

Essays on Thai Folklore

by
Phya Anuman Rajadhon



Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development
&
Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation
Bangkok 1988

This kingdom was known as Siam until 1939, when its name was changed to Thailand. Then it reverted to the original name again in 1946. Two years after the coup d`état of 1947 it was decreed that the country would be called Thailand, and it remains so officially. Ironically the kingdom has since been ruled by one dictator after another-with very brief liberal democratic intervals. The name, Thailand, signifies the crisis of traditional Siamese Buddhist values. Removing from the nation the name it had carried all its history was in fact the first step in the psychic dehumanization of its citizens, especially when its original name was replaced by a hybrid, Anglicized word. This new name also implies chauvinism and irredentism.

The Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Buddhist Era seems to begin one year later than that of Burma, Sri Lanka and India. In fact this is not so. The difference is that while the latter regards the year of the Maha Parinibbana as B. E. I, the former takes it to be the first anniversary after the Master's Passing Away. For example this year is B.E. 2530 according to the Siamese, Cambodian and Laotian Calendar, but it is B.E. 2531 according to the Burmese, Ceylonese and Indian Calendar.

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Shya Anuman
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Preface

The enterprising Editor of The Social Science Review calls my attention of the fact that on 14 December 1968, Phya Anuman Rajadhon will be celebrating his 80th birthday, and, as Chaokhun has been of great assistance to the Editorial Board of The Review, submits, for my approval, a proposal that a publication be made, as a contribution to the celebration, of about twenty articles in English by Phya Anuman on Culture, Language and Literature, Folk Tales, Buddhism, and Rites and Ritual, adding that the Asia Foundation has very kindly agreed to help with the printing costs.

I wholeheartedly give my approval to the proposal and, on behalf of the Social Science Association of Thailand I offer our grateful thanks to the Asia Foundation for its generous assistance.

I am also asked to give the title to the book. I suggest *"Essays on Thai Folklore."*

I have worked for many years with Phya Anuman on the subject of the language and Thai culture and it has been a source of great pleasure to me to find that Chaokhun, like myself, always approaches the subject from a Thai point of view and tries to find a solution from a Thai point of view. Experts in Pali-Sanskrit, for instance, are inclined to give a word derived from Pali-Sanskrit its Pali or Sanskrit meaning and not its Thai meaning. **Songsan** in Thai means “pity”, while **Samsara** in

Pali-Sanskrit means "transmigration". Phya Anuman, without neglecting etymology, would find out the meaning of a word in Thai by comparing its use in various contexts, various periods and various localities. His knowledge of the Thai language is, therefore, sound and profound.

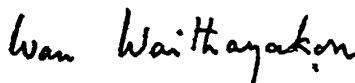
The same applies to his knowledge of Thai culture. Traditional customs and ceremonies have undergone rapid changes and sometimes only the forms known - and that not too accurately - while the substance is only too hazy.

We have to thank Phya Anuman for his analytical and interpretative description of many of our traditional customs and ceremonies.

Take, for instance, the Ceremony of Tham Khwan of a Month Old Child. When my daughter was about to be one month old, the question arose in the family as to whether we were to have a Ceremony of Tham Khwan or not. My wife said : No, it is not necessary. My mother and the rest of the household said Yes, it is our custom. I decided for having the ceremony, because otherwise, if anything happened to the child, I would be blamed for it. In any case it was harmless. Everyone was happy and applauded my decision, except my daughter who cried, not appreciating the sweetness of the Sanskrit lullaby!

Phya Anuman is, indeed, a well-known authority on the Thai language and Thai culture Foreign scholars who come to Thailand either go to him directly or are referred to him. They as well as a wide circle of readers will gladly welcome this publication as a mine of information in a convenient form.

On behalf of the Social Science Association of Thailand, I extend our heartfelt congratulations to Phya Anuman Rajadhon on the auspicious occasion of the eightieth anniversary of his birthday, wishing him many a long year of continued happiness, prosperity and fruitful life.



H.R.H. Prince Wan Waithayakon
Kromun Naradhip Bongsprabandh
President, Social Science Association of Thailand 1968

Foreword

Phya Anuman Rajadhon was a great scholar as well as a popular author. His pen name, Sathirakoses has been admired for over half a century. Although he never completed secondary school education, he taught at many higher places of learning in Bangkok and was external examiner for Ph.D. candidates at Benares Hindu and Cambridge Universities. His first trip to Europe was when he reached the age of 70. Yet he wrote English in numerous learned journals and weekly magazines long before that date.

His writing, in Thai or English, has the tendency of explaining things unknown to him and to many of us. He learnt to explain many subjects from books, from people, (learned or otherwise) as well as from various other sources of information. The way he collected his data was very original. Had he not done so, we would have lost much of our knowledge on Thai studies.

On his 80th birthday, the Social Science Association of Thailand collected his English articles and published them in a volume entitled *Essays on Thai Folklore*. Although this was not his complete work in English, nor did it represent Phya Anuman at his best, the volume served as a good introduction to Thai culture.

Soon after its publication, the author passed away and

the book was out of print. