presenting Thai Arts and Crafts to the World

Her Majesty's visit to the US in 1985 reveals the queen's willingness to exhaust herself to ensure the success of Thai products overseas. Commencing 7 March 1985, Her Majesty attended a reception party at the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Florida, presiding over an exhibition of Thai historical artefacts and SUPPORT Foundation handicrafts. The reception, hosted by Baron Arndt Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach,[1] was attended by, among others, Douglas and Mary Lee Fairbanks, Estée Lauder, Jerry and Christine Goldsmith and Mrs Henry Ford, who were introduced to Her Majesty.



Visiting the US in 1985 to promote Thai Arts and Crafts.

[1] Arndt von Bohlen und Halbach (1938-86), son of Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, once owner of the Krupps iron and steel company.



The next day, an artist, Mrs Marylou Whitney, presented the proceeds of the sale of her art to Her Majesty for SUPPORT. On 12 March, Her Majesty attended a Gala Dinner to raise funds for the SUPPORT Foundation, at the Metropolitan Club. Two days later, 14 March, Mr Robert B. Oxnam, the President of the Asia Society, presented the Society's first Humanitarian Award to Her Majesty the Queen. Her Majesty presided over the opening ceremony of the SUPPORT Foundation Exhibition at the Asia Society in New York City.

On 17 March, Her Majesty granted an audience to members of the Thai community from New York, relating to them the work of the SUPPORT Foundation. On 21 March, she arrived at Ambassador College, California, to open the Exhibition of Products from the SUPPORT Foundation. Her Majesty later went to visit an exhibition of artefacts from Ban Chiang, Thailand's oldest village, at Los Angeles Museum of Natural History. Her Majesty's intense efforts have received a very favourable response, and the US market for Thai products has subsequently grown over the years.



France

One foreign exhibition of Thai arts and crafts arranged by Her Majesty that stands out occurred on 15 April 1997 at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by Madame Benedict Chirac, wife of the then French President Jacques Chirac, and Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn, officially opened an exhibition, entitled Thailand Treasures of Handicrafts. Madame Chirac was pleased to meet six members of the SUPPORT Foundation who had flown with Her Majesty to attend the exhibition. The exhibition was displayed on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower, about 50 metres above the ground and was jointly sponsored by Thailand and France in honour of the 50th Anniversary of His Majesty's Accession to the Throne and the 100th Anniversary of the Eiffel Tower.

A Thai pavilion was built to house the exhibition. As recounted by the Grand Chamberlain,[1] the event was most interesting as the vast amount and variety of Thai handicrafts made it likely that to display everything would have created some chaos. Thus, it was decided to choose a theme and to stay with the theme in order to place some limits on the items displayed. The theme chosen was "Water and Earth," which allowed the viewers to see the wonder of Thai crafts and arts without being overburdened with a clutter of disassociated items. It was decided that demonstrations of arts and crafts making would not be given as the French would be more likely to appreciate the results of the work rather than how it was made.[2]

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[1] Dr Chirayu Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya

[2] However, it was divided into three sections revealing the history of the SUPPORT Foundation, and the methods used to create the various handicrafts displayed by the Foundation.



This proved to be the correct course of action. The exhibition featured baskets woven in the shapes of fish, Thai dolls, models of Royal Barge processions, a nielloware model of the footprint of the Lord Buddha, a peacock made of gold, Thai silks including *mudmee*, *chok* and *phrae wa*, products made of *yan liphao*, and a model of the Wheel of Law – the symbol of Buddhism – inlaid with gold and silver. All of these arts and crafts were created by students of the SUPPORT Foundation to present to His Majesty the King on the 50th Anniversary of His Accession to the Throne. Visitors were able to place orders for items that were shipped to them later from Thailand.[1] The demand was so great that the exhibition was extended to cope with the flow of visitors each day.[2] As Dr Chirayu noted, foreigners have often underestimated the skill of Thai craftsmen and artists. Her Majesty thus "arranges every opportunity for them to be further surprised and delighted."



[1] An interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, 2004.
[2] **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 1997, p. 18-19.

China

A royal visit by the queen to **China** was arranged from 16 to 31 October 2000 at the invitation of President Jiang Zemin and Madam Wang Yeping. President Jiang himself had extended the invitation when he paid a State Visit to Thailand in 1999. Her Majesty Queen Sirikit graciously accepted the invitation to visit China on behalf of His Majesty King Bhumibol. It was the first State Visit by the queen in 33 years and was considered a great success.[1] The 15-day visit included Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Xuzhou, Zhengzhou, Luoyang, Kaifeng and Guilin. Her Majesty, welcomed by Vice President Hu Jintao, first attended a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square.



At Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square.

[1] The following year, the head of the Chinese government, Premier Zhu Rongji and his wife Lao An, were granted an audience with Their Majesties the King and Queen at the royal summer palace in Hua Hin on 21 May 2001.





The queen later presented President Jiang Zemin with a lustral water bowl and a model of the Suphanahongse royal barge, both made by the SUPPORT Foundation. A dinner and fashion show organized on 25 October, at the Pudong Shangri-La Hotel on the Huang Ho River, in Shanghai, stunned many people who attended.

About 500 guests were invited, including diplomats, businesspersons and fashion leaders. With Her Majesty at the head table were Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the Thai Foreign Minister, Mr Xu Kuangdi, the Mayor of Shanghai, the Thai Ambassador to China, the Chinese Ambassador to Thailand, Men Yenqun, the Chairperson of the Shanghai Women's Union, Qian Zheng Ying, the Deputy Chairperson of the National Political Affairs Council, and the Thai Consul General to Shanghai.



During the show, Her Majesty's personal band played Lao Duang Duean, the song composed by Prince Phichai on one of his visits to the Northeast to introduce the villagers to silk weaving while he was the Director General of the Department of Silk Weaving. The performance showed the development of Thai costumes from Sukhothai to Rattanakosin eras. The models were among the most famous actors and artists in Thailand, supported by dancers from the Fine Arts Department and some Chinese students.









Performing traditional Thai dance drama.

Each period was depicted by suitable historical figures, for instance, Queen Sueang of the Sukhothai Period, and two versions of Queen Suriyothai of the Ayutthaya Period were shown, one in regal gown of the royal court, carried onstage by a royal palanquin, the other as a fighting queen in battle regalia, ready to fight alongside her husband.[1] Miss Thailand 2000, accompanied by other beautiful models displayed the contemporary Thai costumes initiated by Her Majesty for her tour of Europe with His Majesty the King three decades previously.



Following this, there was a fashion show from leading Thai designers. Each exhibited collections in Thai silk, especially *mudmee* from Her Majesty's SUPPORT Foundation. The Chinese were amazed to learn that the silks were all made by rural women and the handicrafts by farmers and not highly educated craftsmen, praising Her Majesty for her efforts to preserve the country's traditional handicrafts. Silks, made by Thai women, converted into high fashion by Thai women, is a theme that Her Majesty has promoted not just to market a product, but to bring back benefits to Thai people, in particular Thai women, as they are the cornerstone of the family.

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[1] Queen Suriyothai holds a special place in Thai hearts, sacrificing her life to save her husband, King Maha Chakraphat, from certain death by interspersing herself between him and the weapon that dealt the fatal blow.





Conversion of Common People to National Artists

Her Majesty has brought about a cultural revival as well as a source of national pride through her activities. The Thai people are capable of producing objets d'art that Westerners respect and admire, and Her Majesty has taken the lead in identifying national artists from rural Thailand. Her Majesty believes that the Thais as a race are creative and naturally endowed with artistic talent. Therefore, SUPPORT trainees are recruited, not just because of their apparent skills, but rather because of their need to support the families. More often than not, SUPPORT trainees are selected because of their physical handicaps or their lack of formal education. This makes the transformation of ordinary Thai people into fine artists even more remarkable. Thus, as we now examine some of the finer arts that Her Majesty has saved, we should remember that most of these artists are farmers.

Her Majesty's adamant promotion of Thai arts led to some remarkable exhibitions, and provided a deeper understanding of Her Majesty's ability to *"pull things together"* and create marvellous marketing events for Thai arts and handicrafts.



Chapter 5: Her Majesty's Support for Women

From early in the reign, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej entrusted Her Majesty the Queen to focus on family development, while the king developed the land, hence we know that her earliest efforts to provide supplementary occupations were in the form of weaving groups for women, often with their children accompanying them to training in the grounds of Chitralada or Klai Kangwol Palace. Throughout her journey to foreign countries we are able to read accounts in western newspapers that point to Her Majesty as some kind of feminist (the term was more popular in the sixties than it is today); however, whatever we believe about the words used, the fact remains that Her Majesty was entrusted by the king to pay special attention to the family. Her own interests in many fields have distinguished Her Majesty as a leader of people, promoting projects that will assist women to raise their status in the country.

In dealing with Her Majesty's activities to support and enhance the status of women and the rights of the family, one should understand that the Thai family is often larger than its western equivalent, an extended family that can include grandparents, aunts and uncles. The women of the family have always played an important role in the management of the family; many would say they are the power that keeps the family together. However, when they can find a way to take

care of themselves, they are, often as not, taking care also of several other relatives.

Early efforts to promote and upgrade the status of Thai women were low key. When Her Majesty was about to go abroad for a world tour with His Majesty the King in 1960, she wanted to be able to show the West that Thai women were as sophisticated as they



were, but that did not mean having to compromise all the time by wearing western clothes. The creation of a national costume for women was intended to bring pride to Thai women also, that they had a style of their own, and that it was well displayed by the young queen. Europeans and Americans knew very little about Thailand, Thai culture and the status of Thai women in the sixties. Her Majesty's objective, then, was not fashion-conscious, but to ensure that the first impression that many Westerners would have of Thai women was favourable. She was to provide the look of the sophisticated Thai woman without compromising too



much on the matter of dress. Moreover, it gave many Thai women a feeling of encouragement, that they could feel proud of themselves no less than any other women around the world. Thus, Her Majesty was able to promote not only the image of Thai women abroad, but encourage and support their self image within the country.



Her Majesty in traditional Thai costume.



Wearing a Thai Ruean Ton costume, Her Majesty attended a Sala Thai presentation ceremony at the East-West Center University of Hawaii, during a state visit to the US in 1967.



Her Majesty, wearing a Thai Chitralada costume, attended a ceremony in which an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Law was presented to His Majesty at Williams University, Washington D.C. on 11 June 1967.

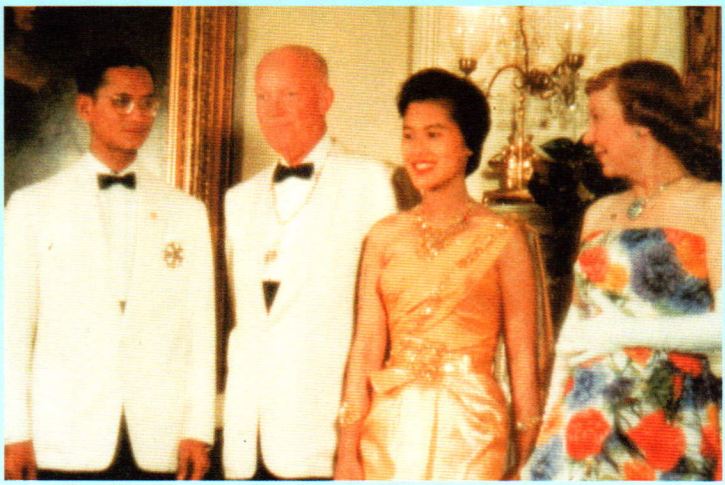


Wearing a Thai Amarin costume, Her Majesty visited the Taiwan Handicraft Promotion Centre in 1963.



Her Majesty wearing in a Thai Borom Phiman costume, visited the Hofburg Imperial Palace during a state visit to Austria, 1964.

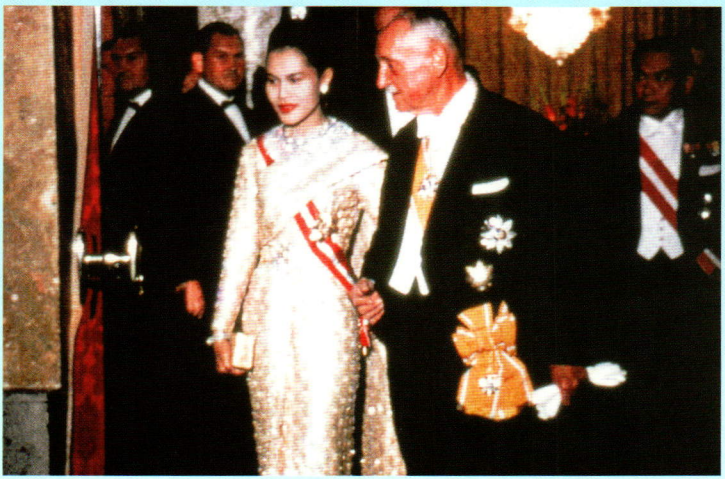




Her Majesty, in a Thai Chakri costume, attended a state banquet hosted by President Eisenhower and the First Lady at the White House, 28 June 1960.



Wearing a Thai Chakraphat costume, Her Majesty opened the SUPPORT Exhibition at the Okura Hotel, Japan



Her Majesty in a Thai Sivalai costume at the return banquet hosted by Dr Adolf Schärf, President of the Republic of Austria on 2 October 1964.



Her Majesty in a Thai Dusit costume at a return banquet for Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, 3 June 1967.



Thai Ladies in traditional costumes greeting Their Majesties the King and Queen.

As a self-confident young woman in the sixties and seventies, the queen stood by the king during the chaotic times of communist insurgency. She was a strong leadership figure for women during that time. The queen was always by His Majesty's side as they toured the hospitals to visit the wounded and maimed. Never one to stand back while others suffered, Her Majesty became well-known for accompanying the king to risky areas in the North to visit the villagers and give them comfort. One of Her Majesty's staff mentions that Her Majesty does not just go to these villages to show her face and return home, but attentively interviews the women in each village, asking them,

"Do you have a problem? Tell me about it."[1]

[1] From an interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, March 2004.



Visiting soldiers on duty at Khek River Basin (Khao Kho), 24 February 1981.



Asking about the well-being of the villagers.

It is not unusual for men in the Southern provinces to cross over into Malaysia to find work. This often leaves the wives with no income. In such cases, SUPPORT can assist with skills training. Sometimes women just start crying. Her Majesty says to them,



Conversing with a villager, who reported to Her Majesty on the progress being made on the screw pine leaves weaving project, during a visit to the members of the SUPPORT Foundation at Wat Chanaram, Thaisuk Village, Ruso District, Narathiwat Province.



Her Majesty the Queen assists women in the South of Thailand to take up handicrafts as a form of supplementary occupation.



Krachut weaving

'Hush, don't worry about it. Learn this and take care of yourself'.[1]

Her Majesty paid close attention to the traditional handicrafts that take place in the home, like silk weaving. It is clear that poor women suffered doubly in the past from social as well as economic disadvantage. Whenever one talks of silk weaving, it is usually the women who perform this work, not the men. In addition to their weaving, these women are expected to look after their families, cook, wash and clean up after them. Yet more often than not, these women receive scant recognition for their achievements. Farming requires some expense, and so many farmers go into debt to purchase fertiliser or seedlings.

[1] From an interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, March 2004.



"When women are able to earn money, they are able to help the family pay off its debts,"

explains Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty.



Even in urban settings, women in Thailand have always looked to Her Majesty as a leader. It is common, even in Western countries today that women, no matter how emancipated, find it difficult to compete on a par with men, often doing the same job but for less money. The glass ceiling exists everywhere. Rather than worrying about making every woman a suffragette, the queen always aims to ensure that women have an income first, which provides their independence.

One cause that assists the improvement of women's lives is non-formal education to teach women how to earn a supplementary income. *"Non-formal education for women takes place on weekends at SUPPORT workshops,"* says Thanpuying Pharani. Many of these women have never worked before in their lives, they

are just housewives and mothers. They told Her Majesty, when invited to attend the workshops, that they couldn' t afford to do so, or that they did not have the money. Her Majesty just tells them,

"Yes, you can – and anyway, it's free."



Opening a SUPPORT training centre, where small children can accompany their mothers.

Unfortunately, assisting women and families in distress who come to the attention of the queen is an active full time job for her secretariat, and there are simply too many women and families living on the poverty line in the far reaches of the country to hope one person, even one with considerable resources, could intervene and resolve their problems. This is one reason why Her Majesty has focused on setting up centres and projects in all regions of the country, gathering people from outside the court to play a part in her work. For these reasons, Her Majesty has also given



her support to institutions that help the development of women and women's rights and the promotion of their equality in law and in the eyes of society.

One method of lending support to such development is to offer royal patronage to organizations working to assist women and young girls. Royal patronage allows Her Majesty to support many groups simultaneously providing them with advice and encouragement. Several of the most prominent institutions that she has supported over the years include a variety of professions and occupations that reflect the progress that Thai women have made over the years.

One of the largest women's organizations in Thailand, incorporating many NGOs under its wing, is the ***National Council for Women of Thailand*** (NCWT) under the royal patronage of Her Majesty the Queen. It was granted royal patronage on 5 May 1961 and had around 140 member organizations, both in Bangkok and seventy-two provinces at that time. Founded on 9 September 1956 by Thanpuying La-iad Pibulsonggram, the NCWT was set up to be an independent women's movement, without ties to the government or any political party. In this manner, the Council acts as a neutral agent in bringing together the activities of the government and private sector to support and develop women.[1]

The Council, with Her Majesty's guidance, searches for ways and means to raise the status and quality of life of Thai women, stemming through the promotion

[1] Social Welfare Department, **Private Organizations under Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit,** Social Welfare Department, Bangkok : 1992.

of education, occupations, family life and health. It does this by searching for obstructions to women's development, and identifies ways around them, all the while co-operating with domestic and international agencies. For instance, the NCWT often represents women's affairs on dialogues with the United Nations.

The problems faced by Thai women such as human trafficking and the sex trade were not a result of self-will. As Her Majesty knew from frequent travels to the provinces, much of them were based on a limited knowledge of their rights. In certain cases, their rights were not equal under the law.

Thai women were enfranchised in 1932, following the change of the political system, and the first Constitution which declared all Thais to be equal. Today, Article 1997 of the Constitution also states in very specific terms the equality of all Thai people, yet women often find themselves disadvantaged by legal loopholes. Society in Thailand is still male-dominated. Her Majesty's programmes to provide women with occupations that made them more self-sufficient was also aimed to give women self-respect. For all their responsibilities for the home and the children, social and cultural reasons mean that women often bear the burden of looking after the family.

Over several years, through her work, Her Majesty built up a reputation as a proponent of women's rights. Naturally, many of them thought of her when they were at a particular nexus of their lives, perhaps reasoning that she was the only famous person who was known to be interested in helping women. Whatever the reason, the palace received many letters from women about issues that required a legal response and Her Majesty's Secretariat usually passed them on to the **Women's Lawyers Association of**



Thailand (WLAT), founded in 1947 by female law graduates specifically to explain the law to those who could not afford a lawyer, or who knew nothing about the law, especially family law. It disseminates legal information and training in family law.

A typical case passed on to the WLAT by the palace was of a woman in Phetchaburi who allowed one of her relatives to use her land as collateral in order to take out a loan from a bank. When that relative could not repay the bank loan, the bank seized all the woman's land, even though it was worth more than the loan. The WLAT took up the case and a lawyer went to the bank and argued that it should have accepted partial payment for the amount of the loan, not taken all the land of someone who had not understood the law in these cases. Fortunately, the bank was persuaded to return half of the land it had seized. Land rights for women are a particular problem.

> *"A company takes deposits from people to book land for a house in a new housing project,"*

Says *Payow Kamalmalaya*, the Director of WLAT, explaining the way in which ordinary people are exploited due to their lack of legal knowledge.

> *"The buyers did not know that the land had been mortgaged to the bank and the company just took the deposits without thinking of handing over the land."*

Her Majesty is most concerned with the problems faced by women. In many cases she can find training for those she comes across, but it is an impossible task to assist everyone. Thus the queen became the patron of the Women Lawyers Association of Thailand, on 15 June 1979, and supported the Association in its fight to promote knowledge of the law to ordinary women and to fight on their behalf.

The WLAT has worked hard to seek women's equality under family law. On 1 October 1976, the Association played a role in changing the law to allow women to control their own property. Dividing marriage assets after a divorce had been difficult due to the male perspective embodied in the law. With Her Majesty's support, the Government agreed that women's rights in marriage with regard to personal assets were made equal. Eventually, they were successful.[1]

Thirty years later, well-known lawyer and human rights activist *Thongbai Thongpao* wrote about the severe inequalities that still existed between men and women despite the continuous efforts of women's rights activists.

> *"The success of this battle depends largely on informing males of the equal rights between the two sexes. In other words, the efforts can be fruitful only when men are well-informed of the essence of this movement and agree to give up the long-held beliefs and habits in which they have had privileges over the opposite sex.*
>
> *"Concurrently, women must be enlightened as to the basic fact that men and women are equal. They need to be woken up and liberated from centuries-old beliefs or traditions which maintain that men are superior, men are leaders and only men can be the heads of families. According to these beliefs, women are*

[1] It should be noted that at the time, women could not be district officers or provincial governors and that they could not take the exams that would allow them to rise in the hierarchy. When they were eventually allowed to take the exams, they performed very well, but still had to struggle to get on. One famous example was the "breakthrough" of Mrs Chalochit Chitarutha, who in 1966 became the first woman judge in Thailand.



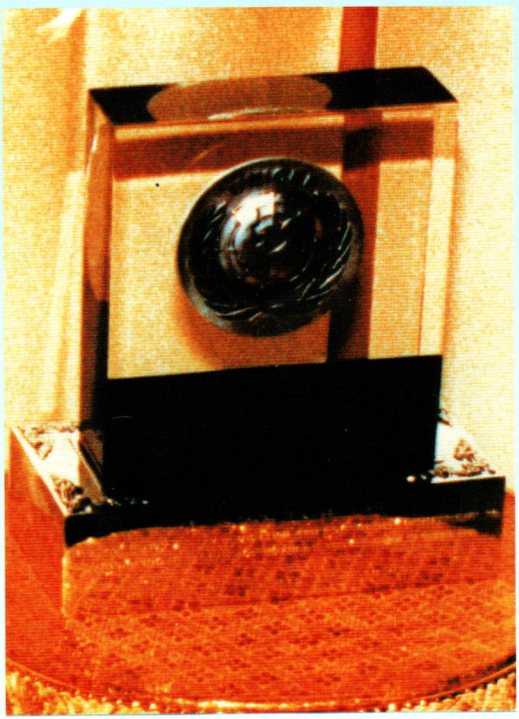
supposed to obey without question and serve their husbands like slaves." [1]

Her Majesty is pleased to lend her patronage to other organizations who promote economics in the family so that women can develop to run a home effectively and with the basic knowledge of home economics required. **The Thai Home Economics Association** (THEA) came under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen in 1963 because it is one of the most determined non-government organizations to support the family, the smallest but most important unit of society, with conferences, seminars, and workshops.

Through home economics, Her Majesty encourages women to be serious about their family responsibilities and find ways to live within their means. THEA aims to make the study of home economics more academic and professional, teaching women how to handle the money issues that every family must deal with, finding new and more cost effective methods of running a home. It generally sees a woman's role in the home as a serious career that requires some academic background knowledge in order to be successful. Such concern of the status of women in society has not gone unrecognized by global bodies either. It was in 1985 that Her Majesty received the Asia Society Humanitarian Award for her work to preserve Thai folk arts and crafts and for elevating the role of women by giving them the means to be economically independent. Later, in 1992, Her Majesty received the ***UNIFEM Award of Excellence*** from ***the United Nations Development Fund For Women.***

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[1] Thongbai Thongpao, **Bangkok Post**, 28 April 1996.



The Special Recognition Award given to Her Majesty by UNICEF.
Engraved on it are the words:
"To Her Majesty Queen Sirikit
In Recognition of Her Dedication and Profound
Commitments to Improving
the Lives of Mothers and Children in Thailand"





The UNIFEM Award of Excellence given to Her Majesty is engraved with the words:

"UNIFEM AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
Presented to
HER MAJESTY QUEEN SIRIKIT OF THAILAND
In recognition of her earnest commitment to
and support of Thai women's contribution to their country
2 August 1992"

Her Majesty's encouragement of others to support the institution of the family gave rise to a general consensus that Her Majesty's birthday on 12 August become National Mother's Day. In recognition of her many charitable activities as mother of the nation. By chance, the vernacular of many hilltribes people assisted by Her Majesty led many of them to refer to her as "Chao Mae Luang" or Royal Mother whenever she visits them.

The Buddhist religion makes it clear that everything is a matter of cause and effect. Her Majesty's interest in the status of women in Thai society has played a role in their development over the past 50 years. By supporting women's groups, Her Majesty has signalled that the way of life of Thai people can change for the better. Thus we see that the constitutional rights of women are equally enshrined with men. However, it is society that will change over time, and the queen pays attention to the opportunities that women have to work and earn a living for themselves and their families. In this, she acts as an example to society of how we can help one another, and how women can help themselves.



Mother's Day 2004.



Hilltribesmen greeting Her Majesty, whom they dub "Royal Mother."



Chapter 6:
Her Majesty's Involvement in Education

Throughout the first decade of the reign, Her Majesty the Queen has been involved in many of His Majesty the King's educational and public welfare programmes, like raising funds for hospital buildings, leprosy programmes, vaccinations against cholera, especially programmes and schools for poor children as stated in her royal speech on 18 August 1986 at Dusitdalai Hall.

> *"...I want to achieve my objectives, to reach out to the poorest people that I can, to give them the four essentials; to make them as developed as the centre of our nation; to allow their children to receive an education. I am determined to ensure the people have an integrated village, with farming, animal husbandry and a rice bank. This is what is called, 'live well, eat well', free from ill health caused by a lack of food."*[1]

As the years passed, Her Majesty developed vocational education projects that provided the poor with a means to supplement their income as farmers. Sometimes this involved teaching them a craft or trade so that they could support their families. Her Majesty's vocational education projects, like the SUPPORT

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[1] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Public Health,** Bangkok : 1995, p. 16.



Viewing SUPPORT students' work.

Foundation discussed in Chapter 4, have helped to bolster Thailand's ancient arts and crafts, reviving them and making them again the pride of all Thai people.

However, not many people are aware of Her Majesty's involvement in general education and her interest in teaching, not simply initiating projects. Keeping in mind His Majesty the King's wish that the queen should pay attention to the family,[1] she has taken schools under her protection and guidance in order to contribute to the future stability of the family. Her Majesty made this desire to stress the importance of education at a National Council for Women on 24 February 1962.

> *"Training provides children with knowledge and a good attitude. They know the value of sharing benefits. This is important for the development of our nation."*[2]

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[1] See also Chapter 3.

[2] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Healthcare,** Bangkok : 1995, p. 37.



Conferring certificates to students of Saipanya School.



Representing His Majesty the King, Her Majesty bestowed sabres and degrees on new graduates of Chulachomklao Military Academy, the Naval Academy, and the Air Force Academy at the Ministry of Defence on 8 April 1975.



Royal Family.

From as early as 1950, Her Majesty has supported girls' schools, for example, Saipanya School in Bangkok. She kept a watchful eye on the school and its students, providing them with additional land for activities in 1952 and bringing the school under royal patronage in 1953. Her Majesty has continued the work begun by His Majesty the King in terms of presenting higher education graduates with their degree certificates, such as at Srinakharinwirot University in 1971. As representative of His Majesty also, the queen has sometimes presented honours and graduation certificates to students of the National Defence College.



Her Majesty's interest in education and teaching stems from her interest in her own children's education. Their Majesties have always been devoted parents and spent hours playing with their children. The king can be seen wearing a polo shirt in family photos playing with the children while the queen sits on the ground telling stories to them. Her Majesty is an avid reader and musician. As she is a classically trained pianist, her family and friends have been entertained by the queen at the piano on several occasions. Although these days, she has little time to practise, one of Her Majesty's secretariat has mentioned that the piano is her means of relaxation. This includes some songs writing on her part, often poetry to be set to music by many of her talented palace musicians. Her favourite subject matter tends to be poetic descriptions of flowers, one of the queen's great interests in conservation matters also.





HRH Prince Vajiralongkorn with his classmate at Chitralada School.

Her Majesty knew well enough that Thai esteem for royalty is such that "teachers at the regular schools would spoil them." In 1955, a school named Chitralada School had already been established in the royal residence, in Bangkok, and students could attend without having to pay fees or for meals in the early days. Her Majesty permitted the children of members of the royal family, their entourage and students from outside to study with her children, Princess Ubol Ratana, Prince Vajiralongkorn, Princess Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn. After the royal children graduated from Chitralada School, the institution continued to operate as a private school.

Besides this, she helped children from families working at the royal household by permitting them to study at Chitralada School. While this opportunity is open to them, should the places be unavailable, Her Majesty will offer a scholarship from her own funds to ensure they receive an education.

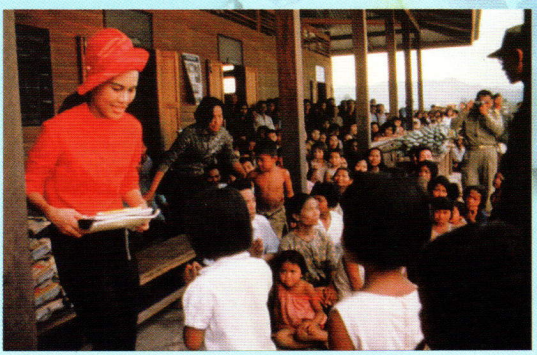


Beachside pavilion at Pran Buri.



Teaching at the beachside pavilion at Pran Buri, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province.

Her Majesty the Queen also initiated the teaching of villagers in various provinces, both adults and children, in the most cost-effective manner. She insisted that education could be provided outside or without school buildings, by teaching children herself in pavilions or on beaches, cooled by sea breezes.



Her Majesty always prepares gifts of books, pencils and uniform for school children in the village.

Her Majesty went to Ban Pran Khiri, Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province early in the reign where she used to teach the village children. It is said that when her automobile swept into the village, children would run excitedly toward the school for their lesson with the queen, shouting to their friends that their royal teacher had arrived. Her Majesty prepared primary level reading practice books for these lessons. The queen often used general information books to read, things that local people would find interesting and not too dry, such as folk stories and the Jataka tales.[1] Sometimes she would read from a history of Thailand and more mature novels by leading Thai writers like ***Red Bamboo*** by MR Kukrit Pramoj. Her Majesty taught individuals and groups of 2 - 3 students, often sitting on the beach under a tree. She gave awards to those who could read fast and diligently, keeping an account of all the students she taught. She listed not only whom she taught, but also how well they studied, noting especially those who could read well. This is an interesting characteristic of Her Majesty.

[1] The tales are a series of stories telling of the many reincarnations of the Lord Buddha.





Visiting a bookstore.

She finds reading to be a valuable attribute and is known to encourage those around her to read. Her gifts for people upon her return from abroad are often books, which she chose on her frequent visits to bookstores. Even if she herself has no time, she will arrange for her companions to be given a tour of the bookshops and has been known to purchase relevant literature, on military matters for instance, for her bodyguards.[1]



Presenting prints of the Lord Buddha's life to teachers, 12 March 1992.

Her Majesty taught general knowledge, but stressed moral education, the story of the Lord Buddha,

[1] From an interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, 2004.

how to be a good person for society and nation, diligence, love of country and of oneself. Her Majesty distributed useful books about religion and others with knowledge of Thailand, such as important places, ancient sites, novels that stimulated knowledge and ideas.

Her Majesty set up temporary SUPPORT centres near several royal palaces and elsewhere, after consulting with local monks about which villages were notably poor. Her Majesty would then select a village that she was informed was particularly in need of assistance and set up a centre there. She would teach



At Sala Ruam Jai.



the children of trainees at the supplementary occupation centres herself, or sometimes asked her royal guards to assist her in teaching subjects such as religion, ethics and health education.



Her Majesty had an idea that she could provide Thai people in the countryside with library sevices and basic health care through a place called **Sala Ruam Jai**. It is similar in part to a local library, containing books and magazines on topics that villagers can use to assist themselves and their own development. These include Buddhist texts, academic books, novels and magazines. Like libraries, they contained newspapers for local people to keep up with national news and general information. Local knowledge was in danger of disappearing, so Sala Ruam Jai act almost as depositories of local wisdom and handicrafts. Basic medicines are also kept there for use by the villagers on the advice of local health volunteers.

One **Sala Ruam Jai** set up at a temple is **Wat Sarawan, Ban Ludong (Sarawan),** Mai Kaen Sub-district, Pattani Province, in the South of Thailand, established on 18 June 1984. These places of knowledge are Her Majesty's personal contribution to villagers, and are good examples of Her Majesty's people-centred approach.

As mentioned above, health volunteers were part of the Sala Ruam Jai facilities. Her Majesty pays for the basic medical training of a number of local villagers who will be stationed at the Sala Ruam Jai, knowledgeable enough to offer immediate, but basic, medical care to the other villagers. Naturally, there is a simple medical kit with essential medicines on hand, and very often a telephone for the volunteers to call a local clinic or government medical centre for the purpose of asking advice when up against something they had never seen before. The Sala Ruam Jai centres were set up in quick succession from 1976 onwards. On 9 March 1976, **Sala Ruam Jai Ban Khun Khong** was established at Hang Dong District, Chiang Mai



His Majesty the King opening a Sala Ruam Jai at Phra Phut Temple, Narathiwat Province.



Visiting the Sala Ruam Jai at Phra Phut Temple, Narathiwat, 3 October 1990.

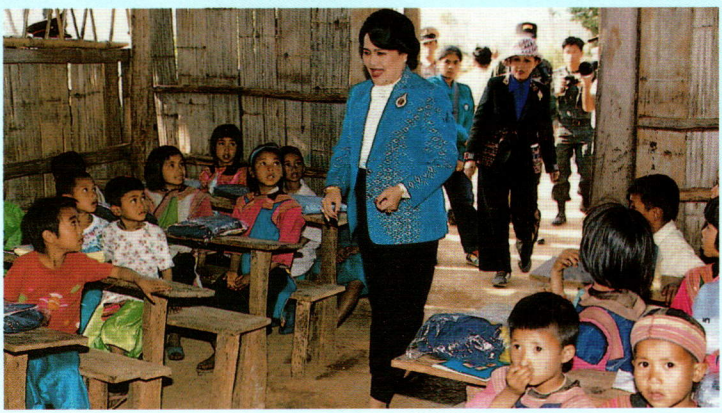


Giving award to a health volunteer.

Province. On the same day, **Sala Ruam Jai Ban Kad** was built near the temple at Ban Don Pao, Ban Kad, San Pa Tong District in the same province.

Whenever the queen visits hilltribes or people in isolated areas, if there is a school, she will visit and observe the classroom. Sometimes Her Majesty will observe classroom teaching so that she could offer advice that might benefit both teachers and students. This advice is based on her broad experience over many years of observation. Her Majesty is particularly interested in health education, social studies and morality. Sometimes Her Majesty donates pictures, clothes, notebooks, pencils and school equipment to such rural village schools. It is fair to say that Her Majesty pays attention to education matters at all levels. For many years, she has accompanied His Majesty the King to universities when he was to present degrees and certificates to graduates. From the grassroots of





Visiting hilltribe schools, Her Majesty provided study equipment to students.

society to the highest level, Her Majesty is interested in all without discrimination.

Although, since the late 1950s, successive governments have placed emphasis on formal education, both Their Majesties have contributed substantially to provide more schools in remote areas for all people. For instance, on 25 April 1962, Her Majesty the Queen donated 13,500 baht "start-up"



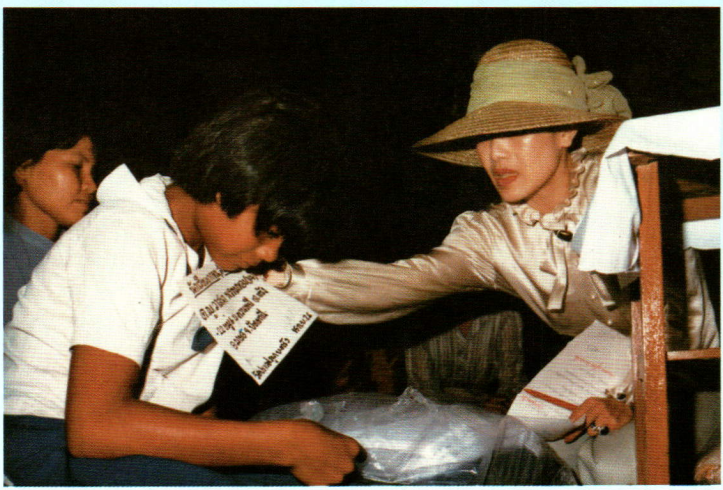
His Majesty conferring degree to Princess Sirindhorn at Chulalongkorn University.

money to build *Chao Mae Luang Uppatham School I* for Yao hilltribes at Ban Huai Khan, Fang District, Chiang Mai. Later, other people donated more money to ensure its construction.

When in 1967, Her Majesty offered 21,000 baht to construct *Chao Mae Luang Uppatham School II* in Chiang Mai. In 1980, the schools were handed over to the government. Her Majesty's effort to provide schools, or at least initiate the construction and encourage other donors, was not for the sake of building a separate block of education institutions that she managed outside of the formal education authorities. It was the initial impetus only that Her Majesty sought to construct schools and start the education process in certain rural areas. Moreover, her charges took their position quite seriously and it was not unusual for royally sponsored schools to do quite well educationally. The Mae Rim Primary School that Her Majesty founded, for example, was later awarded first prize as the best school in the province. It appears to be that the queen's example

motivated both teachers and pupils to do their best. Educational institutions in Bangkok and upcountry are included in Her Majesty's educational projects. Many schools and centres of higher learning have received Her Majesty's support over the years, for example, ***Klai Kangwol Palace School*** in Hua Hin, ***Khon Kaen University*** in the Northeast and ***Maecho Technical Institute*** in the North, all have received her support over the years.

Besides the establishment of schools, Her Majesty has provided scholarships for needy students for many years. In 1961, Her Majesty set up the ***Foundation to Assist Needy Children,*** which by 1992 had helped thousands of children to receive royal scholarships.



Providing assistance to poor children with good academic performance.

The queen provides many scholarships from her own funds and the donations made to her by the public. Her Majesty's secretariat has an education section that is able to track what happens to each scholarship student. Approximately 14,465 students have received such assistance from the royal purse



from 1974 to 2004 and 8,945 are currently being sponsored while they complete their education. The scholarships offered do not stipulate a particular period, and Her Majesty is pleased to provide scholarships for children to study up to any level, depending on their ability. One of the academic criteria is that students should reach a grade point average of at least 2.0. In this way, Her Majesty shows that she is not just providing funds for their education, but actually cares about them and how close they can come to making something of their lives through education and training.

Her Majesty has always paid special attention to the handicapped of Thailand, never allowing them to become marginalized as a forgotten minority.



Hosting the handicapped at Chitralada Villa on New Year Day.



Her Majesty's benevolence enables education and hospital treatment for the handicapped.

Surprisingly, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit granted the ***Foundation of the Blind*** in Thailand under her royal patronage as early as 1951, making the foundation the first to have received her patronage. Originally founded on 2 January 1939 and registered on 10 May that year by Miss Genevive Caulfield, a blind American lady, at a small rented house in Soi Sala Daeng, Miss Caulfield and some Thai students invented a Thai alphabet Braille. The school is now situated on Rachawithi Road, Bangkok. The Department of Public Welfare contributes funds each year, other income coming from donations.

The Foundation of the Blind in Thailand runs five centres, The Bangkok School for the Blind, The Skills Development Centre for the Blind, The Educational



Technology Centre for the Blind, The Samphran Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Centre for Blind Women, The Lighthouse for the Blind. The Foundation tries to provide a chance for blind people to live their lives as normal members of society. They often learn skills such as making handicrafts, knitting, crocheting, rug-making, Thai and international music, singing and stage acting.

The Integrated Education Project of the Bangkok School for the Blind consists of first preparing students at the Bangkok School for the Blind and then integrating them into regular schools. The Bangkok School for the Blind began to integrate blind students into regular schools in 1956. At that time there were no special teachers to support their integration, thus they had to rely on their own abilities to successfully study with sighted children. The first two schools to accept blind students were Saint Gabriel School and Saint Francis Xavier Convent School, the latter of course Her Majesty's alma mater. When integrated blind students graduate from high school, many have continued their studies at Thailand's most prestigious universities like Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen universities among others. Others have gained Fulbright and Columbo Plan scholarships to receive bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees in Australia, India, Japan, the UK and the US.

One other of the most notable organisations to which she has lent Royal Patronage is the ***Siri Wattana Cheshire Foundation***. With Her Majesty's support, the five Cheshire homes in Thailand take care of the handicapped, teaching them to be self-sufficient, for instance by learning handicrafts. The Cheshire Home concept was begun by Leonard Cheshire, a former fighter pilot, just after the end of the Second World



War and promoted strongly in Thailand by Khunying Alma Link, the first foreign woman ever bestowed the title due to her work for the foundation. A typical Cheshire home like the one in Chiang Mai, which has 34 residents and a Cheshire shop to sell the products made by residents earns them some income. Members of the royal family take an interest in organisations



Blind people are trained in handicrafts.



supported by Her Majesty and in early 2004, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visited the Chiang Mai Cheshire home to open its new basketball court. Residents take part in competitions like the Disabled Sports Tournament of Thailand. Such activities by the royal family ensure that every person is entitled to hope in their lives. Her Majesty has stressed the need for the underprivileged and the handicapped to receive the same opportunities as other people in society. In addition to the Siri Wattana Cheshire Foundation, Her Majesty has offered her support to schools for the deaf, and schools for the mentally retarded.

The Foundation for the Deaf was established on 27 October, 1952 by the late ML Pin Malakul, Minister of Education. The foundation provides a service to hearing impaired people, advocates their interests and advances their rights. Noise pollution has made hearing loss the fastest growing disability in Thailand. In 1964 Her Majesty Queen Sirikit granted royal patronage to the foundation because of its efforts to help the deaf lead a normal life. The foundation's main work concerns the fair and equal education of deaf people in education institutions. They provide hearing tests and some rehabilitation. Most of their important work, however, concerns education to enable the deaf to play an active role in society. The foundation follows Her Majesty's work elsewhere in that it teaches the deaf what they need to know, such as sign language, or becoming interpreters for the deaf community. Not all of the people in their care are completely deaf, and for this reason the foundation actively seeks to find hearing aids for those who are hard of hearing.



Opening a building of the Foundation for the Mentally Handicapped in the North, Chiang Mai Province.

Each month a representative of Her Majesty will visit schools like **Si Sangwan School for the Handicapped** under Her Majesty's supervision charged with identifying problems and recommending solutions.



The Foundation for the Deaf, under Royal Patronage, set up a training course for staff and the public in sign language, 8-10 December 2001.



Such problems are not difficult to overcome when someone is willing to seek a solution. One story that illustrates Her Majesty's concern for those less fortunate is that of Darum Bunkum, a boy from Kanchanaburi suffering from Down's Syndrome. When he was seven, he suffered from weakness of one side of his body and was unable to continue his education after grade four. He joined the rehabilitation project run by the **Foundation for the Welfare of the Mentally Retarded of Thailand** under the royal patronage of Her Majesty the Queen. The foundation arranged for physiotherapy for such disabled rural children using natural methods, in this case by giving them small cows to take to graze. This activity enables the children to exercise their limbs. In this case, the community-based rehabilitation project helped Darum's arms and legs grow stronger. Such was the success of his treatment that the foundation, noting that he really enjoyed taking care of these farm animals, gave him the money to buy and raise chickens and Bavary ducks. His parents received training first on how to raise poultry and manage the income. Every three months Darum's progress was monitored by the foundation. He learnt how to vaccinate the birds and prepare their feed according to the prescribed formula. Soon after, Darum found that he could earn enough by selling chicken and duck eggs, ducklings and young chickens and expanded his farm to 50 chickens, 10 pairs of Bavary ducks and five meat cows. His income increased to between 70 to 100 baht per day. Darum learnt about money management from his parents and was able to manage his bank account by himself. He became confident and became physically stronger, developing his intellectual ability to become successful. He wants to make chicken and duck breeding his permanent livelihood.[1]

[1] http:/www.fao.org/DOCREP/004/AD453E/ad453e05.htm



Several trainees are rewarded for their efforts despite their physical disadvantages.



Support is provided for handicapped people to weave liphao, which they enjoy, and earns them some income.



Noi Janta with withered arms weaving chok cloth at a training centre.

Her Majesty's commitment to education which is clearly well integrated into her other projects – teaching handicrafts to the physically handicapped, farming to the mentally handicapped and the like – has received the praise of the communities in which she works, and of the outside world. In 1965, Srinakharinwirot University was gratified to present Her Majesty with an Honorary Doctorate in Education for her contribution to the promotion of education in the country. Her Majesty's benevolent activities will continue to benefit more people for many more years. The Thai people are amazed that so much has been achieved by their queen over the years and never cease to support her by donations of money and other contributions to ensure her work will continue smoothly.



Offering food to the Crown Prince while he was in the monkhood.

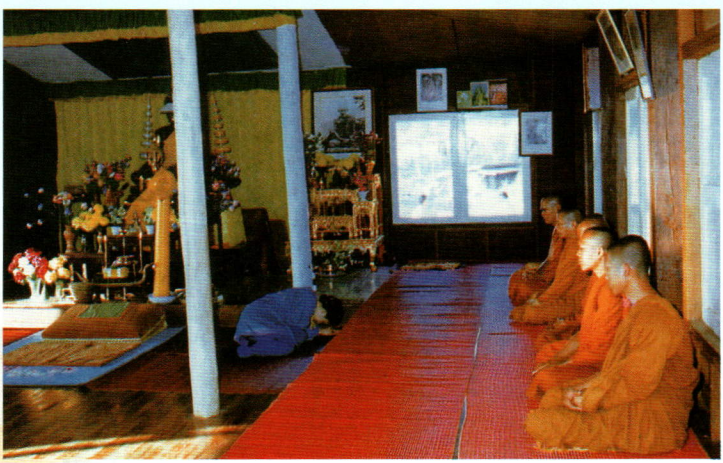
Chapter 7: Sustainable Development of the Spirit

Her Majesty has always been a well-known believer in the power of the human spirit. She has assisted people to help themselves by encouraging them and persuading them to act in a manner that would best serve them in the long term. To this end, Her Majesty often links her work to the beliefs and philosophy of the local villagers. One example of how Her Majesty encourages people to follow a spiritual path in the real world occurred in 1982, when the queen restored the temple at Ban Mae Takhrai, Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand. This served to attract people back to the temple and encourage them to follow the *Dharma*, or teachings of the Lord Buddha. Her Majesty's wish at the time was to see their moral and spiritual development. This she encouraged by requesting the Royal Irrigation Department to turn the area near the new reservoir in the district into a park called the **Mae Takhrai Forest**. The park acts as a recreational and meditation centre for people to learn and practise *Dharma*. Killing animals in the original 30 square kilometre area of the park is therefore strictly forbidden. In initiating the park, Her Majesty was striving to make a place for people to find peace, yet also protecting Thailand's wildlife. This admirable project thereby assisted not only those who entered the park to seek spiritual goals but also the people who lived near the park were brought into play

as they vowed not to hunt animals in the park, as she once pointed out,

"All religions teach people good behaviour."

In order to achieve any of Her Majesty's goals, such as the conservation of wildlife, she first looks to the people to decide for themselves to follow a good path, seeking to appeal to the good in others. Perhaps to the Western mind, this would seem a strange concept, appealing to the good in people rather than relying on the letter of the law. However, one has to understand the very strong intertwining of Buddhism in daily life that is a natural part of the Thai scene and makes such a concept work. Many Thais still practise meditation as a normal part of life. Even young children in primary education have some time set aside for meditation. Most young men later spend a period of contemplation



Paying respect to the monks.



His Majesty King Bhumibol entering the monkhood.



Arranging flowers as offerings to the Lord Buddha.

as novices or monks, while many women go on meditative retreats to provincial temples. Her Majesty has been a practising Buddhist from early childhood and understands its influence on life in Thailand.

> *"I feel that both my personal life and my life as queen could not be the same were it not for the Buddhist religion."*



Their Majesties giving alms to the Supreme Patriarch on New Year Day.

Her Majesty supports religion in many ways, some not so obvious, some more directly, as she sees that it can help people to live in harmony with themselves and others. The **Sala Ruam Jai** libraries that Her Majesty has installed in many villages around the country act



Attending the celebrations for the 300-year anniversary of Conception of the Holy Mother Church in Bangkok.



as local libraries and centres of learning, and Her Majesty has provided them with tapes of Buddhist religious sermons that she feels will be of benefit to the villagers. This helps to create sustainable development of the mind and spirit, just as her other projects create sustainable earnings for the poor.

Thailand is a largely Buddhist nation, but is home to many ethnic groups, tribes and minorities that give it a multicultural flavour. This is perhaps not unique to Thailand as many countries in Asia benefit from a multicultural composition. However, Her Majesty gains the trust of the people she calls upon to be involved in her projects by showing them her respect, though their beliefs may differ from her own. She recognizes these various beliefs and customs add value to the nation and attends rituals and ceremonies when visiting people in the provinces. For instance, in the South, Her Majesty has always been pleased to attend Muslim ceremonies when invited, just as she has attended Christian churches.



On behalf of His Majesty the King, Her Majesty presents gifts and monetary awards at Daksin Palace to provincial representatives of the Muslim community and imams who have acted outstandingly in their duties at Narathiwat Province.



Unveiling a statue of King Naresuan, 1 June 2001.

Spiritual comfort can take many forms. For Thais, perhaps the family is one of the principal sources of spiritual comfort. Her Majesty has encouraged people to love their country by showing it to be "comparable to a large family."[1] She is quick to point out the relationship families have with their heritage, exemplifying the ancestors who sacrificed themselves for Thai independence and therefore emphasizing one's duty to the nation.

> *"to protect the beautiful land that we have inherited from past generations; protect it not only for ourselves but also for our children... and our children's children."*[2]

Thailand is fortunate, she says, that the family is held in such respect here.[3] Her Majesty believes that

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[1] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion, and Public Health,** Kurusapha Press : Bangkok : 1994. p. 50.

[2] Suvit Yodmani (Ed.), **Her Majesty Queen Sirikit and the Environment,** National Identity Board, Bangkok : 1992. p.13.

[3] Ministry of Education, Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Public Health Kurusapha Press, Bangkok : 1994. p. 52.



we should preserve family values and employ modern values that seem appropriate. Her Majesty thus exhorts people

> *"to realize the value of doing things for everybody. It is an important thing to do, to help develop our country. It is good to show gratitude to one's country."* [1]

All this, she appears to say, is to *"join together in harmony:"*[2] It is this harmony that causes spiritual well-being. Likewise, in a family, there can be no discrimination, no favourites. Whether people are of Buddhist, Christian, Muslim or other religious denomination, Her Majesty has endeavoured to show all the same respect and support without discrimination. Thailand is distinctive in its acceptance of other religions.



Presenting saffron robes to Chinese and Vietnamese monks on Her Majesty's 50th birthday.

[1] Ibid. p. 37.
[2] Ibid. p. 56.



Visiting people at the central mosque in Pattani Province.

Whenever Her Majesty goes to the South of Thailand, for example, which has a large proportion of Thai Muslims, she is as much interested in their way of life as she is of the hilltribes or the Northeasterners. The queen has always been pleased to visit mosques whenever she has been offered an invitation. Upon any visit to a holy place of worship, it is not unusual for Her Majesty to donate money for their support, like mosques in the Deep South of Thailand. This is no different from when she visits a Buddhist temple and donates money as a way of making merit.

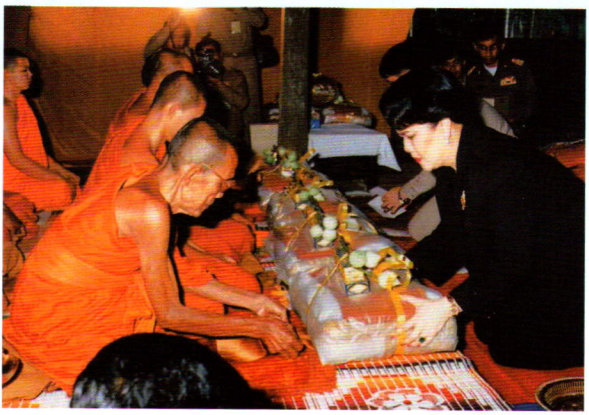
The Christian church, in all its forms, has been present since at least the seventeenth century when the monarch, King Narai, welcomed missionaries. Thailand also maintains an ambassador to the Holy See in Rome to continue the long association of the church with the Buddhist Kingdom. Besides Her Majesty's own account of the visit to the Vatican on 1 October 1960, she was also pleased, with other members of the royal family, to attend a meeting with Thai Christians when Pope John Paul II visited Thailand 10 - 11 May 1984. Naturally,



Welcoming His Holiness Pope John Paul II at the Chakri Throne Hall in the Grand Palace.

Her Majesty is also the patron of St. Francis Xavier Convent School, her alma mater, which is run by the Catholic Church.

Her Majesty the Queen has always followed His Majesty the King to attend important Buddhist religious occasions and ceremonies. Sometimes she has gone upcountry herself to attend religious ceremonies at the temples of people in provincial areas.



Presenting monks with necessary requisities.



Circumambulating the Chapel Royal within the Grand Palace, on the occasion of Visakha Puja Day, 8 May 1990.

One of the important ceremonies is Kathin, the offering of new robes to monks. Usually around October to November, at the end of the rainy season retreat that all Buddhist monks must make, the ceremony is a tradition held in every corner of the Kingdom. Robes are presented to the Buddhist clergy, either in grand ceremonies at royal temples or sometimes in smaller ceremonies in the provinces. Attendance of religious ceremonies is also an opportunity for Her Majesty to talk to the people and learn of their problems.



Offering Kathin robes at Makut Kasatriyaram Temple.



By respecting tradition, Her Majesty endeavours to attend important traditional occasions such as Songkran, the Thai Lunar New Year. One of the main activities of the tradition is to pay respect to one's ancestors. Many people return home to their families for this holiday especially, so that they can strengthen their relationships at home. In this regard, the Songkran



Making merit on Songkran Day (Thai New Year Day).



Loy Krathong Ceremony at Siriyalai Villa, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province.



Among the nuns at the annual meeting of the Thai Buddhist Nuns Institute.



festival is no different for the royal family than for any other Thais. The festival takes place over three days from 13 April. Her Majesty accompanies the king in offering food to monks on 15 April at the Chapel Royal in the Grand Palace in Bangkok. Her Majesty is duty-bound to respect the beliefs of all subjects and customs or traditions are a part of the stability of the country and its institutions that has been the envy of many other nations. For this reason, she joins in several religious rites and customs, many of which are hundreds of years old. One example familiar to tourists in November is Loi Krathong, a festival to present offerings to the water goddess on small banana leaf boats. Such customs are well known across Southeast Asia.

The queen has displayed her spiritual attachment to the Buddhist religion in several ways. She is the patron of the Sunday Buddhist Centre Foundation, The Buddhism and Tradition Club and the Foundation for Buddhist Nuns. This latter is most interesting because it combines Her Majesty's wish to support her religion, and her desire to aid women. Nuns play an important part in Thai society. Besides seeking a spiritual life, many are in touch with the world through charitable work, performing many social functions also, such as teaching.

Her Majesty's words to one group of Buddhist nuns at Wat Bovornives in Bangkok, set the tone of her own feelings:

> *"Those who would be nuns are seeking knowledge of the Dharma in order to find peace and escape suffering. Those of us who do not wish to be unhappy should look kindly on those who escape suffering. They are the same as us. Therefore, nuns ought to join their*



Accompanying His Majesty on one of his field trips.

strength, their spirit, to help those who wish to escape suffering."[1]

This is an aspiration of Buddhists – to eradicate suffering through spiritual strength. Her Majesty has spent her life trying to help others to cope with their life's suffering, both by her support of women, as one example, and her support of religious principles. The queen, a prominent woman, has assisted others to abate suffering by her own sacrifice. Her Majesty's royally initiated projects are one way of ensuring that people are provided a way to create their own income and escape the cycle of poverty; in doing so, people are provided a measure of happiness. Breaking out of the cycle of poverty, like breaking out of the cycle of

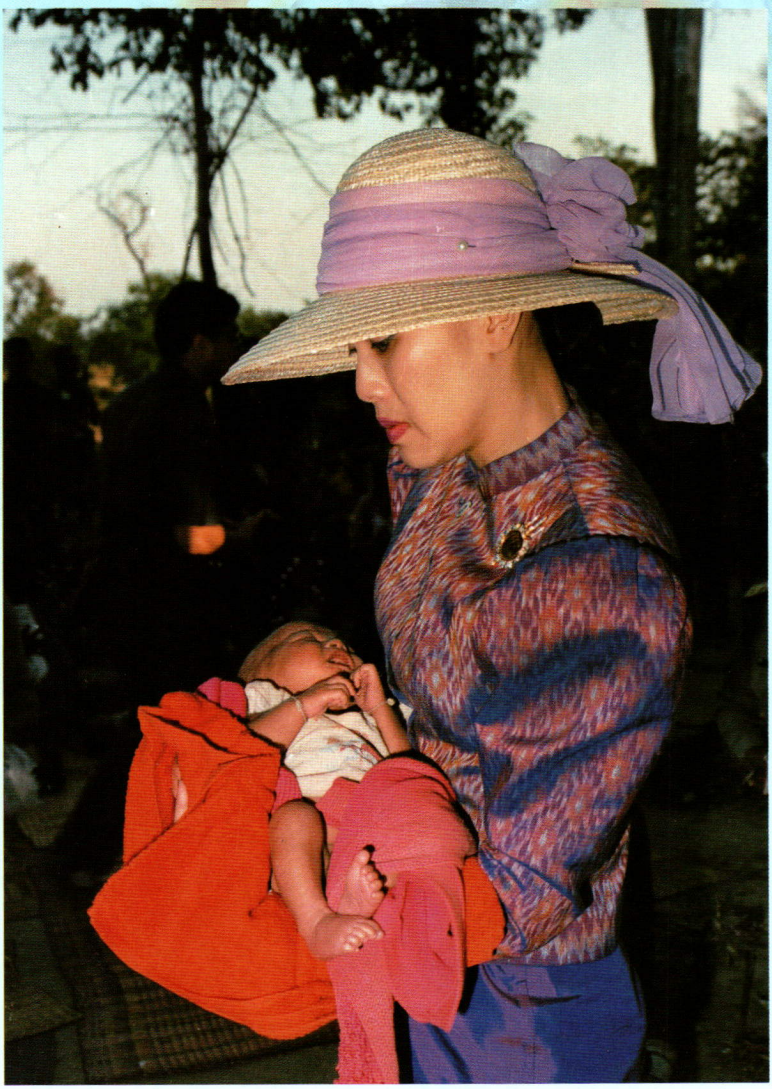
[1] Ministry of Education, ibid, p. 149.



suffering, of which Lord Buddha spoke, has been Her Majesty's way of achieving her own happiness. Her Majesty Queen Sirikit has selflessly worked for the benefit of the Thai people, and often for people of neighbouring countries, with little thought for herself. Her Majesty's support for the spirit, mind and body of the Thai people has kept her young and active. This has often brought her to the attention of foreigners, many of whom are amazed at her energy and perseverance.

Her Majesty's humanitarian work through educational and spiritual development are important elements of her gracious assistance to those who have no other source of help. Her Majesty has deep inner resources of spiritual and moral decency that lead her to overt demonstrations of love for her subjects that would appear unthinkable to those more aloof from their subjects. Moreover, this empathy extends to all who suffer, regardless of nationality, race or status.





Her Majesty holding a baby while a royal doctor examines its mother.

Chapter 8:
Relief of Suffering

The early hours in Nan Province, among the mountains of the far North of Thailand, are chilly and quiet. *Private Sommai Thongphraphakun* of the 21st Infantry Regiment had recently returned from a visit to his mother and sisters in Bangkok. It was 9 April 1975, and the Communist insurgency in Thailand was a major threat to the unity of the country. By 30 April, the Americans were to be defeated in Vietnam, leaving Thailand as the last **"domino"** in Southeast Asia to stand against a hostile ideology.

Sommai had completed one tour of voluntary duty and he had told his mother in Bangkok a few days earlier of his intention to return to his regiment. She had burst into tears and begged him not to go. His father *Yokphang Sae Liak*, a Chinese immigrant from Hainan Province, passed away in 1972 leaving his mother, *Thongyip*, with seven children to support, which she did by selling charcoal with Sommai's elder sister, *Narin*. The family had changed its surname to *Thongphraphakun* when Sommai entered the army.

About 200 Thai soldiers were posted at a place called Huai Kon near Thung Chang District on the border with Laos. Night became day with the flashes of gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades as insurgents attacked their position. They fought until everyone ran out of bullets. The radio went silent and enemy forces clambered over bodies and the wounded. They hooked the red banner to a pole and were about to plant it in



Visiting soldiers posted at Nan Province.

victory when a cry went up. *Sommai* with a few others arose and attacked them with empty rifles. After a few minutes of vicious hand-to-hand fighting, Sommai and 16 other comrades were stabbed and clubbed to death, their bodies scattered one on top of another, silent.

When the official messenger arrived at their home, the children begged that the news wait until their mother had finished bathing and dressing. When she came in and learnt the news of her son's death, Thongyip was inconsolable. In addition to the great personal loss of her eldest son, she found herself facing a black hole of never-ending poverty.

There was to be a funeral in Chon Buri, headquarters of the 21st Infantry and on the day, Thongyip was still in tears, unable to accept the tragedy. Her Majesty the Queen, as Honorary Commander-in-Chief of the Regiment, attended the funeral and saw Thongyip weeping uncontrollably with her children



around her. Her Majesty appeared particularly moved by the sacrifice of the 17 soldiers in Nan, and of their heroism. Amid the shocked expressions of the other attendants, she walked over, comforting her and saying,

"Don't worry, I won't leave you. If you have any trouble, tell me and I will help."

The significance of this small yet personal act was immeasurable.

Thanpuying Suprapada Kasemsant, then Her Majesty's Private Secretary, and Thanpuying Manatnit Vanikkul appeared one day at their home to enquire about the family. As they entered, they saw the two youngest girls, *Duang-ruethai* and *Somjai* playing on the floor. Looking around at the abject poverty of the family, they met with Thongyip and discussed what to do. They did not offer money, for Her Majesty does not believe that free cash is a long-term solution to poverty, but Her Majesty offers something more precious, an education.

Narin, the eldest daughter, wanted to stay home to help her mother, but all the other children were provided an education at Her Majesty's expense. When they asked the eighteen-year-old daughter *Chonthicha* what she wanted, she said she would like to learn dressmaking. They nodded and after one month Chonthicha was arranged to enter the palace to study dressmaking. Thanpuying Thasamai Savetserani, Her Majesty's personal dressmaker at the time, was assigned to oversee her instruction. As she was often called upon to attend to the queen in different parts of the country, she asked her sister, ML Rapeepan Devakul to supervise the girl.

The younger children fondly remember that every month or two Police General Vasit Dejkunchon, who

was in charge of the Royal Court Police, came over to chat with the younger students. He instilled in them an understanding that to help others was a part of Her Majesty's life and should be a part of theirs.

However, Her Majesty's grace did not simply cover a basic education. The two youngest children in the Thongphraphakun family became very sick. *Duang* had bad asthma, so bad that her lips sometimes turned blue from lack of oxygen. The youngest sister *Somjai*, whose nickname is Nam, had a skin disease that formed a layer of extremely hard skin covering her neck. Her mother had tried everything within her power to cure this affliction, but due to her financial means this really meant only visiting temples and asking monks to offer a magical cure. Her Majesty requested that a royal physician, Lt. Gen. Doctor Assawin Dhepakam, treat both.

As they were poor, the family was a bit apprehensive. The treatment was expected to be costly and they informed Doctor Assawin that they could not afford to pay, but he told them the queen would pay and not to worry about it. Another obstacle to their treatment : Phra Mongkutklao Military Hospital where the doctor worked at that time was quite far from their home and they had to walk a long time to get there. When they visited he would reach into his pocket and give them the bus fare back home.

Duang went on to complete her university education thanks to the queen. Nam decided to leave after completing lower secondary school, preferring to help her mother in a new business, a restaurant selling fried noodles. Soon, all the sisters joined in the family business and it thrived thanks to their motivation to work hard and their gratitude to the queen for giving them a chance in life.



Visiting the Thai Red Cross Centre, Khao Lan, Trat Province.

As an example of Her Majesty's relief of the suffering, the Thongphraphakun family is perhaps typical but far from unique. Sommai was one of hundreds who sacrificed their lives for their country, leaving behind families who suffered no less. Her Majesty was concerned for all who suffered and worked tirelessly to help alleviate their suffering whenever possible.

Her Majesty's inspiration came, she once mentioned,

"I was accompanying His Majesty the King upcountry and I saw these sick people afflicted with severe diseases. I thought to myself, we could help these

people officially. We could prevent the parents of these families from becoming so sick that they just died, because each family had seven or eight children. They didn't raise these children to die for no good reason."[1]

The futility of such preventable deaths impressed Her Majesty, who understood that rural people had an inadequate social security, pension and welfare system to fall back on. She realized what would happen if the mother and father were to become chronically sick or die.

"Those seven or eight children, instead of being the future strength of the country... would become a burden to the nation. For this reason, I think we ought to lend our assistance."[2]

Her Majesty then set about identifying those who required assistance. It was not an easy task. Considering that those who turned out to see the queen when she visited them usually wore their "Sunday best," Her Majesty had to utilize powers of observation worthy of a detective: She instructed her staff.

"Do not look at the way they are dressed, Always look at their faces, look into their eyes."[3]

Her Majesty would look into their eyes for a hint of sadness and would ask quiet questions. She would then listen to their stories and usually there would be included somewhere in the litany, mention of illness, sitting there brooding above the issues of occupation or drought.

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[1] Thasaneepan Chanthathot, **The Great Queen and National Development,** Bangkok : 2000, p. 16.
[2] Ibid, p. 16.
[3] Ibid, p. 17.



Asking the sick about their symptoms.



Medical Aid from Royal Doctors

Their Majesties had seen the condition in which the people lived on their earlier visits to rural areas. Understanding that medical treatment for the population was still inadequate, the king later permitted the Royal Medical Unit to treat the public in April 1965. Her Majesty then commenced many of her own

activities involving medical assistance for the rural poor. Her Majesty's staff became deeply involved in the care of patients, keeping track of their welfare and the treatment they required.

The Royal Medical Unit was further instructed to accompany Their Majesties on provincial visits. Thus, units were established at Klai Kangwol Palace, in Hua Hin, the upper South of the country, at Phuping Palace in the northern city of Chiang Mai; the upper Northeast city of Sakon Nakhon, at Bhuphan Palace; and in the southernmost region at Daksin Palace, Narathiwat. Royal medical teams are composed of volunteer doctors and doctors who are part of the Royal Medical Unit who set up temporary mobile facilities in small villages especially for royal visits.

Their Majesties later took this a step further and implemented a project to provide people with royally sponsored doctors in 1967 when they were residing at Klai Kangwol Palace. The team was authorized to go out to visit more remote areas of the country starting with Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan provinces, all not far from Klai Kangwol Palace.

In 1969,[1] Their Majesties were visiting the Royal Project in the far North accompanied by the project leader, Prince Bhisadej Rajani. While the royal intention was to donate some pigs, seeds and essentials to the hilltribes, tribesmen who were extremely ill met them. His Majesty requested his personal physician, Prof. Dr Danai Snidvongse na Ayudhaya to check the villagers. In the same year, Prince Bhisadej requested His Majesty to allow royal doctors to visit people

[1] Ibid, p. 17.



living in so-called "red" or "pink" areas of Thailand[2], that is, the areas where Communism had taken a foothold. It was important at the time to assist villagers in these areas so that they would not feel neglected by the authorities. This was the start of the royally initiated





Her Majesty's personal doctors tending to sick hilltribe people.

[2] "Pink" areas in the past referred to those where locals held communist sympathies.



Her Majesty and Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn observing royal doctors providing medical treatment.

doctors project and led in the next two or three years to an expansion of medical assistance, commencing in Chiang Rai, in the Golden Triangle that borders Myanmar and Laos, then extending throughout the North.

The Royal Medical Unit then went to treat people in provincial and district hospitals. Their Majesties' personal doctors worked in the vicinity of whichever palace the king and queen were residing, from eight o'clock in the morning to around four thirty. Besides the personal physicians of the royal family, there were also volunteer doctors and military doctors. Her Majesty's ladies-in-waiting and secretariat dispensed medicine. Each day four of them would accompany the doctors in their rounds. Someone from Her Majesty's



Personal Affairs Division would take notes of the medical record of each patient and those who needed to enter a hospital for further treatment. The only palace that did not have a Royal Medical Unit attached was the one in Chiang Mai, a large metropolis with adequate modern facilities to tend to the sick.



Seriously ill people are taken by helicopter for emergency treatment.

Whenever villagers are hospitalized under this royal sponsorship of medical treatment, they are visited regularly by ladies-in-waiting and members of Her Majesty the Queen's Personal Affairs Division until they are fit enough to go home. This Division effectively takes over administration matters concerning the patient after admission. They ensure that the medicines used to treat patients are no different from those used by Their Majesties. The funding for such medical treatment originally all came from the Privy Purse, with some donations by individuals and socially conscious

companies. Medical supplies were bought directly from the government-owned pharmaceutical organization.

If the patient is the head of a family and needs to be sent to Bangkok for treatment or surgery, Her Majesty will advise the Division to arrange for someone to take care of the family or for local officials to pay them a visit occasionally. They are usually supported financially, temporarily, to tide them over until the head of the family is well enough to work. Should the patient be unable to take care of his or her dependants thereafter, be crippled or even die, the children of school age also receive royal assistance in the form of an education or occupational training so that they can later take care of themselves. Children are considered the weakest among all the people especially those without a family. A recent example followed the



Overseeing the administration of medicine by a mother to her sick child.



discovery of a new-born baby at a department store called Future Park in northern Bangkok on 20 July 2004. Within days, it was reported that Her Majesty had taken the baby, nicknamed "Future", under her royal patronage, meaning that he would be provided for until he reaches maturity.[1]



Observing the work of the mobile medical unit while visiting the people of Mae Tam Village, Lampang Province.

In 1969, the year that Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the surface of the moon, royal medical assistance to impoverished and neglected farmers and hilltribesmen had been extended to include an Ear, Nose and Throat Doctors Project. Among the patients who came to receive treatment, a large number had ear ootorrhoea and breathing system malfunctions. Her Majesty the Queen arranged for doctors to treat those

[1] "Brighter Future for Queen's Boy," **The Nation**, July 23, 2004, p. 4A.

patients, but the more she became involved the more Her Majesty could see that more help was needed.

Far from being cautious when in the vicinity of so many sick people, Her Majesty's concern sometimes took the better of her. One doctor brought her Hussein, 35, a tuberculosis victim already coughing up blood. Once again, Her Majesty caused much commotion among her aides as she leaned towards the consumptive man and listened to his whispered story.







Royal concern for sick people.



"I know I must be careful, but they are shy and they speak so softly and if I don't get close to them I cannot hear what they say." [1]

She said later of the incident.

Having heard his tale of poverty and sickness, Her Majesty took command of the situation immediately.

"He must go to hospital right away before he infects his children, he has three,"

The queen instructed an aide. She promised Hussein that she would pay his medical expenses and, if necessary, see his wife and children housed in the palace compound until he could recuperate. Aware of the psychological needs of the man, his pride, she also slipped him some money so he would not worry about leaving home without any.

The seventies saw the country under serious threat from the activities of the communists both from within and outside. The war in Vietnam was escalating and the Americans commenced the bombing of neighbouring Cambodia. Even though the king has seen the need for projects that would allow hilltribes and lowland farmers to be more self-sufficient, it was increasingly difficult to enter certain parts of the country except in daylight and by helicopter as the communists controlled the jungles surrounding the villages by night. Her Majesty the Queen, who accompanied His Majesty the King on missions to visit the poor people in the provinces, began to take on more duties to assist these people. She took with her a retinue of female staff who were to play an increasingly vital part in the administration of Her Majesty's projects.

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[1] Pheungchit Suphamitr, **Royal Visits Abroad**, Bangkok : p. 280.



Guiding a blind soldier.

Her Majesty saw that even so the wounded had a difficult time being moved to a safe place for medical treatment. She attempted to alleviate this problem in Nakhon Phanom Province, in the far Northeast close to Laos and particularly infested with communist guerrillas, by providing them with an armoured ambulance in 1972.

It was not just the North and the borders with Laos and Cambodia that suffered due to the communist insurgency. In 1976, communists were infiltrating the South and people were suffering. From 12 May 1975, senior doctors from the Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand[1] volunteered to support Her Majesty's medical assistance to the people in the South by treating patients in Narathiwat for free. By 21 January 1977, with fighting against cross-border terrorists in Narathiwat and Sakon Nakhon increasing, a group of specialist surgeons formed a Volunteer Surgeon Project under Her Majesty's guidance.

[1] See http://www.inet.co.th/org/rcst/ for more information on this organization.





Conferring certificate on a village doctor.

Her Majesty's initiatives to relieve the suffering of the poor and dispossessed in rural areas were proving to have both immediate and longer-term effects. Combined with the king's rural development projects, medical assistance was winning the hearts of the people. A **Village Doctor Project** was established to provide villagers with a measure of self-help. Doctors began to train volunteers for the first time in 1981 at Kawila Military Hospital, Chiang Mai. Later, in 1982, Her Majesty the Queen asked Doctor Assawin Dhepakam to oversee the project on her behalf. Her Majesty had noted that villagers had begun to ignore the healthy food that was once a traditional part of their lives, like the small banana, *Kluai Nam Wa*,[1] or even brown rice.

[1] *Musa sapientum* Linn.

Her medical team was now to advise the villagers on nutrition and the value of eating wholesome traditional foods in order to prevent sickness and disease.

Their Majesties' personal dentist, Dr. Si Sirisingh, was asked in 1969 to continue working after his retirement to help people with dental problems. Within no time more dentists volunteered to assist in this project and by April 1970 the first Royal Dental Unit began to operate in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province near Klai Kangwol Palace.

The Department of Military Medicine has been entrusted since 1984 to assist the Royal Dental Project. This was partly because the terrorist actions around the country made military personnel the most experienced at dealing with the sick and wounded. Moreover, many types of civilian doctors also volunteered to help Her Majesty's medical projects over the years.

People who lost limbs to mines and bombs suffered not only the pain of their wounds, but the loss of limbs meant that they were often unable to fend for themselves or take proper care of their families. Thus it was in 1984 also that the ***Mobile Royal Artificial Arm and Leg Project*** was initiated by Her Majesty to ease the suffering of those who had suffered enough already. First started at Daksin Palace, Narathiwat and then expanded to Bhuphan Palace, Sakon Nakhon, the people in areas infested with insurgent activity were thus able to find some relief and help.[2]

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[2] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Healthcare,** Bangkok : 2541, p. 88.



Her Majesty's Relief Work through the Thai Red Cross under Royal Patronage

Besides efforts to utilize the resources of various medical units in the fight to ease the suffering of the poor and underprivileged, Her Majesty also serves as president of an organization dedicated to relieving the suffering, the ***Thai Red Cross under Royal Patronage.***

The history of the Red Cross began in Europe with Swiss humanitarian Jean Henri Dunant (1828 - 1910). He established the Red Cross in 1863 as a voluntary relief service. It provided a welfare service for victims of war and to help carry out the terms of the Geneva Conventions of war. Today, it includes services such as maintaining blood banks, offering training in first aid and water safety, caring for victims of such disasters as floods, fires, and famines and aiding refugees. One of Bangkok's thoroughfares, Henri Dunant Road, passes Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. The road was named in Dunant's honour.

Thirty years after its establishment in Europe, in 1893, Thailand found itself in a brief war with Laos, a French colony, about the location of the border between Thailand and Laos. Thanpuying Plian Phasakorawongse, the wife of Chao Phraya Phasakorawongse (Phon Bunnag) felt there should be an organization to help the soldiers similar to the Red Cross. She informed Queen Savang Vadhana and requested her patronage in setting up an organization to relieve the hardship of soldiers fighting on the borders of Laos. King Chulalongkorn commended this idea and the organization was set up on 26 April. It was originally called the ***Red Unalom Society.*** Queen



Queen Saovapha Phongsri, the first President of the Red Cross Society of Siam.

Saovabha Phongsri was its first president. Thanpuying Plian Phasakorawongse was its secretary. Its main activities were sending medicines, food, clothes and other useful goods to support soldiers on the battlefield.

Royal decrees in 1918 and 1920 formed the legal basis for the ***Siamese Red Cross Society.*** It was recognized by the International Red Cross Society in 1920 and became a member of the International Federation in 1921.

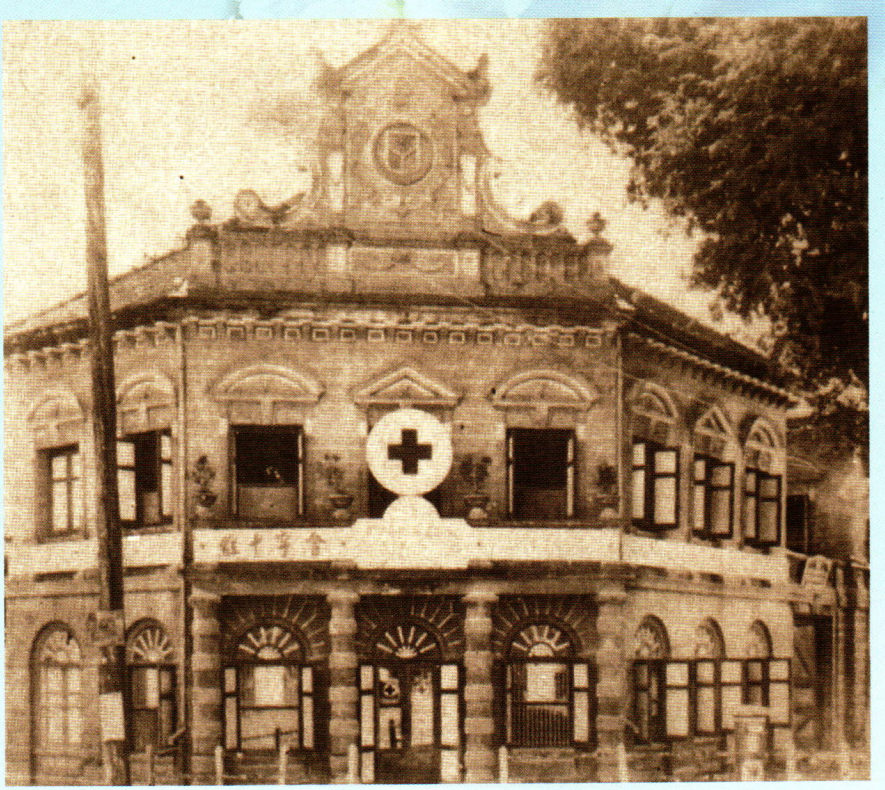


The emblem of the Siamese Red Unalom Society.



Queen Savang Vadhana, the second President of the Red Cross Society of Thailand.

Queen Savang Vadhana, the second President of the Red Cress Society of Thailand, passed away in 1955. His Majesty King Bhumibol, noting that the position was vacant for some time, and realizing that



The original location of the Thai Red Cross. At present, the site is the Army Mapping Building.

with her compassion, Queen Sirikit was able to devote herself to helping others less fortunate, appointed Her Majesty the President of the Red Cross Society of Thailand under Royal Patronage on 12 August 1956. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn now serves as Executive Vice President.





Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the current President of the Thai Red Cross Society.



HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Executive Vice President of the Thai Red Cross Society.





Accompanying His Majesty the King to open the Blood Donation Centre on 12 November 1953.

Blood Donations Save Lives

The National Blood Donation Centre of the Thai Red Cross Society is a vital part of the work Her Majesty does to help the sick. It identifies blood types and supplies blood donations to needy hospitals throughout the country.

Blood donations to the Red Cross have increased steadily thanks to Her Majesty's support. Provincial chapters of the Society have multiplied, ensuring that accident victims and those requiring surgery have sufficient supply of blood for transfusions.

The Centre has also become an important part of the state medical system, entrusted by the Ministry of Public Health with formulating and carrying out a national blood programme. Her Majesty has played an active role in encouraging people to donate blood, for example, by issuing a pin honouring blood donors. This was symbolic, yet for Thai people it means a lot more than it would anywhere else. The great respect and affection felt for the queen provides an extraordinary impact on their lives. Her Majesty acknowledged the efforts of others to aid their fellow Thais, as when she told them,

> *"I am very pleased to meet the blood donors to the Blood Donation Centre, Thai Red Cross. I realize that you extend the lives of Thais in need of blood..."*[1]



Pins honouring blood donors.

[1] Ministry of Education. **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Healthcare**. p. 189



Attending the Thai Red Cross Fair in 1996.



Attending the ceremony of handing the commemoration pins to blood donors.

These words often caused people to donate out of their faith in her because she mentioned it was needed. The Red Cross does not pay for blood, and furthermore, the Thai people's willingness to donate it is not out of any commercial interest but rather a mark of their highest respect and devotion to Her Majesty. It is common for many people to donate blood on the birthdays of Their Majesties the King and Queen and other members of the royal family. Often, mobile blood donation vehicles will visit companies and military units where hundreds of people will line up to donate at one time. Thai movie stars play a leading role also in encouraging people to donate for a worthy cause. For those Thais who are Buddhists, the act of giving a part of one's own body to help others is highly valued. To optimise safety for blood recipients, Her Majesty insisted on thorough scientific testing of the donated blood before its use.

Blood and blood components are supplied to hospitals in the Bangkok area and the nearby provinces. Blood surpluses are converted into individual components and blood products for the treatment of certain diseases. The centre also conducts research, organizes training in the areas of haematology and transfusion medicine and helps set up regional Red Cross Blood Centres. In 1997, there were 146 provincial blood centres nation-wide. In Bangkok area alone, about 400,000 units of blood are collected annually.[1]

The Thai Red Cross has been operating efficiently due to the goodwill built up globally by Her Majesty

[1] For further information, please see the Thai Red Cross website http:/www.redcross.or.th



AIDS Centre

the Queen over the years. Concerns and fears about the spread of AIDS for instance have led to much research work being done in Thailand in collaboration with other countries and organizations like the ***Netherlands–Australia–Thailand Co-operative HIV Research Project*** (HIV-NAT). This project has involved the Thai Red Cross, AIDS Research Centre, the Netherlands National AIDS Therapy Evaluation Centre and the Australian National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research. Such research also involves collaboration with various universities and government hospitals in Thailand.

Her Majesty's Thai Red Cross Activities

There is an office at the Thai Red Cross especially entrusted to take care of war victims. The office trains people to help in emergencies and stocks the items needed to care for people in a war like medicine and food. In early 1979, Cambodia had suffered through four years of war and genocide by the Khmer Rouge. When a Vietnamese army of over one hundred thousand invaded Cambodia on Christmas Day 1978,[1] the regime came to an end, but the suffering of the people did not.

By 7 January 1979, Phnom Penh was deserted in the face of the invading army. People were relatively free and began to search out long lost relatives across the country, however, ignoring the need to plant rice for the next harvest. The result was disastrous as famine gripped Cambodia. Refugees, fleeing the civil war, starving and in rags, tried to cross the border into Thailand for safety, mostly through crossing points in Prachin Buri, Chanthaburi and Trat provinces. Over the years of war across the border, Thai authorities pushed them back for a time. Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, however, upon hearing of the refugees trying to cross the Thai border in desperation, advised the then Prime Minister that the border be opened to them.[2]

The Khao Lan Refugee Camp

In Trat as many as 40,000 people crossed the border and simply sat down at an area known as Khao

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[1] David P. Chandler, **A History of Cambodia,** (Chiang Mai : Silkworm Books, 1993), p. 223.

[2] Account of Dr Suvit Yodmani, the then Government Spokesman (1977 - 1980).



Lan. Skeletal refugees lay down to die. Conditions were awful, with virtually no hygiene, making the situation also look ripe for epidemics.

Her Majesty was staying at Klai Kangwol Palace with other members of the royal family. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, as Executive Vice President of the Thai Red Cross Society received the report. She informed Her Majesty the Queen of the situation and the royal president of the Thai Red Cross decided that some personal action was now required.



The condition of refugees seen by Her Majesty at the beginning of the influx.

Her Majesty's Private Secretary at the time, Thanpuying Suprapada Kasemsant, was ordered to accompany Her Majesty to Khao Lan. This order concerned the queen's staff, who had heard of the terrible conditions there. It was not considered "appropriate" for Her Majesty to go herself. Yet go they must.



Observing refugees from Cambodia.

It was the stench that let the royal party know they had found the right spot. The refugees had no facilities and had used the ground around them as a public toilet. Exiting a helicopter meant delicately walking through a stinking minefield of excrement, yet



Taking care of a Cambodia child.



Her Majesty ordered the provision of milk to the children first and supervised the activity.

Her Majesty kept her chin up and carried on walking to see for herself "what was what". She saw people sleeping and lying everywhere using just their traditional loincloths for blankets. They were exhausted and decidedly unclean.

Government policy was to drive them back over the border, though this now appeared impossible – the hundreds and hundreds of ragged, starving people were far too exhausted. To push them back would be a disaster as there was no food there, and what aid reached Phnom Penh was often used to feed the occupying army.[1] A site was put aside for them at Khao Lan. Her Majesty, due to her compassion, would take care of these people to give them shelter, clothes, food and medical relief. Her Majesty thereupon decided to make it a Thai Red Cross Project and on 26 May

[1] David P. Chandler, **A History of Cambodia**, Chiang Mai : Silkworm Books, 1993, p. 230.



Her Majesty stayed overnight at the Thai Red Cross Centre, Khao Lan, in order to check all the ongoing work herself.

1979 the queen ordered a refugee camp built, and established a Red Cross Centre at Khao Lan. For this act, Her Majesty not only gained the thanks of the Cambodian refugees, but also the respect of many foreigners due to her graciousness in helping these people.

The former Border Patrol Police Deputy Commander and Deputy Director of the Village Scouts was the co-ordinator of the project and explained what had been done to help the refugees.

"On 2 July, 1984, I took the Village Scouts to see Princess Sirindhorn at the Dusidalai Hall. Her Majesty





Observing a temporary surgical bed, Her Majesty advised the use of bamboo for its construction. Sick people were brought in on a stretcher and placed on a bed frame, alleviating the need to move the patient further.

was keen to teach Thai to the Khmer children. The interpreters of the Border Patrol Police and soldiers taught Thai together with Catholic nuns who taught English. The children were also taught Khmer, mathematics, social sciences and history by the older, educated Khmer refugees.

The objective of teaching the refugees was to help them prepare for settlement in third countries as well as to give them something to do.

Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn ordered Border Patrol Schools to be opened in the camp. In fact, these schools were originally opened all over Thailand for Thais. As these people would probably be in Thailand for a long time, and their future was in some doubt, we had to teach them Thai language and culture. We aimed to give these children self-realisation and self-help. They were to be able to take care of themselves in these camps and in whichever third countries they went without being a burden to others. We also aimed to show them how to be able to develop their own country should they one day be able to return to it.

... Her Royal Highness had us separate the children into different ages for school through primary one, two, three and four. We arranged for Border Patrol Police to help teach. Those children who were not of primary school age we divided into two groups: those who had some primary school education already and another group with no basic education. The latter undertook an adult education course. We got volunteers to take up vocational education while the former carried on with their formal education. We received co-operation from the Eastern Vocational School, which was in Prachin Buri. They came in to help teach occupations. Those interested in animal husbandry and agriculture were allowed to study it for instance."[1]

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[1] National Identity Board, **"Chak Fa Su Din"** Volume 4, Bangkok : 1988. pp. 69 - 74.



Observing weaving at the SUPPORT Centre, Khao Lan.

By 4 July 1986, the Thai Red Cross Centre at Ban Khao Lan was closed down after the situation in Cambodia had improved enough to allow the refugees to return safely to their own country, while some emigrated to third countries. However, similar problems were to plague the country's neighbours for a long time to come.

In 1997, a new influx of refugees from Cambodia and Myanmar called the Thai Red Cross to action. The Thai government accorded a co-ordinating role to the society among NGOs providing assistance to the displaced Cambodians and the society acted with more authority as an implementing partner of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

The Thai Red Cross has assisted thousands of refugees from Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos over the years through the auspices of Her Majesty, mainly



HRH Princess Chulabhorn, representing Her Majesty the Queen, received the United Nations' Centre for Migration Studies Immigration and Refugee Policy Award, 29 March 1990 in Washington D.C., US.

through the provision of curative health services and food aid. These humanitarian missions provide relief to refugees, who it can be said owe their safety and survival to Her Majesty the Queen's intervention.

Victims of Natural Disaters Get Royal Help

Typhoons and floods often strike Thailand. For instance, tropical storm Harriet hit the south coast of Thailand on 27 October 1962 and caused 769 deaths and US$19 million worth of damage.[1] His Majesty the King at the time formed the Rajaprajanugroh Foundation to assist disaster victims. In November 1970, a devastating flood that destroyed large expanses of rice fields and brought immeasurable suffering to the people struck Nakhon Phanom Province, in the far

[1] Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, http://www.adrc.or.jp/ 2003.



Northeast of Thailand. Their Majesties the King and Queen visited the flood victims and donated relief supplies to alleviate their plight. His Majesty the King observed that,

> *"Distributing supplies to the victims is like throwing pebbles into the river. How much would be needed to help the people survive (the crisis)?"*[1]

As if to bring matters to a head, on 3 November 1989, Hurricane Gay smashed the south coast once more causing 458 deaths and affecting 184,000, causing US$452 million worth of damage.

The Thai Red Cross, with Her Majesty at the helm, is well suited to respond to emergencies like natural disasters. In some cases, the goodwill that she had developed overseas for so many years was needed to gain support and assistance from those countries that had long been friends of Thailand. Such an event occurred on 11 August 2001. Typhoon Usagi, accompanied by floods and landslides in the North and Northeast of Thailand, left 147 people dead and another nine missing. Weather forecasters predicted more to come. Thai Red Cross volunteers worked without rest to provide vital supplies to the 5,000 grief-stricken families who survived weekend floods in Phetchabun and Udon Thani, provinces in the North and Northeast of the country. Floodwaters filled with tree trunks and thick with mud, smashed through several villages in the Lom Sak district of Phetchabun Province, 180 miles north of Bangkok, in the early hours. The nearby mountains were the source of flash floods that swept away everything in their path.

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[1] **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal**, August 1997, p. 11.

"It was a real catastrophe. Almost an entire community was wiped out. The survivors were stunned, grief-stricken and helpless. Luckily they were being taken care of quickly by their neighbouring communities and the response by the authorities has been quick and effective,"

said Dr Tanit Vajrbukka, Deputy Director of the Thai Red Cross' Relief and Community Health Bureau.[1] A relief team consisting of doctors, nurses and volunteers was sent to provide medical assistance to survivors from its Relief and Community Health Bureau and from its chapter in Phetchabun. Canned food, mosquito nets, clothes, plastic sheeting, drinking water, candles and matches and 3,000 packets of household medicines were provided also.

Survivors of floods in five villages in the northeastern province of Udon Thani, hit by the same heavy rains as in Phetchabun, were also provided with food by the Thai Red Cross, helped by 100 Royal Thai Army personnel. According to the then Deputy Head of the Thai Red Cross' relief section for Udon Thani, 15 of the province's 16 districts had been submerged. In the provincial capital water levels had risen to one metre on 14 August 2001 while outside the city, it rose to almost 3.5 metres.

People were starving in their homes as they could not get out. The floods had damaged medical instruments at most local hospitals, with only one military hospital left unaffected. On 16 August, US President George W. Bush expressed concern in a letter for those affected by the floods and arranged for help.

In September, US Ambassador Richard E. Hecklinger presented US$25,000 in flood assistance to the Thai Red Cross to be used to provide shelters,

[1] Rohan Kay, "Red Cross Comes to Aid of Flood Victims in Thailand," 2001.



food, and drinking water for the Thai flood victims. The Ambassador's donation originated with the US Department of State and the US Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Thanks to the international recognition won by Her Majesty over the years for her relief work, several other nations also contributed to the effort of the Thai Red Cross.



Visiting the headquarters of the Red Cross in Switzerland on 28 November 1960.

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit has developed the work of the Thai Red Cross, resulting in wide recognition not only by Thais, but significantly by foreigners also of the work being done. This recognition is valuable to the society as it draws in financial and other forms of donations that it might otherwise not have. At the onset of her work with the society, in 1960, Her Majesty visited the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross in Switzerland so as to learn more of the activities at the international level.

Such was Her Majesty's enthusiasm for the work that people outside the country learnt of it quite soon after. When Their Majesties the King and Queen made their first European tour together in 1960, the queen was delighted during a visit to the Mercedes-Benz Factory in Germany to be presented with a hospital van. The famous automobile manufacturer had heard of Her Majesty's work in the Thai Red Cross. Subsequently, Their Majesties welcomed a succession of guests who had the opportunity to view the activities of the Thai Red Cross, and offer their own comments on its work. Following these visits, all kinds of assistance poured in for the society.



Mrs Lyndon B. Johnson, wife of the US President, donating fund for medical equipment.



The Thai Red Cross also now assists the Lao Red Cross' Blood Programme through training and has a training exchange programme with the Kunming branch and medical college of the Chinese Red Cross. It works together with the Malaysian Red Crescent to provide health services for Thai migrant worker families in northern Malaysia. In keeping with the international structure of the organization, the Thai Red Cross occasionally provides health delegates to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami

On 26 December 2004, the South of Thailand was devastated by a massive tidal wave, or tsunami, over five metres high that struck the Andaman Sea coast.[1] The Thai Red Cross responded on 27 December, dispatching a relief team together with 400 relief supplies to assist victims in Phang-nga Province. The

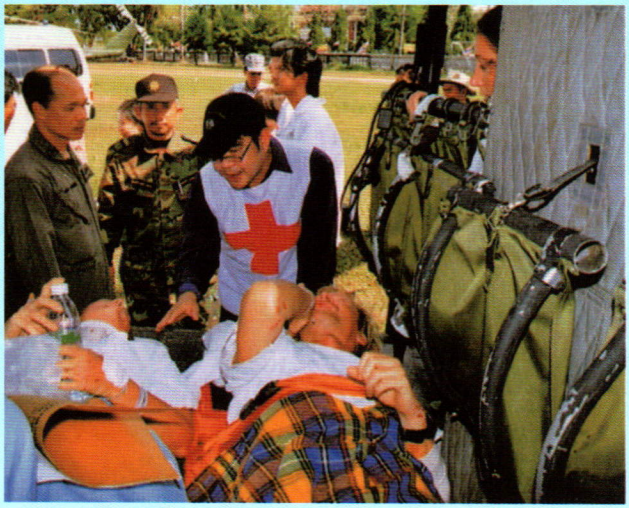


[1] Phuket, Phang-nga, Krabi, Trang, Satun and Ranong were the worst-hit provinces.

organization also sent a medical team from the King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital of the Thai Red Cross to provide emergency relief to the victims in Phuket Province. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Executive Vice President of the Thai Red Cross Society, paid a visit to the Relief and Community Health Bureau to be briefed by management of the Thai Red Cross about the situation.

Leading relief efforts were the officials and volunteers of the Red Cross Provincial Chapters of the six affected provinces of Phuket, Phang-nga, Krabi, Trang, Satun and Ranong. They were helping local government officials in rescuing survivors, and providing medical care, food, water and clothing to the homeless, the injured and the suffering.

Support from Thai Red Cross Headquarters has been co-ordinated by the Disaster Relief and Community Health Bureau which has sent relief supplies to the disaster areas. The Bureau and Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital has also sent 29 medical doctors and 45 specialist nurses to help. The Thai Red Cross mobile medical teams consisted of surgeons, orthopaedics, anaesthetists, forensic and plastic surgeons. They were supplementing the local medical teams and those sent by the Thai Government, the military, medical and relief agencies. Thai Red Cross medical teams focused on Phang-nga Province as the hotels, resorts and villages there were on strips of land 50 to 250 metres wide between the beach and a backdrop of hills.





Doctors and nurses from the Thai Red Cross helping victims of the tsunami.

In addition, the National Blood Service Centre of the Thai Red Cross has launched an appeal for blood donors, needing those from the O, A and Rh negative groups. Approximately only one in 1000 Thais has Rh negative blood and the appeal for this group has been

directed to visitors and foreign residents. On 27 December, the first day of the appeal, 3,000 donors showed up to give blood. The next day, 4,000 came, including a number of visitors and foreign residents.

The Thai Red Cross Society is an organization that has received the trust of all the people, both Thais and foreigners who have donated basic necessities, which constitute things necessary for daily life and survival. In only 15 days following the 26 December tsunami, The Thai Red cross had already collected more than Baht 200,000,000 in donations by thousands of members of the public.












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Social Welfare Concerns

Besides her work as leader of the Thai Red Cross, Her Majesty graciously accepted to play a leading role in the National Social Welfare Council. This body seeks to provide help to those who "fall through the cracks" in the system, who are disadvantaged and suffer through the neglect of the authorities. She realized that

> *"At present, there are more social problems than before. These problems if not solved in time will affect and endanger the living..."*[1]

On 10 August 1961, Her Majesty thus became Honorary President of the Council of Social Welfare of Thailand under His Majesty's Patronage. This organization comprises around 150 private and public social welfare units throughout the kingdom, and it is now a member of the International Conference of Social Work. His Majesty the King, upon inaugurating the building from which the council operates, remarked,

> *"... This building, besides being beneficial and convenient to the administration of the Social Welfare Council of Thailand, is a significant symbol of co-operation between government and private organizations to jointly aid public social welfare..."*[2]

The Council, determined to alleviate suffering as much as possible, sought Her Majesty's permission to set up a foundation to provide social welfare support to the poor. Called the Metta Fund, Her Majesty initiated its formation in 1966.

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[1] Thailand Social Welfare Council, **Royal Mother of Heaven in the Land of Siam**, Bangkok : Pha Phim Publishing House, 1992. p. 37.
[2] Ibid, p. 41.





In granting an audience to the Volunteer Committee of the National Social Welfare Council at Ambara Gardens on 2 March 1967, Her Majesty the Queen noted the concept adhered to by the Thai people that suffering or happiness is not an issue of concern only to a particular individual or family, but was a concern to all people in society. The idea of social responsibility for society's ills was concurrent with much of the concepts of equality of the time, from the civil rights movement in the US to the social contract established in the UK under a Labour government, but could be considered rather bold in Thailand. Her Majesty pointed out that one could not be happy alone without considering the plight of many others. She stressed that the benevolent members of society with the common interest in mind would know how to share their happiness with others and always be ready to help alleviate their sufferings according to their ability and opportunity. True to her word, Her Majesty has continued to seek ways to help ordinary people who have fallen on difficult times. The Social Welfare Association today provides much needed sponsorship

for the activities of other organisations, such as the New Life Foundation, which sets up villages for the rehabilitation of former lepers.

Whenever Her Majesty comes to the aid of an individual, this creates media interest. Anyone who can say they have received direct help from Her Majesty is regarded as highly honoured and people know automatically that he or she must be in serious trouble to have warranted royal assistance. One such beneficiary of Her Majesty's compassion is *Zaw Bi*, aged 35, a man of Karen descent born in Thailand who was caught up in circumstances beyond his control. Arrested in 2002 for allegedly shooting at a bus and killing three children, he was acquitted, to the applause of those who attended the court, in April 2004. However, he was further detained while prosecutors planned to appeal the verdict, even though the parents of the victims themselves believed he was innocent. During Zaw Bi's detention his health began to deteriorate. He could no longer walk, his muscles were atrophying and he was suffering from bronchitis. Her Majesty, who had read of the case, made a special request on 21 July 2004 to transfer Zaw Bi to a hospital in Ratchaburi and provided the funds to pay for his treatment.[1] By offering to pay for his medical expenses, Her Majesty was also offering her support to a man with a family who had been made to suffer.

Families are Her Majesty's *raison d'être*. Her activities, whether toward women's rights, children's education or providing supplementary income for housewives, are aimed at ensuring that the family, in

[1] The Nation, 17 June 2004.
[2] The Nation, 22 July 2004.





all its broad interpretations, can persist. Survival for some of the people in Thailand cannot always depend on their own resources to struggle with their environment. As we turn toward Her Majesty's work concerning environmental issues, the importance of the family, its environment and the sustainability of the two comes to the fore.

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[1] The Nation, 22 July 2004.



Chapter 9: Her Majesty's Care for the Environment

"The forest is a water resource for people. Without forests, or if we keep destroying the trees, though we gain more land we will lose all water supply. The land will become so dry that it turns into a desert. Forests should exist to preserve life, to preserve water and to keep the yearly rainfall, and that would help us make a better living."[1]

As queen of Thailand, Her Majesty has always followed the lead of the monarch, she once famously said:

"If His Majesty is water, I will be a forest, the forest that pledges loyalty to the water."[2]

Her Majesty thereafter sought to balance her own activities with his. Thus, while His Majesty the King has desired to help his people by developing water resources, Her Majesty has involved herself in forest conservation and reforestation. This interest is a direct means of supporting His Majesty the King's projects, as without watershed areas and forests there would be

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[1] Srikorn Tankamhaeng, "Royal Development Project of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit in the Area of Phra Mountain in Nong Bua District, Nakhon Sawan Province", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 2000, p. 47.

[2] The National Identity Board, **Thailand Executive Diary 1992,** Bangkok : 1991.



Her Majesty would like forests to be preserved in order to become water sources.



no water sources. To keep abreast of her subject, Her Majesty reads environment-oriented periodicals such as *World Watch* and others to learn more about environmental issues globally.[1] The underlying concept of one of the most well-known royally initiated projects is ***Pa Rak Nam*** or ***"The Forest Loves Water"*** project, which creates water sources. Her Majesty thus focuses on forest conservation and reforestation in order to restore abundance to nature and the environment.

The forests are invaluable to the existence of the Thai people and animals as for centuries Thailand has been an agrarian nation that lived off the land as well as practised agriculture. In the past, rice was harvested only once or twice per year. Today it may be up to three times a year. However, rice alone is not enough, and there is a lot of time available to farmers so the forest becomes an important source of other things. People use the trees for conventional purposes, such as for building homes or as firewood, but the leaves and the birds that live in the trees are hunted for food. Animals that live in the forests and the fish in the woodland streams are additional sources of protein. Grasses can be woven into baskets. Bamboo is useful for many things, like making huts; so it goes on and on.

In order to create or rebuild forests, Her Majesty first had to solve the problem of forest encroachment. The use of forests by locals as they have for centuries is natural in abundant times, but when the forests have

[1] An interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen, 2004.

been worn out by loggers and gatherers, there comes a time to call a halt and give the forest a chance to grow back. While forestry officials and border patrol policemen may try to capture illegal loggers, the locals are often caught in the middle. It is not an easy problem, as the queen notes:

> *"There is a speech by His Majesty the King about how one must make the villagers realize that the forest is not their enemy. The villagers always intrude into the forest; it is hard for the police to arrest these poor people. Finally, the king realized that the villagers could grow and take care of the forest themselves."* [1]



A deteriorated forest.

[1] Thasaniphan Chantarathot, **12 Singha Maha Rajini**, Bangkok : 2000, p. 15.



Pa Rak Nam (Forest Loves Water) Project

Her Majesty was quick to see that legal and illegal logging had severely damaged the land especially in the Northeast, around Sakon Nakhon, making it dry and sandy, the start of desertification. Her Majesty commences the work first by educating the people who live near the forest. A reforestation project near Ban Tham Tiew, Sakon Nakhon, about 600 km northeast of Bangkok, called the ***Pa Rak Nam***, or the ***Forest Loves Water Project,*** was launched on 20 December 1982. By learning from His Majesty the King's experience, the queen knew that by planting trees, the water could be bound to the soil between the roots, and regenerated. A plot of land, about 0.2 of a hectare[1], was set aside for demonstrating the planting of saplings. Her Majesty's Private Secretary at the time, and another experienced assistant were assigned to implement the project. About 20,000 people turned up to see the launch of the project, coming from several districts away and from the neighbouring province of Udon Thani. A Propitiation Ceremony carried out by Brahmins was performed to pay respect to the spirits.



Propitiation Ceremony carried out by Brahmins.

[1] One hectare (ha) is 2.47 acres.



Eucalyptus trees planted for general use and for sale as supplementary income.

This ancient animist rite invites the spirits of the forests to watch over the small plot of land. By recognizing the beliefs of the local villagers, Her Majesty not only showed respect for their beliefs but also ensured their faith in the work she was doing.

Her Majesty and local government officials then planted 100 saplings of shade trees, ironwood, wattle, eucalyptus and others. Thirty-five poor village families volunteered to take care of the saplings and received an allowance of 1,500 baht a month. Later, more villagers volunteered to help plant saplings on a further 9.7 hectares of land.

With this small success in hand, by the end of 1982, Her Majesty had extended the project to Ban Nong Phai, Tambon Khok Si, Sawang Daen Din District, Ban Sai Thong and Ban Tha Wat, Tambon Pathum Wapi, Song Dao District, Ban Kut Na Kham, Charoensin District, and Ban Chan, Ban Muang District, Sakon



Measuring the width of a eucalyptus tree in the Forest Loves Water Project, Sakon Nakhon Province.

Nakhon Province. Her Majesty thought that if the villagers had to be relocated from the reserved forest and given land for farming, there might not be enough land available, noted Thanpuying Suprapada Kasemsant. As they were already in the forest, they might as well be allowed to stay there and have a piece of land where they could grow crops, plant trees and conserve the forest. That would prove that man and forest could co-exist and benefit from each other.[1]

"People who have no place on which to live and to earn a livelihood would feel that those who want to protect the forest are their enemies, standing between

[1] The National Identity Board, **Her Majesty Queen Sirikit and the Environment,** Bangkok : 1992, p. 25.



Planting trees as a memorial in the Forest Loves Water Project.



Visiting members of the Forest Loves Water Project and members of SUPPORT Project at Sai Thong Village.



them and their happiness. Since the forest is taboo to the landless and goes against their interest, the only option is therefore to turn it into a place where they can live and a means by which they can make a living, with people from the government to give them help and look after their interest."[1]

Observing that it was the villagers' encroachment into the forest that was the cause of so many problems, Her Majesty noted that there would be side effects.

"There is still the practice of deforestation, so water resources continue to diminish. That is because the forest is the one factor... one essential factor that brings us rain."[2]

The queen's ***Forest Loves Water Project,*** which saw the planting of thousands of forest trees on marginal land in Sakon Nakhon Province, and poor, landless farmers being hired to look after the trees, has been the model of a rehabilitation programme initiated by Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn to help the victims of the floods that destroyed the livelihood of thousands of people in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in 1988. The queen's project allows the farmers to plant fruit trees for food and to augment their income while looking after the forest trees. In addition, each family is given a house in which to live, fowl and livestock to raise, and seeds and tools necessary to make a living.

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[1] The National Forests Policy Board, **Collected Speeches of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit Concerning Forests and the Environment,** Bangkok : 1996, p. 20.

[2] Srikorn Tankamhaeng, "Royal Development Project of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit in the Area of Phra Mountain in Nong Bua District, Nakhon Sawan Province", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 2000, p. 47.



Visiting the Forest Loves Water Project at Nong Phai Village, Sakon Nakhon Province.

Villagers were so inspired by the queen's reforestation effort that landowners in Sakon Nakhon Province and adjoining provinces joined the programme and planted forest trees on their idle land without being hired to do so.



Visiting people at the Forest Loves Water Project, Kut Na Kham Village in the Northeast.



At Kut Na Kham Village in the Northeast.

Ban Lek Nai Pa Yai (Little House in the Big Forest) Project

Her Majesty had first noticed the destruction of Thailand's great forests from the air as she went from one part of the country to another to visit the people. Whenever she travelled by car, the queen also saw the desertification of the land, especially in the Northeast region.[1] This occurred not only because of natural reasons, the land there being particularly dry and sandy to begin with, but was made worse by the continuous deforestation that took place over many years. Without the trees to retain the water in the soil, it just dried up. For most people in the government sector, the answer was to move the villagers away from the forests, so as not to exacerbate the situation. Her Majesty saw things differently.

> *"If the villagers are to be moved from the forests and relocated elsewhere, sometimes no place can be found for them to earn a living. In that case, as they are already there, let them remain in the forests with land to work on, to plant a forest and look after it, thereby showing that man and forest can co-exist and reap mutual benefits."*[1]

Her Majesty continued to support the reforestation of the country, with a new project started in 1991 at Ban Huai Mai Hok, Om Koi District, Chiang Mai Province, in the North. It all started when Her Majesty was on her way to visit the villagers in Tambon Mae Tuen and Tambon Mon Chong in Om Koi in March 1991. Looking down from the helicopter, Her Majesty saw that the forest, although destroyed in some areas,

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[1] An interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen, 2004.



Feeding the fish at Ban Huai Mai Hok.

was still rich and fertile. Aware that this same forest was the habitat of rare wildlife species and home for poor villagers who eke out their living in the forest, the queen decided to protect and preserve it through proper management.

Following the queen's suggestion, a programme was launched with three main objectives. The first, to protect that part of the forest that was still rich and fertile from being destroyed. Next, to reclaim and revive that part which



Goral remaining only in Om Koi forest.

[1] The National Identity Board, **Thailand Executive Diary 2004,** Bangkok : 2003



Wild elephants.



Tropical forest at Doi Mon Chong.



Mae Ping River flowing through the Om Koi Forest.



Observing hilltribe children weaving cloth with a loom at Huai Mai Hok Village.

had been destroyed by planting trees, both for forest protection and for practical use as fuel and timber; and to improve the livelihood of the villagers living in the forest.



The Litte House in the Big Forest Project, Chiang Rai.

The idea was to enable the villagers to continue to make a living in the forest and at the same time care for it. The project, known as ***Little House in the Big Forest,*** is therefore characterized by the concept of co-existence, with man caring for the forest and the forest supplying some of his basic needs.

There were more at Ban Thansamai in Nakhon Phanom Province. Considering that at one time most of Thailand was covered with forests, it is surprising how fast the forests have disappeared. The result of Her Majesty's project was that by 1992 she had conserved or created about 1,292.8 hectares of forest with about 800,000 nurseries.[1]

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[1] Ministry of Education, **Her Majesty the Queen's Activities in Education, Religion and Healthcare,** Bangkok : 2541, p. 88.



Her Majesty knew that it should be possible to group the hilltribes into villages, according to their tribes, in the hope that each one would specialize in one type of skill or handicraft, and thereby avoid the need to cut down trees. The heads of households could plant trees and look after the forest, producing silverware, woodcarvings, and basketry in their free time. Their wives were to produce embroidery for sale by SUPPORT.

Lying 358 kilometres north of Bangkok is the site of Kamphaeng Phet Province, a province known for its historical importance as an ancient city with traces of seven centuries of past prosperity. Its plains and mountains have long been the settlements for people of different ethnic origins including some hilltribes, or highlanders.

The aim of reclaiming the deforested area was to provide access to established farming land without having to move from place to place and, in the



With members of the Lahu hilltribe at Khamphaeng Phet.

process, destroy the quality of the surrounding land. To enable people to play a participatory role in the land conservation efforts, a supplementary training programme was designed. This was to ensure the villagers' customs and traditions were preserved and would feature as potential tourist attractions in the future.

Her Majesty called together a team to fulfil this task, including the Director-General of the Royal Forest Department, The Third Army Area Commander, the Kamphaeng Phet Governor, and a provincial forestry officer. Her Majesty instructed them as follows:

> *"The Commander of the 3rd Army Area, the Kamphaeng Phet Governor and the provincial forestry officer should find for the Khao Mae Phuet and Ban Plaeng Si villagers lands on which to earn a living, giving to each family 0.8 hectares, and arrange to improve the hilltribe people's quality of life and standard of living by giving them employment. The men could be hired for reforestation work and the women could produce silverware, embroidery and basketry. The area should be further developed into tourist spots, where souvenirs could be sold."*[1]

Consequently, the ***Little House in the Big Forest Project*** here, starting at the village of Ban Udom Sap in Pang Sila Thong Sub-district, Kamphaeng Phet Province, covers an area of 84 hectares. Its objective is to provide the landless somewhere to earn a living through sustainable agriculture. To transform them from poor people who simply practised shifting

[1] "Little House in the Big Forest Project in Kamphaeng Phet Province", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 1999, p. 11.



A hilltribe man tying consecrated thread around Her Majesty's wrist.

cultivation to people with valuable occupations, using their own skill. This ultimately led to the rehabilitation of the local watersheds and advanced the development of the villages as tourist spots.

The ***Little House in the Big Forest Project*** received help from various government agencies, such as the Royal Forest Department, which provided the villagers with tree saplings and the Department of Agricultural Extension, which taught the villagers proper agricultural methods and cultivation of fruit trees and vegetables in their back gardens. The Department of Livestock Development taught the villagers to raise livestock and poultry; The Department of Fisheries gave advice on aquaculture and provided fish fries for the village community pond. The Ministry of Public Health provided health education and health care for the villagers; The Local Administration Department gave support in digging to build reservoirs for fish farming.

Lastly, the queen's **SUPPORT Foundation** assisted in teaching villagers to weave as supplementary occupations. While the women are engaged in embroidery to be supplied to the SUPPORT Project, men are further encouraged to spend their time working on the silverware, carving and weaving that they have learnt from SUPPORT.



Assisting hilltribe people, with skill in embroidery, to supply products for the SUPPORT Foundation as supplementary income.

Fifty-three of the initial group of hilltribe families, 279 people, were settled into the project area. After joining the project in 1994, their average annual income increased six times what it was, from 3,347 baht per head to 18,729 baht per head in 1999.[1] Such a significant achievement was largely because of the occupational development and promotion of the local hilltribe people. To date, the project has proven extremely successful.

[1] "Little House in the Big Forest Project in Kamphaeng Phet Province", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 1999, p.12.



Revival of deteriorated forests.

Under the project conditions, settlements are only established along the edge of the wooded areas to achieve harmony with the surrounding environment. The settlers contribute by planting trees to cover an area of some 315.1 hectares of land per year. The original target was that by the end of 1996, villagers' annual income was to be raised to 35,000 baht per person. Meanwhile, their children are guaranteed education and basic health care services.

Following a visit to the village of Ban Huai Ya Sai, in Mae Suai District, Chiang Rai Province, on 15 March 1999, Her Majesty the Queen initiated a pilot project to prove that after training and education, people could live in harmony with the forest. Thus, a Little House in the Big Forest project was extended to a nearby village, choosing poor hilltribe villagers for the experiment. The project obtained the assistance of local government authorities and the Provincial Army Unit. In keeping with Her Majesty's philosophy that everything should blend in with nature, even the water was conveyed



A litlle House in the Big Forest Project was exetended to Ban Akha (Old), Mae Ta Chang, Chiang Rai Province.

through bamboo piping. As the queen said whilst visiting a project at Om Koi District, Chiang Mai, that same day, 15 March 1999:

> *"Allow the forest to co-exist with man. Emphasize the happy and sustainable co-existence between man and forest."*[1]



Traditional Akha house.

[1] Piyachat Pawornsood, "Transforming Deserted Forest into Community Forest", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** December 2002.



Irrigation channels into the paddy fields.



People working together to build a small check dam.



Conveying water from natural creeks throught a bamboo pipeline system.

Besides the introduction of agricultural techniques and suitable strains of rice, both local and from Japan, poultry and swine were provided. Tilapia fish were released into the local water as a source of protein. A village rice bank was set up for off-harvest season supplies. To ensure the wellbeing of villagers, some were trained in basic healthcare and treatment. When Her Majesty paid a visit to the project on 12 January 2001, she was informed that the project had been implemented to plan and that the quality of life of the villagers had indeed improved.[1]

Now, with Her Majesty's projects increasingly dealing with both water and forests, it is often difficult to tell where His Majesty the King's projects end and Her Majesty's begin, though over the years Her Majesty and the royal children have taken it upon themselves to continue many of His Majesty's projects themselves. ***The Royal-initiated Mae Ping Basin Development Project*** in Chom Thong and Hot districts, Chiang Mai Province and Ban Hong District, Lamphun are good examples of this. Originally a royal initiative project of His Majesty the King for the rehabilitation and enrichment of the forest area, the queen has taken responsibility for the forests' continued well-being by visiting the project on 23 January 1999 to observe its progress.[2]

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[1] Suparach Intrawooth, "Interdependency between Man and Forest The Royally Initiated Little House in the Big Forest Project Ban Akha (Old), Mae Ta Chang, Chiang Rai Province", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 2001.

[2] Srikorn Tankamhaeng, "The Royal Development Project of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit in the Area of the Phra Mountain Range in Nong Bua District, Nakhon Sawan Province", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 2000.



Ratsadon Asa Samak Pithak Pa (Volunteers for Forest Protection) Project

In 1995, Her Majesty the Queen paid a visit to the people of Ubon Ratchathani Province, infamous for its rapid and extensive deforestation, and presented them *Thong Phithak Pa Phuea Raksa Chiwit* (Protect the Forest to Maintain Life Flag). The purpose of the project is to inspire villagers to understand that their present and future well-being depends to some extent on the forests, as not only sources of food, but also protection against drought and the elements, like flooding and mudslides. On the Thai-Lao border, The ***Volunteers for Forest Protection Project*** in the Dong Na Tham Forest Area, Ubon Ratchathani Province covers 8,888 hectares and targets 16 villages, with 1,776 families, in three adjacent districts, Khong Chiam, Si Chiang Mai and Pho Sai. Life on the border was hard on the poor people as there were so few ways to supplement the income from rice farming. Many fished and gathered forest products for sale. Some villagers resorted to illegal logging and weapon or drug smuggling along the



Observing the volunteers for Forest Protection Project in the Dong Na Tham Forest Area, Ubon Ratchathani Province, 16 December 1998.

border. Some got caught, some escaped. This naturally caused problems within their communities and made it difficult for them to develop.

The queen pursued a course of action that would educate the people to understand that protecting the forests was essential to their future well-being. This royal command led the project to consult with other government agencies concerned on the manner in which assistance might be brought to the farmers. The project then adopted His Majesty the King's **"Sufficiency Economy"** theory as a guideline for its activities, meaning that the people should have a method of producing enough so that they could sustainably use the land and therefore have enough to grow for their own needs first. Anything over and above this amount could then be sold.

If the people were to be able to grow food efficiently and sustainably, the project needed to ensure



Bio-fertilizer or compost.

they did not harm the soil with chemicals. The project organizers therefore persuaded the farmers to use bio-fertilizer, or compost. The form of compost tried used micro-organisms to break down vegetable and animal matter. This is easy to produce with materials found locally. Animal dung, leaves, straw and grass are mixed with a microbial activator and left to ferment for a certain peroid of time. As it is so simple to produce, compost can substitute chemical fertilizers, reducing production costs and meeting with the demand for chemical-free products around the world. It also increases the yield of vegetables and fruit crops. Due to the newness of this type of fertilizer to farmers who had grown up being told the benefits of chemical fertilizers by middlemen from the city, only a few farmers volunteered to try it out on their land. When the results started to be promising, the project extended the technology to neighbouring villages. Within a short period, other farmers from outside the project area



A thriving kitchen garden that can be used for consumption and sale all year round.

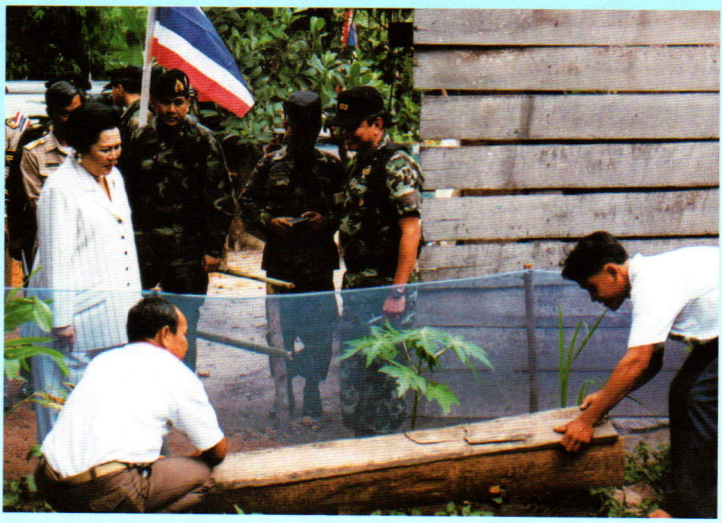


Good quality rice.



Rearing frogs in a plastic-lined pond.

asked to observe and learn the technology for use on their own land, so much so that the project had to organize training sessions to cope with demand. With the reduction of production costs, the project taught people how to raise frogs and fish in ponds lined with plastic sheets, cultivating garden crops along the edges of the ponds. Next, farmers were taught how to raise poultry using termites found commonly in the soil. After just three years, the project was considered successful in developing the occupations of local



Termites used as chickens feed to reduce costs.

farmers, reducing production costs and increasing yields.

Three years of project implementation have yielded enormous benefits for farmers in the project area by developing their occupation, reducing their production costs while greatly increasing the yield. A venerated monk, Luang Pho Khun Kantaviro, noted that as a former rice farmer

> *"Rice growing did not thrive. The output was insufficient for our own consumption, not lasting through the year. Then I learnt something new, about*

micro-organisms. So I tried out the new technology, but only on an area of about 0.48 hectares... Well, the result was beyond my expectation. The yield doubled."[1]

A few years later, on 17 January 1999, Her Majesty visited villages in Lampang Province and the Ban Thung Chi Supplementary Occupations Training Centre, Mueang Phan District. There, she observed the work following a royal initiative to prevent villagers in three adjacent districts from encroaching on the forest. It was not effective enough. Her Majesty the Queen now had to conserve what was left and allow it to grow back. She went on to establish a local Forest Conservation Project to encourage people to work toward reforestation. This brought people together as a community to assist in conservation work.

The difficulty the queen and those assisting her found most arduous was the habit of destruction endemic in the culture of many of the people who were accustomed to taking what they wanted from the forests without thinking that something needed to be replaced. They appeared to believe that the forests would forever replenish themselves. Now as the population increased, and materialism crept into society, wood had many more uses and economic benefits. This led to rapid deforestation.

For Her Majesty to keep pushing forward with these initiatives, she needs to make a regular habit of following up on each and every one. Her Majesty the Queen therefore has to travel continuously to see that the people she has entrusted to save the forests are actually doing it.

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[1] Somluck Bunnag, "Dong Na Tham Forest Folk-Style Sufficiency Economy", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 2000, p. 29



At Mong Luang Village, Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai Province.

Suan Pa Sirikit (Queen Sirikit Forest Park) Project

Her Majesty set up some of her own projects in the North, the hilly region that provides much of the forest cover still left in the country, especially The ***Queen Sirikit Forest Development Project*** in Mae Chaem District, Chiang Mai. Her Majesty's visits invariably help the morale of the villagers to conserve and prevent forest destruction, as her presence is a reminder to those involved in the projects that it is of national importance. The ecosystem concept can be seen in several projects, one example is the Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project, designed to preserve the forests as watershed areas and to plant new forests in areas of degradation.

"The Forest Park Village needs to be built where good species of bamboo can be planted during the rainy season so that the very poor people may realize that bamboo houses are very comfortable to live in and that they can withstand sun and rain. If the bamboo is



Conversing with the Karen hilltribe people at the Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project, Yang San Village, Mae Chaem, Chiang Mai.



Bamboo groves.





Ton Nga Chang Waterfall in the vicinity of the Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project is a water source for the area.



Visiting the Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project at Huai Muang Village, Suan Phueng District, Ratchaburi Province. It is a royal initiative to plant fast-growing trees.

correctly cut and prepared, when woven they are very beautiful and can last up to five years before they need to be replaced." [1]

The implementation of this programme will see the protection and rehabilitation of 5,400 hectares of rain forests, which represent 63.35 percent of the total project area. The rest will be used for farming and for planting fruit trees and cash crops, so that the villagers can earn a living without destroying the forests.

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[1] The National Identity Board, **Thailand Executive Diary 2004,** Bangkok : 2003.







Various plants in Queen Sirikit Forest Park for SUPPORT products.

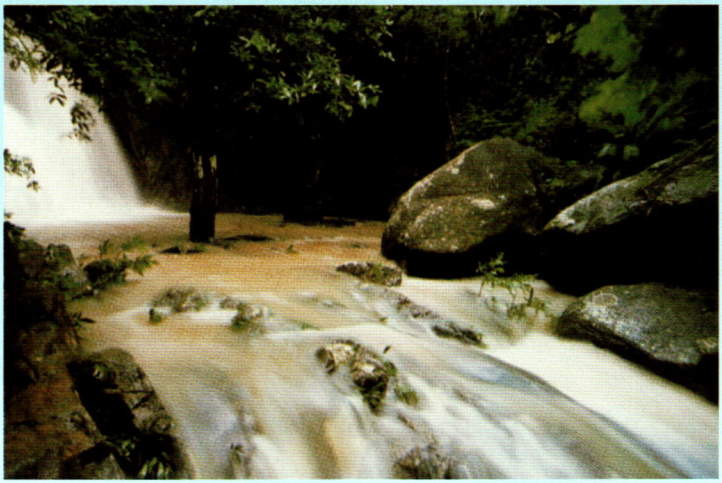


Planting a tree in Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project, Bala-Hala Forest.





Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project at Bala-Hala Forest, Narathiwat Province.



Queen Sirikit Forest Park Project at Thalae Ban, Satun Province.















Plant species in the Bala-Hala Forest.

Reforestation Project



Soil embankment to divert and store water constructed in the watershed area.



Vetiver planted as Buffer Zone between the forest and the people.

Phra Mountain Range Project

Besides the above-mentioned forest projects, Her Majesty has others that are considered just as important. The Mae Wong National Park, Nakhon Sawan Province, faced massive forest destruction in the nineties and the only remaining forest was on the Phra Mountain Range.



The situation was so serious that the local people petitioned Her Majesty to restore the forest and water resources to their original condition. This appeared almost impossible at the time. Nevertheless, Her Majesty the Queen graciously accepted the petition and initiated a project in 1999 called the Environmental Conservation and Rehabilitation of The ***Phra Mountain Range Project,*** in Nong Bua District, Nakhon Sawan. The project covers 11,156 hectares and aims to restore the natural environment and return forests to Thailand. The Office of the Royal Development Projects Board allocated a budget to the Royal Forest Department for the rehabilitation of the highlands' ecological system, and this was supported also by the Land Development Department by planting vetiver grass and constructing soil embankments to divert and store water. The project is still continuing and it may take many years to return the mountain range to its original pristine condition.

The Khlong Lan National Park

This project has already had a positive impact on the vicinity of the wooded areas including the Khlong Lan National Park and Mae Wong National Park in the North. These parks have come under legal protection, where trespassing is prohibited. While self-reclamation of the land is possible, the protected status of the two national parks, the source of Mae Wong, Khlong Suan Mak, Khlong Wang Chao watersheds, will ensure the continual flow of water to the Mae Ping River.

In December 1994, as an initial step, 279 highlanders from 53 households of Yao origin from Ban Pang Nuea, Khlong Lan District, were settled in the project site. Bueng Lom of Ban Khlong Nam Lai, Khlong Lan District was targeted as the next site for some 213 households in the project expansion plan.



Yao hilltribe village in the Khlong Lan National Park.

Her Majesty keeps herself abreast of the progress from reports prepared by the committee in charge of the project at half-yearly intervals. On her annual visit, she not only spends ample time inspecting the vocational progress of the settlers, but also observes the results of the reforestation programme with the Commander of the 3rd Army Area, the Governor and the personnel concerned.

Development of the project led to other initiatives and began to take the shape of a holistic approach to development, typical of Her Majesty's development pedagogy. It appears that on several occasions, Her Majesty has utilized a holistic approach, for instance, how education and saving forests go hand-in-hand, how teaching agricultural methods integrates with developing local temples as centres of learning. Her Majesty has understood that to develop an area, more than one subject needs to be taught.



The children of the villagers were enrolled in schools nearby and outside the area. Consequently, about 90 percent of the hilltribe people are now able to speak, read and write the Thai language, which helps them to assimilate into the locality and the nation.

The Pang Sila Thong Hospital, located close to the project area, has made available to people easy and rapid access to first aid, health promotion, immunization and basic dental services. Such has been the success of the project that the communities have now been declared "health-for-all" villages, implying they are receiving standardized medical care for the first time.

The villagers in the project area have also been encouraged to participate in a 468.6 hectares reforestation effort. They are taught forest protection and maintenance, and trained to prevent forest fires as volunteers. Forest-fire control units have been set up



Making silverware, sewing, embroidery and weaving as supplementary income.



Water source for household use and agriculture.



An agricultural demonstration plot.

to ensure their communities remain safe. Throughout this time, the villagers continue to receive occupational training in such fields as silversmithing, embroidery, woodcarving, dressmaking and bee keeping.

Reservoirs were developed for the hilltribes to use for fish culture and other agricultural activities for which water is essential. Her Majesty is often requested



to provide some sort of water resource, like a reservoir. On 29 November 1999, Her Majesty was visiting Ban Nong Kaen, in Mukdahan Province to the far Northeast. She was with the Crown Prince to learn about the Huai Hin Lap Reservoir in the area. Her Majesty then received a request for an extension of the reservoir's pipeline to distribute water more effectively as another source for consumption. To have sufficient water on which to live became a serious concern over the years as water dried up with the disappearance of the forests.

Upon the successful completion of the project's first phase, the then Kamphaeng Phet Governor requested Her Majesty to continue the project into phase II, to which Her Majesty graciously gave her consent. The target area of phase II of the project was to consist of Ban Pang Manao, Khanu Woralaksaburi District, and Ban Pang Malako, Pang Sila Thong District, both in Kamphaeng Phet Province. Ban Pang Malako had originally been chosen for the project's phase I, but the local population had not cooperated at that time, and had objected to the resettlement of hilltribe people in their area. However, after noticing the success of phase I and the benefits the participants had received both in and around the project area, they agreed to their land being used by the second phase of the project.

Phase II follows the same lines as phase I, this time it was to resettle 21 selected families of Lahu tribesmen in the area of Pang Manao, and to install the necessary infrastructure. These include providing the people with housing and land on which to earn a living, as well as developing sources of water for household use and agriculture.

In addition, government agencies provided for the social development and improvement of the



Khlong Lan National Park, phase II.

people's quality of life, their opportunity for occupational development and promotion aimed at increasing their income. The conservation of natural resources and the environment was a preliminary step so that the Little House in the Big Forest Project could be introduced in accordance with Her Majesty the Queen's instructions. The people in and around the project area were able to reap the reward of their hard work under the queen's initiative. Her Majesty was thus able to put an end to hunting and logging, and turned the villagers into protectors of the forest.



Mulberry planting, a part of the Demonstration Farm Project at Khun Tae Village, Chiang Mai.

Demonstration Farm Project

In order to provide the people in and around forests with a stable income from agriculture, Her Majesty has initiated ***Demonstration Farm Projects.*** As the name suggests, they are examples to farmers of how to get the most out of their land without using it up. In March 1997, Her Majesty initiated three demonstration farms, two in Chiang Mai Province, at Ban Khun Tae, in Chom Thong District, Ban Mae Tung Ting, Samoeng District and Ban Rom Fa Thong, Wiang Kaen District, Chiang Rai Province. The demonstration farms provided villagers with practical examples of animal husbandry, especially sheep and poultry farming, which can be used to gain more income. Local people and those from the nearby areas are brought together for training and employment. Poor farmers are hired for labour and breeding stock is provided for

domestic husbandry. To support these activities, the Department of Livestock Development provides breeding stock and information, for instance the prevention of animal diseases and marketing of animal products, to farmers.

The Demonstration Farms have helped to improve the quality of life for the people in the highland areas. They now have a secure occupation. The projects also encourage them to raise different types of animals in order to serve as a local food source and to protect the forest, wildlife, and watershed, as well as the environment, from being further destroyed.

The three demonstration farms started in late 1997 and early 1998, with emphasis on raising different kinds of animals best suited to the conditions of the areas, such as sheep raising. The wool is used as a raw material for the farmers' training course on weaving and poultry raising to provide a protein source. For extra variety in their diets, the people raise rabbits and boars, while aquaculture also serves to provide protein.



Raising fish in plastic-lined pond at Khun Dong Village Demonstration Farm Project.



The people are able to learn additional skills in agricultural technology for livestock raising, agriculture, fishery and forestry by using local labour and natural resources in the most effective ways. The produce is partly among the schools in the areas as part of the school lunch project; the remaining produce is sold to the villagers to provide adequate and nourishing meals for household use. Some of this cash income is ploughed back into the farm in the form of a fund set up to support the project. To create supplementary incomes in addition to farming, they learn fine arts and handicraft making, such as textile weaving.



Visiting the Mae Tung Ting Demonstration Farm Project.

One Demonstration Farm Project is in Chiang Mai, at Ban Mae Tung Ting. The villagers there receive about 80 baht per day whilst being trained in organic farming methods, like preparing manure, running a nursery and animal husbandry. The range of farming instruction provided assists villagers to seek income from several sources. Villagers noted that they used to



Organic farming at Mae Tung Ting Demonstration Farm Project.







Duck raising at Mae Tung Ting Demonstration Farm Project.

grow just one crop, like corn, but were later able to grow other vegetables, raising poultry to supplement their diet and income[1]. The organic farming methods

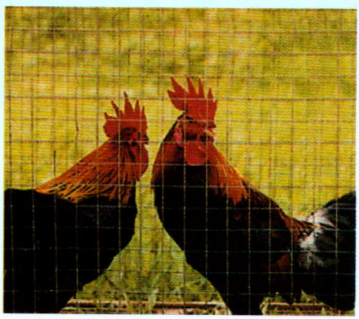
[1] Bangkok Post, 12 August 2003.



Visiting a black-boned chicken farm.



These Chee Fa *chickens have black meat and bones.*



Mae Hong Son native fowl raised on Her Majesty's advice.

taught have a beneficial effect on the farmers' health also, in that they are now cutting out chemical pesticides.

On 28 September 1998, the ***Rom Fa Thong Demonstration Farm Project*** in Chiang Rai was in operation and this brought in black-boned chickens from the People's Republic of China. This project was provided as a demonstration and occupational support for the farmers with assistance from the Chinese

Government. The farmers started to grow a large variety of crops, fruits, seasonal vegetables and flowers, which were grown as a cash crop. The establishment of the demonstration farm helps circulate money within the area, thus boosting the economy of the community.



Visiting Nong Mak Thao Demonstration Farm.



Produce of the Nong Mak Thao Demonstration farm.



Her Majesty also set up a Demonstration Farm at the Nong Mak Thao, Demonstration Farm Project, Mueang District, Sakon Nakhon Province.

In July 2000, concerned about the lives of the farmers, Her Majesty initiated a search to find land for setting up a demonstration farm in Narathiwat Province. In response to this, the Narathiwat Provincial Office and the Phikun Thong Royal Development Study Centre facilitated the use of 33.1 hectares of public land at Khok Pakhabuesa, Mueang District, Narathiwat Province, and 2.2 hectares of adjacent state property, totalling 36.4 hectares for use as a demonstration farm. The objective was to generate jobs for unemployed farmers and to serve as an important food production source for Narathiwat Province. The result was that the workers on the farm could practise a variety of agriculture and use the skills acquired to earn a living on their own land, thus providing direct benefits to the farmers.



Watering compost at Khok Pakhabuesa Demonstration Farm in Narathiwat Province.

The area of the demonstration farm was originally a deteriorated forest. The soil was mostly sandy, belonging to the Bacho soil series, which has low fertility. The narrow strip in the centre of the forestland was made up of black peat soil. First, the soil was improved by using organic fertilizers, green manure and compost; then the peat soil, which existed in the shallow soil layers and on more flat land areas, was dug out to make a farm pond.

The layout of the farm divided the areas to serve different activities. The farm was separated into plots of land for cultivating plants, raising land animals, raising aquatic animals, growing paddy and for



Organically grown vegetables at the demonstration farm in Narathiwat Province.



Goat paddock.



Ostriches.



Raising fowl.



Observing rice planting at Khok Pakhabuesa Demonstration Farm, Narathiwat Province.



Inspecting Khok Pakhabuesa Demonstration Farm in Narathiwat Province.



Kho Lon Chickens, a species native to Phatthalung at the Phatthalung Demonstration Farm.



Rice Bank.



Raising fish in nets.



The Demonstration farm : the source of employment and food production for the community.



conserving as a forest park. Then the farm was used in line with the layout through co-operation among agencies, support from the central government as well as Her Majesty's support from her private purse for the operational expenses and the workers' wages.

In addition to the above Demonstration Farm Projects, Ban Udom Sap Rice Bank founded on the 100,000 baht start-up money provided by Her Majesty, to store rice for use by farmers. Farmers can borrow seeds, plant them and when the harvest comes, return the amount borrowed and keep the difference. This is directly run by the highlanders with supervision and advice from the project director.

Her Majesty initiated the Lam Plai Mat Reservoir Area Development Centre, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, as well in the Northeast region. Her Majesty kindly granted an initiative for the concerned agencies to conserve the forest and wild elephants by considering solutions to increase food supplies for the elephants.

Besides this, Her Majesty also inaugurated The ***Sufficiency Economy Village Project*** at the end of 2001, at Ban Dong Yo, Mueang District, Sakon Nakhon Province. She presented fish breeds, chicken, and fertilizer to the people living in the village. This project was incepted by His Majesty the King to experiment on making proper use of the land on a small area of about 0.3 hectares and later taken care of by Her Majesty. One of the main aims of the project is to encourage the villagers to have self-confidence in their occupation and thus make enough produce to be self-reliant.

Hat Sai Yai Forest Park

Her Majesty's work does not only consist of initiating projects like this, but over the years she has lightened the load of His Majesty the King by following up and helping the progress of royal-initiated projects to ensure their continued success. One of His Majesty's earliest projects, and one that Her Majesty now assists with follow-up visits, is The Hat Sai Yai Farm in Hua Hin District, not far from Klai Kangwol Palace. Originally set up in 1965 on a plot of His Majesty the King's own land, it is an experimental farm that tries out different ways of raising livestock and poultry and growing cash crops, like tamarind and cashew-nut trees, on arid, sandy soil. The offspring of the cattle, pigs, goats, sheep and poultry bred at the farm are distributed to nearby farmers.



Visiting Hat Sai Yai Farm in 1973.









Planting vetiver grass to retain moisture in the soil.

The farm is important, as its purpose is to find a link between the right combination of water and fertilizers in order to grow crops under such poor conditions. The ability to grow kitchen garden crops and field plants, such as pineapples, corn and mulberry bushes is obviously a good example and encouragement for farmers. Mulberry trees are essential to the silk industry.

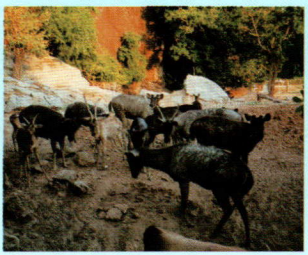
Her Majesty, who bought land at Ban Khao Tao, Hua Hin, in order to restore the soil, initiated *Hat Sai Yai Park Forest* in 1983. A ***Breeding and Propagation of Wildlife Project*** began in Hat Sai Yai Forest Park and



Examining a hill site.



Barking deer



Samba and Eldi deer.



Hog deer



Painted storks



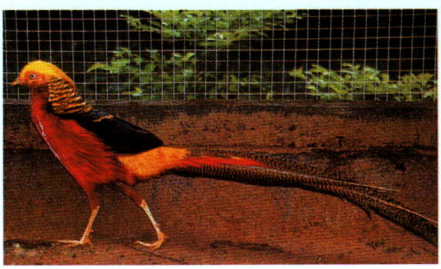


Black swan and cygnets



Peacock





Pheasants

the area was set up for breeding wildlife; its first occupants were deer. Later, barking deer, hog deer and wild fowl were introduced as these were considered endangered species. In the same year, 1985, *Khao Kho Wildlife Open Zoo* in Phetchabun Province opened to the public with similar objectives.



Feeding a goat at Hat Sai Yai Forest Park.



Flowers in Hat Sai Yai Forest Park.





Reservoir and water storage tank on a hill.

Just initiating and leaving the projects to fend for themselves would often doom them to failure due to the ease with which problems can overwhelm farmers without significant initial support. Thus, Her Majesty constantly visits each of her projects to give encouragement and to provide the impetus for the work to be carried out.

Saline Soil Development at Sakon Nakhon Province

To Thai farmers, the soil is the lifeblood of their existence. Therefore, whenever Her Majesty learns of problems with the soil that inhibit the farmers' ability to produce crops, she becomes most concerned. As with ***The Peat Soil Development Project*** at Ban To Lang and Ban Sai Khao, Her Majesty was informed by a local figure of the farmers' problems.

On 26 November 1998, Her Majesty visited The *Ban Chan Vocational Promotion Centre* at Ban Muang District, of Sakon Nakhon Province. During her visit, the local officials of Ban Muang appealed for Her Majesty's aid. They reported that saline water from salt farming had flowed into the creek causing problems for the rice farmers because they could not cultivate rice in this poor soil condition. Salt farming had caused saline water to permeate the agricultural land, affecting rice farmers because saline water not only damaged the paddy but also precluded the cultivation of other crops. The villagers' habit of pumping underground water and releasing wastewater affected the environment, causing the water in public creeks to become salty. This water could not be consumed or processed. The salinity killed fresh water aquatic



Visiting Ban Chan Vocational Promotion Centre, 26 November 1998.

animals and was destroying the ecosystem. To make matters worse, pumping underground saline water in large amounts created hollow spaces in the ground and caused land subsidence.[1]





Hollow spaces in the ground caused by pumping underground saline water.

[1] "Soil Salinity Diluted after the Royal Relief Project Started", **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August 1999, p. 30.



Therefore, Her Majesty graciously granted a royal initiative to change the soil chemistry aimed at relieving this hardship. In this connection, she sought advice from His Majesty the King, whose solution was duly translated into practice.

The following day, Her Majesty the Queen conveyed His Majesty's initiative directions:

> *"We should consider the idea of establishing a system to draw water through pipes from Huai Kum and Huai Sang Reservoirs in Wanon Niwat District, Sakon Nakhon Province. These were built by the Royal Irrigation Department to solve the problem of saline water and soil conditions resulting from salt farming in Ban Muang District, Sakon Nakhon Province."* [1]

[1] Ibid, p. 30.

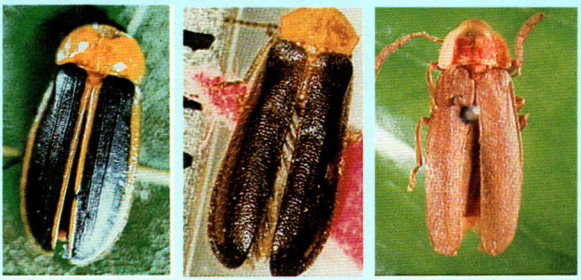


Coastal Resources Rehabilitation Project

Her Majesty has visited the South as much as any other part of Thailand. She is willing to go anywhere and travel in uncomfortable conditions to see for herself how people, especially the poor and disadvantaged, live, what the people there suffer from, and how their suffering can be eased. Her Majesty has always been fond of Pattani and Narathiwat, the largely Muslim provinces in the Deep South of Thailand. Her concern for the plight of small fishermen, whose waters near the coast had been over-fished by larger trawlers for many years, led her to develop artificial reefs in shallow coastal areas. Once developed, the reefs became home to small fish and she was able to assist the local fishermen to survive. The sea could have been compared to an enormous food source for the local fishermen from 7,900 households in more than 61 villages.



There was a lack of proper coastal resource management, evident in the fact that aquatic animals were slaughtered by the use of fishing equipment such as the trawl, resulting in a decrease in the numbers of aquatic animals in the area. Once the ecological system of the coastal resources reached its present fragile state, the traditional food source of these local people began to diminish. Closely linked to royal concern over the ecosystem, Her Majesty became interested in the breeding and distribution of a local insect, *Hing Hoi* (Fireflies), or *Pteroptyx vlida* Olivier, which could serve as a barometer of the ecosystem. The small insect is



Fireflies or Pteroptyx vlida.

sensitive to the surrounding environment and therefore a harbinger of pollution and the degradation of the ecology. Her Majesty initiated a breeding and dispersal programme. The insects commonly form a part of the ecosystem and are even a part of the diet in some rural areas.

Community Forests in Krabi and Phang-nga Provinces

"... Thailand belongs to all Thais, not just one group of people. Thus, everybody must care about Thailand. One knows that throwing things on the roads, on public roads, can be seen in Bangkok, which is not correct. Everybody must be equally responsible, must know that the country is ours." [1]

Her Majesty's concern for the environment has been tempered by the understanding that people still need to live and derive an income from their surroundings. In visiting the people in the South of Thailand for instance, she is more interested in learning firsthand of their problems concerning living conditions, healthcare, and occupation as much as ensuring that forests are preserved. On visits such as these, Her

[1] The National Forest Policy Board, **H.M. Queen Sirikit, Collection of Her Majesty's Statements on Forests and the Environment,** Bangkok : 1996.



Majesty graciously grants guidelines to solve pressing problems, advising related agencies, such as ***the SUPPORT Foundation*** and the Department of Agriculture, in order to help the people adopt suitable occupations and have a better and sustainable quality of life in harmony with nature. Practical and beneficial use of the environment can take several forms.

When Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, visited Krabi and Phang-nga provinces between 8 - 14 April 2001, it was to visit the local people and observe the eco-tourism-oriented community forest at Ban Thung Sung, Ao Luek District, Krabi Province. This



The community forest for eco-tourism at Thung Sung Village, Krabi.

type of forest is open to visitors who wish to enjoy its coolness and beauty, but care is taken to ensure it is not abused. The forest protection volunteer groups from Thung Sung and Ban Phiphat at Mueang District, Phang-nga province, are empowered to protect the local forests and came to pledge their loyalty. They are often rewarded for their diligence by Her Majesty. In this way, Her Majesty can ensure that they will carry on their important duty when she returns to Bangkok.

Her Majesty's view is that forests are the source of waterways and to conserve one is to conserve the



Visiting the people of Krabi and Phang-nga provinces in April 2001.

other. Her Majesty often speaks very directly in this regard, noting that it is everyone's responsibility:

> *"Rivers neither belong to the state, nor to anybody, for the rivers are ours. By throwing away so many things, there will be decay: fish will die, all the aquatic creatures will die because there will be no oxygen. And who finally has to deal with the problem – why, of course, the Thai people."* [1]

Krabi's Protected Forest: Thung Thalay

It is undeniable that, for more than three decades of national development along the lines set by The National Economic and Social Development Plans, Thailand's wealth of natural resources has allowed her to maintain her rate of economic growth. Our rich forest resources were one of the various foundations upon which were based many aspects of national

[1] Environmental Quality Department, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, **Royal Charisma, Nature and Life,** Bangkok : 1992, p. 13.



development, in particular, the increase in industrial production to generate employment and income for the population. As the rapid expansion of the industrial sector raised the Thai people's per capita income, the demand for natural resources to be used as production inputs increased rapidly.

Environmental Problems

In the course of Her Majesty's development activities, while accompanying His Majesty the King on their annual travels to all the regions of the country through the sixties and seventies, she became aware that the country's environment and natural resources were being destroyed at an alarming rate. She understood that this was the root cause of the hardship suffered by the rural people. Therefore, she has endeavoured to encourage her people's love for and attachment to natural resources. This is evident in the initiation of many projects in a wide variety of fields concerned with the environment and aimed at the harmonious co-existence among elements that formed part of the ecological system. That is the forest and its inhabitants, as Her Majesty once said.

Thung Thalay Forest forms part of the Ko Klang National Reserve Forest, located in Ko Klang Sub-district, Ko Lanta District of Krabi Province, with a total area of approximately 759.5 hectares. It covers an island of scenic beauty endowed with a diversity of forest types: terrestrial forest, mangrove forest and beach forest. The western seaboard in particular is well known for its beautiful 7-kilometre-long beach with fine white sand. Further inland from the beach there are shrubs, which give way to swamp forest, then mangrove forest.

Owing to its lush vegetation, biodiversity, and the picturesque views it affords, investors bent on pre-empting lands for the tourism business have greedily eyed Thung Thalay Forest. To this end, they hired local, generally impoverished, villagers to encroach on the forest, fell the trees and plant fruit trees in the hope of obtaining land right documents, then selling those rights to the businessmen.[1]



San Klang Island, an important tourist spot of Thung Thalay Forest.

[1] "Under Royal Aegis... Thung Thalay Forest and Its Dwellers," **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August, 1999, p. 19.



Deteriorated forest at Thung Thalay.

While the forest area of Thung Thalay gradually deteriorated and shrank for the above-mentioned reason, a number of its inhabitants still cherished and were possessive of the local natural resources. They made every effort to counter the actions of those villagers who were tools of businessmen. The situation gradually worsened into a conflict, and later on to physical clashes, between the two groups of villagers. Many petitions were submitted to the Crown.

The Krabi provincial government attempted to solve the problem, until the situation showed a trend for improvement, however new felling occurred as before and things were bleak for a while. The conflict, which had seemed to be a problem easy enough to solve, was in fact still smouldering. Before things got any worse, a group of villagers wishing to conserve the forest united to request the Krabi provincial government to present the 759.5 hectares area of Thung Thalay Forest to Her Majesty the Queen. Their action stemmed

from the inspiration they have taken from her and their belief that only the queen could conserve the natural resources and environment and remove the fuse of the conflict.[1]

Commencement of Thung Thalay Project

Her Majesty the Queen's concept of co-existence between man and forest led to Thung Thalay Forest being taken under her protection on 26 September 1994. Her Majesty advocated the rehabilitation and conservation of the forest's ecological system. She also proposed, for the benefit of the local people, the promotion of occupations based on available indigenous resources.

The case of Thung Thalay Forest shows what can be done to protect Thailand's remaining forest cover if people can just co-operate for the common good. The Krabi provincial government, The Royal Forest Department and The Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, jointly drew up a master plan for a three-year (1999 - 2001) ***Thung Thalay Forest Rehabilitation and Conservation Project.*** The purpose was to serve as a roadmap for the complete and efficient implementation of Her Majesty's ideas.

Emphasis was placed on Coastal Resource Project of the area, at the same time as human development, to enable the forest dwellers to earn enough to live on and be self-reliant. Should the project successfully achieve its objectives, not only would the Thung Thalay Forest area recover its original fertile and pristine state, but the local inhabitants' standard of living and quality of life would also be improved.

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[1] "Under Royal Aegis... Thung Thalay Forest and Its Dwellers," **The Chaipattana Foundation Journal,** August, 1999, p. 20.



Rehabilitated forest.

Narathiwat Coastal Resource Preservation

Besides the forested areas of the Northeast, other regions of Thailand suffer from environmental degradation through overuse of natural resources. Having heard about the misery and hardship of the local fishermen in Narathiwat, in the deep South of the country, as well as the deterioration of the coastal resources, Her Majesty the Queen conferred with His Majesty the King in order to seek solutions to the problem. She then graciously granted a royal initiative to the agencies concerned, such as the local people and the Fisheries Department, to organize a meeting to work together on the guidelines for solving the problem. On this occasion, Her Majesty herself presided over the meeting that was held on 6 September 2001, at the Daksin Palace, Narathiwat Province. The meeting concluded that it would be necessary to find an area where coastal aquatic animals could be propagated



Presiding over the opening ceremony of the Coastal Resources Rehabilitation Project at Laweng Village, Mai Kaen District, Pattani Province.



Local fishermen participating in the opening ceremony of the project.

and nurtured. These creatures would then be released back to the sea covering the areas from Narathiwat to Pattani, particularly the area where the troubled fishermen carry out their coastal fishing occupation. To achieve this, the community had to be strengthened by formulating preventive, monitoring and control measures in line with the law.



Observing the making of artificial reefs.







Train carriages, cement pipes and coconut leaves were sunk onto the seabed.

In order to attract fish back to the coast, several innovative methods were used. One was the construction of bamboo shelters over coastal areas to provide the shade that would normally induce small fish to come and breed. Experts from the Department of Fisheries designed an *artificial coral reef* to serve as a shelter and habitat for marine fish and to establish a state mechanism for the maintenance work covering a distance of three to five kilometres from the coast.







Once underway, the project was able to provide a sanctuary using old railway carriages and large sections of concrete pipes sunk off the coast for small fish to nest. A cargo ship positioned at approximately 11 - 12 kilometres from the coast of Sai Buri District, Pattani, began to unload train bogies to a depth of 25 - 29 metres. Around 40 bogies were dropped at first, with around 208 dropped in five groups. About nine kilometres from the Ban Thon coastline in Narathiwat Province, huge cement pipes, bamboo trunks, coconut leaves, ropes and sacks were sunk. Within less than a month after the artificial coral was placed, fishermen reported fishes, for example Yellowstripe Scad *(Salaries leptolepsis)*, Giant Sea Perch *(Lates calcarifer)* and Striped Barracuda (Sphryraena obtusata) they once thought had disappeared forever, to reappear.

More recently, in mid-2004, divers of the Department of Marine and Coastal Researches went to



Fish caught with fishing gear near sunken railway carriages.

record the progress of the project.[1] The area is once again teeming with sea creatures. The railway carriages are home to many of the common small fish of the region, including larger creatures like sharks. Local fishermen are able to fish once again, so the result can be called a success, having met one of its objectives, though requiring continuous management if the resources are not once again to dry up through over fishing.

[1] An interview with Mr. Manoth Wongsuryrat of the Department of Marine and Coastal Researches, August 2004.



Visiting the Yaring Mangrove Research Centre, Yaring Distict, Pattani Province, 14 September 1999.

Pattani Mangroves

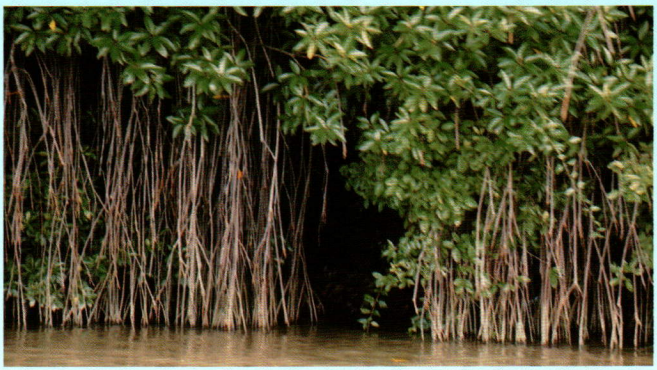
In order to continue this work, Her Majesty put her energy into the preservation of mangroves, as these will form the nurseries of many shallow water creatures, including the birds and other animals that live there.





The Yaring Mangrove Nature Research Centre is one of the activities under the project called Mangrove Rehabilitation and Development in Target Areas of Songkhla and Pattani Provinces. Mangroves are forest areas that protrude into the sea. The tangle of roots and vegetation is an important nursery for small aquatic animals, providing shelter and nutrients. The project was executed in response to His Majesty the King and the late Princess Mother's royal initiatives to give forests to their subjects on the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to the Throne in 1996. One of His Majesty's initiatives, the basis for work at Yaring, was at Khung Kraben Bay in Tha Mai District, Chanthaburi Province on the southeastern coast of the Gulf of Thailand. *A* ***Royal Development Study Centre,*** founded in late 1981, was established because of over fishing in coastal waters. The mangroves there were being converted into shrimp farms, leading to saline water intrusions into the farm areas nearby. By 1993, a band of mangrove had been preserved between the shrimp ponds and the mudflats beyond. Khung Kraben now not only minimizes soil erosion in the area but also provides nutrients and shelter to many creatures. The mangrove and exposed mudflats also act as a natural water treatment plant, trapping suspended sediment within its tangled roots and absorbing the dissolved nutrients discharged from shrimp ponds. This was the example for Her Majesty the Queen to continue.

Thus, the Yaring Mangrove Nature Research Centre Project covers an area of 80.8 hectares, surrounded by 3,238.87 hectares of healthy mangroves along the Ya Mu Canal. Although the project is close to the communal area, the forest is still very rich and the community has continuously participated in the reforestation and forest protection efforts thanks to the queen's encouragement. Under Her Majesty's direction, the community has conserved its traditional way of life and adopted the mangrove as a part of it. This often





Mangrove forest along the Yaring shoreline.

means using the mangrove as a source of wood and vegetables. But for instance, when a charcoal production concession was allowed, management of the mangrove allows for tree cutting on a 15-year cycle only. The Yaring Mangrove Nature Research Centre informs visitors how important mangroves are to the environment. The centre attracts not only students and teachers but also local civil servants and officials who learn about how to set up similar projects in other areas following the example given at Yaring. After Her Majesty's initiative, work was undertaken to stabilize the mangrove. This was done by planting reeds along the mudflats.



Releasing sea crabs and fish at Pran Buri, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province.



On 4 April 2000, Her Majesty visited the royally initiated ***Pran Buri Forest Park Project,*** Pran Buri District, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, to follow up on the progress of mangrove rehabilitation work there. Pran Buri Forest Park covers an area of 299.43 hectares



Releasing sea turtles.



Visiting the turtle conservation site at Man Nai Island, Klaeng District, Rayong Province.

and consists of not only mangrove areas with various mangrove trees, but also a complex mangrove ecosystem, which is interesting to study. As an example to others, Her Majesty released crabs and fish fingerlings into the mangrove.



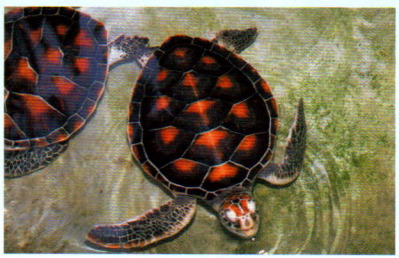
Baby turtles.



Leathery turtles.



Sea turtles.



Kra, or Hawksbill, turtles.



Enamel Venus shell.



Scaly giant clam.

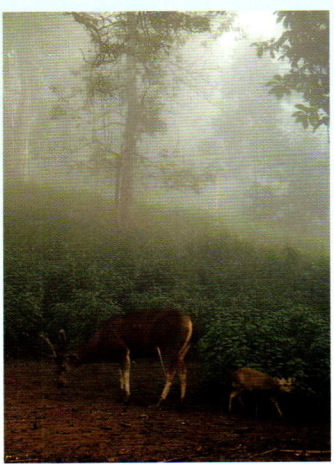


Pearl oyster.

Promoting Biodiversity through Wildlife Breeding and Propagation Projects

Her Majesty the Queen has always taken a keen interest in the complex relationship that exists among living organisms in nature, and her awareness of the ecosystem has led to initiation and implementation of a number of environment conservation and wildlife protection projects when she accompanied His Majesty the King to visit the people in different regions of the kingdom. Her Majesty has been concerned about the fact that several animal species are being destroyed, and that animal offspring are often taken away from their parents and their habitats, to be kept in captivity. This has led to her resolution to identify fertile land in different parts of the country for use as open zoos where animals can live freely in natural surroundings.

To this end, Her Majesty the Queen has dedicated herself to hard work, doing everything possible to find solutions for problems involving wildlife. Determined to conserve animal species, whenever the villagers present to her as gifts, wild animals or ornaments made of animal's organs, she tells them that she would be happier to see these animals alive and well. With her dedication and with support from the public, together with technical advice from experts, wildlife conservation projects are growing successfully because of Her Majesty's early efforts.

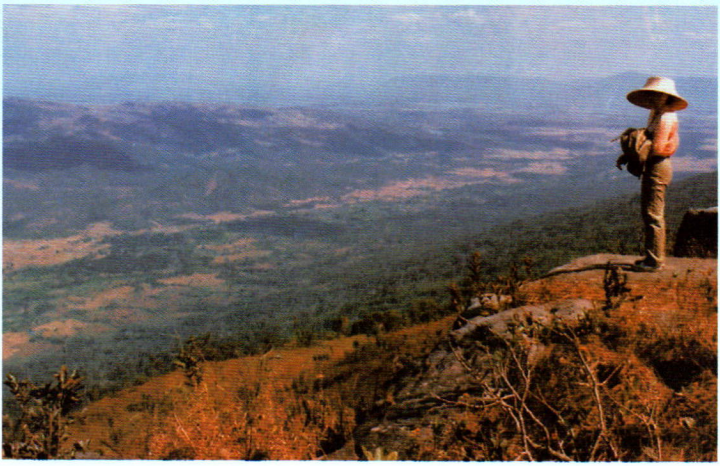


Deer at the Pang Tong Wildlife Breeding and Propogation Centre, Mae Hong Son.

Besides the farmers and the rural people who lived in and around forests, wildlife also needs a thriving forest to use as a habitat. Her Majesty appreciated that wild animals and



birds are part of the forest and deserved conservation. ***Pang Tong Wildlife Breeding and Propagation Centre*** was set up in Mae Hong Son Province in 1983 with the objective of conserving a variety of fauna. In the same year, Her Majesty opened ***Khok Mai Ruea Wildlife Breeding and Propagation Centre*** in Narathiwat, and the ***Chong Klam Bon Wildlife Breeding and Propagation Centre*** in Prachin Buri Province. In 1985, the ***Phu Khiao Wildlife Breeding and Propagation Centre*** in Chaiyaphum Province was set up. The general raison d'être of these other centres was to safeguard or reintroduce animals that had almost disappeared from the forests.



Visiting the animal conservation project at Phu Khiao.

Phu Khiao Natural Zoo

Her Majesty had recommended that the Forestry Department establish a ***Research and Study Centre for Wildlife Open Zoo Project*** in 1983 in response to the sad decline of some wild animals. By August 1984, The Wildlife Conservation Department had set up a research and study centre according to Her Majesty's wishes,

the Phu Khiao Natural Zoo Project, Chaiyaphum Province. It plays an important part not only in conserving our wildlife, but also in teaching young people about the rich and diverse environment, in which they live and should help to preserve in the future.



Great Hornbill

Bird Sanctuaries

One of Her Majesty's areas of wildlife conservation that is little known is the area of bird conservation and propagation. While Her Majesty has always shown interest in the conservation of the nation's unique wildlife, the story of how she came to understand the danger to some bird species came on her visits to the South of Thailand, where the local villagers would offer her the beaks of exotic birds as gifts. While understanding their respect for her in doing so, Her Majesty offered them a different view:

> *"If you want to make me happy, next time offer the whole bird—alive!"* [1]

Bird sanctuaries are a royal initiative that has grown in stature over the years. Two aviaries have been established, one at the Bang Sai SUPPORT Centre in Ayutthaya Province and the other at Khao Khiao in Chon Buri Province. At these aviaries, an emphasis is

[1] Interview with Thanpuying Pharani Mahanonda, Deputy Private Secretary to Her Majesty, 2004.



given on natural settings where birds are raised properly and bred. The aviaries also serve as resource centres where information on rare species of birds that are near extinction is available. Her Majesty can take pride in the work undertaken by these bird sanctuaries.



Her Majesty advised the conservation of the endangered Painted Stork.



Opening the Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden, 8 April 1996.

Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden

In 1992, a royal decree established the Botanic Garden Organization in honour of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit in celebration of her 60th birthday.[1] The Biodiversity Board of Thailand recommended the organization be responsible for the collection of various plants and vegetation, especially rare and endangered

[1] The Botanic Garden Organization has an informative website at www.qsbg.org

species of native flora, for further planting and propagation. Its mission is to preserve the invaluable plant resources of the country, maintain, and protect the biodiversity of flora that a tropical country like Thailand can boast. Two years later, in 1994, Her Majesty the Queen granted permission to name the northern botanic garden the "Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden."[1]

Located 27 km northwest of Chiang Mai, it covers an area of 960 hectares with about 80% designated as a watershed and conservation zone. The zone is fertile and watered by the Mae Sa River, which in turn is fed by three major streams, the Na Wai, Phan Si, and Mae Sa Noi. This confluence ensures water all year round. The topography consists of plains alternating with imposing mountains. Due to its beautiful landscape and convenient access, the garden is a major tourist attraction in Chiang Mai.



Mae Sa Noi Waterfall inside the botanic garden.

[1] In order to integrate the work at national and international levels, the garden now comes under the wing of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.



Planting Ueang Sae (Dendrobium longicornu Lindl.*) orchids at the Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden, Chiang Mai.*

Orchid Conservation

The garden has a staff of botanical and horticultural experts who have tried to create a representative collection of Thai plants for research as well as conserving those species at risk in the wild. There has been a threat to orchids, for instance, due to their commercial value, to the extent that several species were under threat of extinction. Thailand is home to 177 orchid genera and 1,125 species.[1] Plants that are usually collected in the wild for their medicinal properties or use in producing medicines are grown in quantity to provide a sustainable, economical source. The garden also provides facilities for students and researchers. Several institutions and universities throughout the country have collaborated with the

[1] The Nation, 2 April 2003.



Herb nursery.



Tissue lab for breeding purposes.



Room for collecting dry specimens.

garden's administration on projects. To restore and maintain floral diversity for the nation, the garden contains many rare and endangered species, particularly those indigenous to Thailand. The Technical and Research Department at the garden is responsible for the research and conservation efforts undertaken at the garden. It also conducts educational programmes on botany.



The Herbarium is one of the three important parts of the Technical and Research Department. Although it is not very old, established in 1994, it is the third largest in the country and contains approximately 20,000 pressed and dried specimens and is able to act as a collection centre for plants from all parts of the country. An advanced computerized database catalogues the herbarium collections and serves as an international reference for academic studies. Here, there is a room for collecting dry specimens of flowers that are now rare, others that exist only in certain areas or regions. Of the Thai plants collected, perhaps the largest number is from the North, as may be expected, and the Northeast; however, the collection contains specimens from all over Southeast Asia. The work on biodiversity handled by the Technical and Research Department includes a Tissue Culture Unit, in a Laboratory Centre, for micropropagation and in vitro plant conservation, especially of rare and endangered species and molecular genetic studies of native orchids. The unit focuses on plants that are endemic to Thailand. The department has had its significant successes: in April 2003, it was announced that over the previous few years, four botanists at the Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden had discovered three species of orchid from a previously unknown genus. The genus was named ***Sirindhornia*** after HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who, like Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, also works to conserve Thailand's biodiversity.[1] Another major attraction at the garden, besides its colourful ornamental flowerbeds, is that plants are classified according to their botanical families for educational purposes, including common

[1] Two of the species, *Sirindhornia pulchella and mirabilis*, are only found in Thailand, **Bangkok Post**, 2 April 2003.

plants from the fig family, *Moraceae;* the banana family, *Musaceae*; the palm family, *Arecaceae;* the ginger family, *Zingiberaceae* and the pine family, *Pinaceae*. Other areas include a section on ferns and an area for climber plants.














Wild Orchids.



Lady Slipper Orchids.





On 19 November 1979, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the World Wildlife Fund presented an award to Her Majesty as an outstanding conservationist of World Wildlife Fund.[1] The queen of Thailand had worked selflessly for the sake of the environment, and her devotion caught global attention. How the world has recognized Her Majesty Queen Sirikit over the years is a story of great interest to many.

[1] **Bangkok Post,** 12 August 2004.



Chapter 10: International Recognition of Her Majesty's Work

"I think that I am able to perform merit making by assisting my people"[1]

From quite early on, foreign observers had recognized Her Majesty's work. Besides the numerous academic honours bestowed on Her Majesty by local institutions, foreign institutions have provided the international acknowledgement that has helped Her Majesty pursue the promotion of Thailand's arts and crafts overseas. She has acknowledged these international awards and presentations with a philosophical attitude:

> *"Without co-operation from people in various sectors, my work would not have turned out successful. To receive these medals is to receive them in the name of the Thai people who have goodwill to work sincerely for others."*[2]

Her Majesty's words are a reflection of the philosophy of Buddhism, that men and women are reborn to the world of suffering, and that by selflessness, they can hope to end the cycle of rebirths and worldly torment. Not surprising then, that Her Majesty has chosen the path described in this book. Her view of the

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[1] Associate Professor Athaya Komolkanchana, "Her Majesty the Queen Who is Excellent in All Disciplines", **Ramkhamhaeng University Journal** : Humanities Issue, Commemorating Her Majesty the Queen's 5th Cycle Anniversary, 1992, p. 84.

[2] Ibid. p. 79.

awards bestowed upon her is to see them as appreciation for the work done by all those involved in her projects, and for whom she sees herself as a representative. The day before Her Majesty's birthday in 1991, the queen was pleased to give a public address during which she acknowledged an honour given her, but saw also an opportunity to promote not herself, but Thailand.

> *"The award will be presented to me during a luncheon party in Washington D.C., in the presence of over a thousand honoured guests, and with a fashion show participated by leading ladies of the great city. There will also be a Thai cultural exhibition, and I have been requested to bring to this exhibition the products from our SUPPORT centres. I admit that I am proud of it, because the "SUPPORT" Foundation was established with the purpose of helping the needy, especially the members of the families of poor Thai farmers...*
>
> *"... This is the reason why I am happy to know that people far away in foreign lands are aware of the existence of the "SUPPORT" Foundation; and by asking me to take handicraft samples produced by this foundation for exhibition in that Children's Museum, they have given formal recognition to its purpose, and its work. They would like to see with their own eyes the kind of handicraft work produced by the poor farmers of our country. What I have in mind to take to the exhibition is gold nielloware and other kinds of gold artefacts. They are representative of a sector of folk arts and craftsmanship of our country."*[1]

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[1] The Royal Institute, **Festivities in Celebration of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary, 12 August 1992,** Bangkok : 1992, p. 20.



At the Red Cross Centre, Khao Lan, Trat Province.

Her Majesty's humanitarian acts had drawn the attention of much of the world. The famous incident in 1978 when she quietly urged the government to open the border to Cambodian refugees was an exemplary act that deserved recognition, although Her Majesty's action was not known until much later[1]. The then Prime Minister General Kriangsak Chamananda complied with Her Majesty's recommendation, which saved thousands of refugees and displaced men, women and children fleeing from military suppression in Cambodia to find safe haven on the Thai side of the

[1] An interview with Dr Suvit Yodmani, the then Government Spokesman.

border. In March 1990, Her Majesty was awarded **The Centre for Migration Studies Immigration and Refugees Policy Award 1990** for her efforts in assisting approximately one million homeless refugees since 1975. As she was not free to travel abroad in that month, she requested HRH Princess Chulabhorn to represent her and to receive the award from The Centre for Migration Studies at Washington D.C., US. A part of the citation read,

> *"Her Majesty the Queen is a good example of an outstanding leader who through her humanity has assisted approximately one million homeless refugees since 1975."*

A royal trip to **Japan** in 1993 was followed by visits to **the United States** and **Austria** from 11 May to 7 June. In Washington D.C., Her Majesty was then honoured by Georgetown University, which granted her an **Honorary Doctorate Degree in Humane Letters.** Georgetown University, the alma mater of former US President Bill Clinton, has a very large law school and one of the oldest schools of Foreign Service and language and linguistics in the United States. Located right at the heart of the American capital, it often invites personalities of international fame as guest lecturers, including Henry Kissinger, Jean Kirkpatrick and Madeleine Albright. The then President of Georgetown University, Rev. Leo O'Donovan, remarked that an honorary degree signifies what the university as an institution can learn from the person on whom it bestows the honour. He said,

> *"The degree is awarded in recognition of the commitment and energy brought to bear in a particular cause of distinguished achievements and leadership and humanitarian outreach."* [1]

[1] **Ramkhamhaeng University Journal,** 1993, p. 82.





In an invocation that day, Reverend Francis Winters, Associate Professor at the School of Foreign Service, said,

> *"Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's achievement should enlighten students and teachers of the art of government."*

For many, Their Majesties have been an example of how it is possible for a royal family to work for the common good whatever the political or economic conditions of the country. Reverend Winters took Her Majesty's work as the epitome of how a queen should act and went on to pray that God

> *"teach the ways of wisdom neglected in the classic texts of power, and to awaken awareness that to rule wisely is to serve, a path already travelled by the Queen of Thailand."*

Her Majesty the Queen, it appeared to Reverend Winters, showed how

> *"the people involved seek to learn how in their own lives they can offer themselves to the welfare of those less fortunate than them in their community, country and the world."*

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, he continued, had taught them through her life's work that true compassion must include action. Her Majesty's commitment to her people and her efforts on their behalf illustrated the words written in Latin on the wall of Gaston Hall, at the university:-

> ***"For the greater glory of God and the salvation and welfare of mankind."***

The citation also noted Her Majesty's work to improve the health and economic well-being of her people, especially those living in rural areas. Dr John Griffith, the Director of the University Medical Centre and Dean of the School of Medicine, referred to the most urgent of the needs in the remote areas of Thailand, health care, and described how Her Majesty created medical and dentistry units staffed by volunteer doctors and dentists to provide care for villagers during the king and queen's visits. It appears that the Americans were well aware of the work of Her Majesty, and Dr Griffith spoke of how Her Majesty founded the Village Doctors Programme to train local volunteers to administer basic medical care and advice. He also pointed out her role in improving the livelihood of the poor and her establishment of the SUPPORT Foundation.

In her acceptance address, Her Majesty was pleased to mention the special bond of friendship that existed between Thailand and the United States. One should note here that the US relationship had commenced in 1828 with the arrival of missionaries to Thailand. Among the earliest was Dr Dan Bradley who established Thailand's first printing press in 1835, which led to better education, and the first vaccinations, leading to better health care. Her Majesty went on to express hope that the relationship would be even more strengthened in the future. Her work for the people,

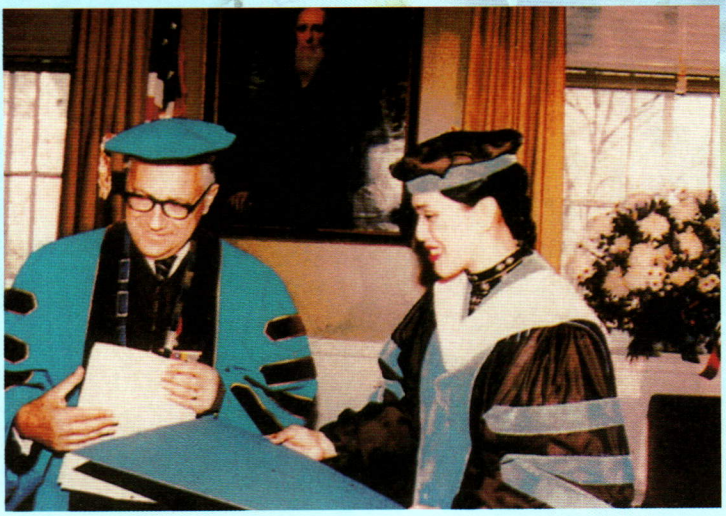


she said, would continue, especially in the field of environmental conservation. Her Majesty recalled her first visit to the rural areas of Thailand, more than 40 years before, in the company of His Majesty the King. Their resolve to improve the conditions of the people, she said, have succeeded to a considerable extent, but *"the work has to be carried on"* – though Thailand had become successful in its economic growth and conditions were improved.



Her Majesty's recognition by foreign universities was well established in the sixties when Centro Escolar University of the Philippines bestowed on Her Majesty a ***Doctor of Humanities Honoris Causa Degree.*** In 1980.

Her Majesty, travelling with HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, visited Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts. The Fletcher School, conducted jointly by Tufts and Harvard Universities, is recognized as one of the top schools for diplomacy and international relations in the world. There she received an ***Honorary Doctorate Degree of Humane Letters*** on 4 March 1980, presented by Mr Theodore Elliot, Dean of the Fletcher School and a former US Ambassador, in recognition of her work to help Cambodian refugees, especially infants. This is a



theme that was formally recognized – Her Majesty had been instrumental in the border being opened for refugees and thousands of lives of Cambodian men, women and children had been saved.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing awards presented was an ***Honorary Fellowship*** from the 470-year-old Royal College of Physicians of London in recognition of Her Majesty's humanitarian work. This took place at the Chakri Throne Hall, Grand Palace, on 1 May 1988. The Royal College of Physicians was represented by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, its President from 1983 - 1989, and himself a former refugee from apartheid in South Africa. Sir Raymond informed Her Majesty:

> *"The Royal College of Physicians of London offers fellowships only to those who are really suitable. Most are medical doctors and scientists who are famous and well known in medicine and other related sciences. The Fellows of the College know that Your Majesty has*





performed many activities for the progress of both medical science and public health. Your Majesty has formed royal medical units and sent volunteer medical doctors to give medical care to people in impoverished areas. Your Majesty also goes to supervise the treatment of those people yourself."[1]

A few years later, on 18 January 1991, the medical world bestowed upon Queen Sirikit a further ***Honorary Fellowship,*** this time from the Royal College of Physicians of Thailand, again honouring her devotion to humanitarian work.

Her Majesty's humanitarian work was provided for the poor, yet outside of Thailand it was most often the rich who were aware of it. The wealthy in America had several notable families known for their altruism, none more so than the Rockefellers. The honorary

[1] Ibid. p. 84.



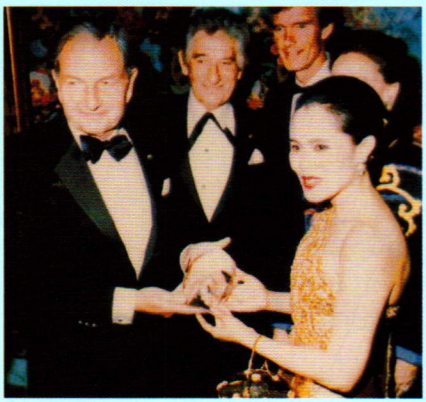




Granting an audience to a representative of the Royal College of Physicians who presented her with honorary degrees and honorary fellowship for Medicine and Public Health.



chairperson of the Save the Children Federation, Mr David Rockefeller, presented Her Majesty with the Federation's ***Save the Children's Distinguished Service Award*** in New York in November 1981, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Federation. Her Majesty was its first ever recipient.





Mr Rockefeller noted that,

> *"The activities Your Majesty has performed are very beneficial and advantageous for poor people in rural and remote areas. Your Majesty has kindly solved their household economic problems and their health. With Your Majesty's great humanitarianism, a huge number of refugees have been assisted to live in Thailand, especially the orphans who have had to confront their unjust fate since childhood. Your Majesty's contributions to social services have been widely known and praised all over the world."*[1]

As Her Majesty's work has attracted such international acclaim, it is not surprising that one of the world's foremost organizations, the United Nations,

recognized Her Majesty's efforts to improve the lives of Thai families. It was to Her Majesty that Mr Kurt Waldheim, the then United Nations Secretary General presented ***The First Thai Proof Coins in Series Commemorating the International Year of the Child*** on 12 November 1981 at the Dag Hammarskjold Library in New York. Concurrently in 1981, Her Majesty was taking more steps to lend her assistance to rural families and established the Royal Medical Project and supplementary occupations at a military camp in Chon Buri Province toward the east of Bangkok, which was built for soldiers' families and the people who live there.

The following year, on 19 June 1982, Her Majesty was also presented with ***UNICEF's Coins Commemorating International Year of the Child*** at the Barom Phiman Throne Hall.[1] This was the year that Her Majesty gave the name "Pa Rak Nam," to her first reforestation project set up at Ban Tham Tiew, Song Dao District, in Sakon Nakhon Province.

Her Majesty's work continued to draw the attention of the United Nations. On 2 August 1992, Her Majesty was awarded both the ***UNICEF Special Recognition Award*** and the ***UNIFEM Award of Excellence*** in recognition of her dedication in supporting the role of Thai women in developing the country. The UNICEF Special Recognition Award had never before been presented to a single individual (it was usually given to organizations) and was awarded in this instance in recognition of her sacrifice and dedication in developing the quality of life for mother and child in Thailand.

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[1] Ibid. p. 81.



Receiving UNICEF Special Recognition Award and UNIFEM Award of Excellence on 2 August 1992.



This emphasis on Her Majesty's humanitarian activities was recognized once more by a United Nations body, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO, on 30 January 1992 when the organization awarded Her Majesty the ***Borobodur Gold Medal*** at Salatham Pavilion, Chiang Mai University in the north of Thailand. The Secretary General of UNESCO, Mr Frederico Mayor, presented the award, noting that Her Majesty had for over 40 years devoted herself to improving the lives of the poor by providing them with work that developed and preserved their cultural heritage. The award ceremony took place at the opening of the Asian Weaving Heritage Handicraft and Industry Fair in celebration of Her Majesty's sixtieth birthday and once again it proved to be an occasion in which Her Majesty could highlight the handicrafts and arts that the Thai people had on show at the time.









Besides Her Majesty's work for the rural poor in terms of vocational education, she had also paid special attention to Thai women, gaining the reputation of an emancipated woman herself and an example of Thai womanhood. ***The Ceres Medals***[1], from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) were presented to Her Majesty in recognition of an outstanding person who had devoted her life to the improvement of the lives of women and people in rural areas. The FAO started making the Ceres medals in 1971 with the aim of honouring women who have







contributed to the benefit of agriculture, nutrition, social welfare, women's rights and education, while FAO itself was set up to wipe out starvation and poverty. The medals were presented to Her Majesty in recognition of her work with women at the Chakri Throne Hall on 11 May 1979. Her Majesty was presented the medals by the Food and Agriculture Director,

[1] Ceres was the Roman goddess of agriculture (called Demeter by the Greeks).

Dr Eduard Sauma, and Dr D.L. Umali, who was the Representative of the FAO for Asia and the Far East.

Dr Sauma noted in his address,

> *"Her Majesty the Queen of Thailand, whose mind is filled with virtue, has always kindly assisted her people, especially the poor and needy in rural areas. Her Majesty has devoted her time and life to social service. She has co-operated with social welfare organizations and charitable organizations to alleviate the suffering of the poor by providing food and shelter for the starved and homeless, including orphans."* [1]

Her Majesty received both silver and gold medals, the silver slightly larger. One side of the medals shows Her Majesty and the other shows a female Thai farmer with the words, ***"To Give Without Discrimination."*** An excerpt in the official citation reads,

> *"For your far-sighted efforts to advance the status of women, as expressed in the Royal Patronage of organizations and programmes providing educational and training opportunities to enable women to improve their economic and social welfare, while enhancing appreciation for their national cultural heritage."*

In the most recent international recognition of Her Majesty's efforts to improve the health and quality of life of ordinary people, the United Nations body, the World Health Organization (WHO), presented the ***First Food Safety Award*** to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on 9 August 2005. WHO Director-General, Dr Lee Jong-

[1] **Ramkhamhaeng University Journal**, 1993. p. 79.



wook, presented the award to Her Majesty in recognition of Her Majesty's outstanding and notable efforts in promoting food safety in the country. The award presentation ceremony took place at the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall in Bangkok, to coincide with the 6th Global Conference on Health Promotion held in Bangkok from 7 - 11 August.

The award was presented at a special ceremony in the presence of over a hundred dignitaries, including the WHO Regional Director for Southeast Asia, the Assistant Director-General for Non Communicable Diseases and Mental Health and the WHO Representative to Thailand.







As the first recipient of this award, WHO wished to compliment Her Majesty the Queen for her devotion and contribution to the promotion of food safety among the Thai people, particularly those living in remote areas.

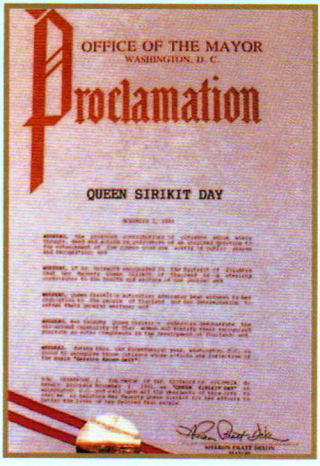
Food safety has always been an important issue for Her Majesty, as we have seen in this book, having initiated model farms in rural areas, for instance, to create more food sources and provide jobs for local people to make a living. Her Majesty has helped to reduce chemical use in food production, and provided information on health measures against chemical hazards in daily life.

Addressing the assembly of well-wishers on the eve of her birthday anniversary in 1988, Her Majesty the Queen pointed out that good health was very important, as people would be better equipped to contribute to the progress and prosperity of the country. On the occasion of Her Majesty's 72nd birthday anniversary in 2004, the Ministry of Public Health published the book ***Kin Tam Mae*** (Eat What Your Mother Does), featuring Her Majesty's own choice of nutritious food.

Her Majesty also became well known globally for giving her time and energy to the poor, the homeless, the sick and those with little or no hope. Her humanitarianism was to strike a chord in the hearts of many Westerners who acknowledged her role played in the development of the country, for instance, the ***First International Humanitarian Award*** on 1 November 1991, presented by Mrs Esther Coopersmith, President of the Friends of the Capital Children's Museum of Washington at the Sheraton Hotel, Washington D.C. for Her Majesty's work with refugees and especially children. The presentation ceremony






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QUEEN SIRIKIT DAY

was performed on 1 November 1991, at the VIP Room, Sheraton Hotel, Washington D.C. Other receivers of this award were Mrs Barbara Bush for her campaign to erase illiteracy and Mrs Nancy Reagan for her work in the prevention of drug addiction. Queen Sirikit became the first ever non-American award recipient.

The citation on the ***Asia Society's Humanitarian Award***, presented to Her Majesty on 14 March 1985, described Her Majesty's role in assisting women,

> *"With far-sightedness, Her Majesty has done nearly every possible thing to raise women's social status, such as by patronizing many societies and organizations and initiating projects to educate*



and train women so that they may be able to raise their economic status and social welfare while encouraging them to appreciate their Thai heritage of traditional art and culture."[1]

Conferred in New York by the President of the Asia Society, Mr Robert B. Oxnam, Her Majesty had become the very first recipient of the award since its foundation, in honour of Her Majesty's work concerning the conservation of Thai village handicrafts and her work in raising the status of women. As Oxnam noted at the time,

"She is a beacon of hope, tirelessly working to bring a better life to the people of Thailand."[2]

Though Her Majesty had worked hard over the years to raise the status of women, she acknowledged that she had not done so single-handedly, reminding those at the ceremony,

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[1] Ibid. p. 82.
[2] **The Nation**, 16 March 1985.



"I certainly believe that this award offered to me indeed belongs to every Thai."[1]

To coincide with the award ceremony, the Ambassador Foundation also asked Her Majesty to bring SUPPORT exhibition along to the US in order to promote the SUPPORT Foundation. It became common for Her Majesty to combine any invitation to receive an award with the opportunity to also exhibit the arts and crafts made by Thai people under her patronage.

Soon after, Her Majesty travelled to California to receive the ***1993 Woman of the Year Award,*** of which Her Majesty was again the first ever recipient, from Stanford University in San Francisco. The university's Institute for Research on Women and Gender presented the award to the queen. Established in 1974, the institute is one of the first of its kind in the United States. It has fostered and disseminated inter-disciplinary research into the causes and consequences of changing gender roles for the ultimate goal of securing an egalitarian society.



Addressing the assembly on the occasion of receiving an award from Stanford University.

[1] **Ramkhamhaeng University Journal**, p. 82.

The Institute recognized the exceptional achievements of women like Her Majesty Queen Sirikit and encouraged her to continue with her work among women. This Her Majesty performed with joy over many years, On 12 December, 1994, the Suep Sai Yai Phra Metta or Carrying on Her Majesty's Compassion Fair was organized to exhibit textile products made by women under SUPPORT foundation award also recognized that Her Majesty is patron of the Council of Social Welfare of Thailand and has worked to preserve forests and wildlife. The presentation ceremony was held on 26 May 1993, at Stanford Law School's Kresge Auditorium, San Francisco.



*Receiving the **Lindbergh Award** from the Charles A. Lindbergh and Ann Morrow Lindbergh Foundation, 16 May 1995.*



*Receiving an **Honorary Doctorate degree in Humane Letters** from John Hopkins University, 25 May 1995.*



On 21 May 1997, Tokai University, Japan, awarded an ***Honorary Doctorate Degree in Philosophy*** to Her Majesty the Queen in recognition of her world-renowned work on social welfare. Mr Tatsuro Matsumae, President of Tokai University, presented the degree to Her Majesty at the Matsumae Memorial Hall, Tokai University, Japan.







Receiving an Honorary Doctorate Degree in Philosophy at Tokai University, Japan.

Two years later, on 18 December 1999, Dr Walter Leibrecht, President of Schiller International University, London, awarded an ***Honorary Doctorate Degree in Humane Letters*** to Her Majesty the Queen in honour of her service to humanities. The presentation ceremony was performed at the Chakri Throne Hall of the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

The M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Texas, in presenting Her Majesty its ***Award for Humanitarian Service*** in 2002 highlighted that,

> *"Queen Sirikit's humanitarian efforts have been evident in the ways she has influenced the ability of people to support themselves, her protection of the environment, and... the improvement of both access to health care and treatment in Thailand...Her Majesty supports the cancer unit of the Thai Association of Gynaecologists so that all women have access to screening and treatment of cervical cancer."*



Presiding over the opening ceremony of the Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer at Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, the Thai Red Cross Society, 11 June 2005.





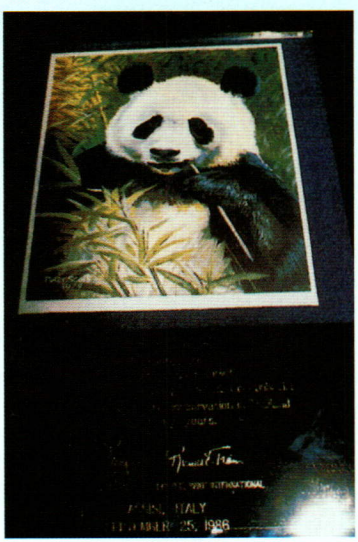
Her Majesty's work on traditional arts and crafts also led the International Sericultural Commission (ISC) to present the ***Louis Pasteur Award*** to her in recognition of her immense efforts to improve Thai silk and promote it for the international market. Dr Gerard Chavancy, Secretary of ISC, presented the award to Her Majesty during a gala dinner at Government House in Bangkok on 21 September 2002.

One month later, in France, the Société Académique d'Education & d'Encouragement Arts – Sciences – Lettres (ASL) presented to Her Majesty the Queen a ***Diplôme de Grande Médaille d'Or avec Plaquette d' Honneur*** for her work and support for the preservation of Thai arts and crafts on 18 October 2002. The presentation ceremony took place at Salon Vendôme, The Ritz Hotel, Paris.

Besides the queen's work with people, many are intrigued to note the amount of work Her Majesty has done to improve the conservation of nature and wildlife in particular. Symbolically, first came a few small tokens that were simply a way of showing her the esteem in



*Receiving the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources** (IUCN) Gold Medal in honour of her environmental conservation work, 17 November 2004.*



Award of Outstanding Conservation of Forests and Wildlife.





which Her Majesty was held, such as a white orchid grown in England and named after Her Majesty in 1958. The **Queen Sirikit Cattleya** went on to win an award itself at the Royal Horticultural Society Show that year. The orchid, sometimes referred to as the Cattleya "Exquisite" is a cross between Cattleya Bow Bells and C.O. brieniana 'alba'. Later, in 1963, the Philippines Government requested permission to name a flower **Queen Sirikit Don'a** when Their Majesties paid a royal visit to the Philippines. It is true to say that Her Majesty has had her own role in conservation of forests. In recognition of her affords, the goverment set up the Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden in Chiang Mai, in 1993. It is the first botanical garden of the country to serve as a centre for botanical studies and research, a centre for ex situ conservation of Thai flora, and a place to provide botanical education and aesthetic displays for the public. Here also is one of the few places one may encounter the rose called **Queen Sirikit,** named by M. André Hendriks, the Belgian supervisor of a rose nursery in France, in August 1971. A fitting tribute to a woman who appears to glow as she





talks to people, the yellow rose has a mild fragrance and petal tips that turn pale orange in strong sunlight.

Orchids that visitors admire in the garden and on farms may include the Lady Slipper that today exists because of Her Majesty's efforts to preserve one of their rare species, requesting that:

> *"... The Lady Slipper orchid species be propagated to increase their number and then returned to be replanted in forests where appropriate."*[1]

The flowers of Thailand have been Her Majesty's concern, much as the people of Thailand have if the queen was able to spare attention for every living thing that she comes upon.







[1] The National Identity Office, Office of Prime Minister, **Thailand Executive Diary 2004,** Bangkok : Amarin Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd., 2003, p. 120.



In concluding this small contribution to Her Majesty's 72nd birthday celebrations, one must stress that Her Majesty's life bears much scrutiny. Individual activities have drawn the attention of the popular





press and foreign observers, but it is best to look at her life as a whole. In this way, we can see real changes in her life and attitude over the 72 years since a stranger foretold her future with such uncanny accuracy.

From a relatively young age, Queen Sirikit has gained and maintained the respect of millions of people due to her hard work and genuine concern for others less fortunate. It is a measure of her tireless work on behalf of the families of poor people that she has drawn the attention of many people from around the world, acting as a good example of Thai women and gaining the respect and admiration of countless organizations, institutions and individuals. Many of Her Majesty's royal activities have been a natural extension of His Majesty the King's influence. Having decided that the royal family would dedicate themselves to helping the poor, His Majesty assigned the queen to care for people's families. Her Majesty was quick to understand that women were the cornerstone of the Thai family and yet were under-appreciated in society.



Mr Leo J. Odono, the Dean of Georgetown University, US, admiring the products of the SUPPORT Foundation.

Her Majesty's earliest efforts were directed at women in rural areas; weaving classes provided them with a supplementary income that would stand them in good stead when farming or fishing was inadequate. It was because of such activities that she concluded the Thai people had a heritage that could support them further. Thus, she introduced the world to Thai handicrafts and fine arts through the auspices of the SUPPORT Foundation. Her pride in the work of Thai artisans was rewarded by the success her exhibitions had on the international community. She became a role model for Thai women and people who wished to emulate her strength of character and self-sacrifice. Each year on her birthday, people from all walks of life donate blood to the Thai Red Cross as a way of showing their respect and admiration for her work.

As a Buddhist, Her Majesty has understood the laws of cause and effect, which is a common theme in



Planting orchids at Nang Non Centre, Chiang Mai Province, designated to be developed as a Northern centre to breed archids for conservation and tourism.

the religion. In effect, she understood that what people did to earn a living had an effect on their environment. If the effect was detrimental to their surroundings, it followed that their livelihood also suffered. Hence, we see that people who employed slash and burn agriculture were actually destroying their environment and their ability to remain on the land in a sustainable manner. Her Majesty, realizing that for people to live comfortably they would have to live off their surroundings in harmony, implemented numerous projects to revive the forests with water sources and persuaded the villagers to protect them. In return, they were shown other methods of earning a living that were non-destructive and yet sufficient for their needs. Projects like ***the Little House in the Big Forest*** and ***Forest Loves Water*** are still inextricably linked to the well-being of the people in the countryside as they are

to the life of the forests and water sources they protect and conserve.

Besides the protection of the forests, Her Majesty has also been an active conservationist when it comes to flora and fauna. Her efforts to conserve rare breeds of orchids and wild animals have brought acclaim worldwide. Besides conservation of land ecosystems, Her Majesty has played an important role in the protection and revitalization of the ocean environment



The Som Maew cataracts in Queen Sirikit Forest Park, Ratchaburi Province.

off the coasts of Thailand. By creating habitats off the coast using such things as railway carriages and concrete pipes, Her Majesty has protected sea creatures in areas that were once so over-fished that the local people were in danger of losing their livelihood entirely.

Her Majesty has acted as a beacon for all Thai people, who, wherever they are in the country, know that she thinks of them all as equally deserving of a high quality of life. She has encouraged all to live in



Her Majesty the Queen is always in the hearts of Thai people.

harmony with their neighbours and surrounding environment, eschewing a life of comfort for herself in order to be close to them as they struggle to survive. In her example to the country and the world, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit evokes the glory of a nation forever in her debt.

To relieve His Majesty's onuses,
As patroness of the arts and crafts
Her Majesty uplifts the people's well-being
Through supplementary occupations.
Lauded for her humanitarian work,
The Queen befits the appellation
"The Glory of the Nation."[1]

[1] Composed by Associate Professer Malithat Promathatavedi.

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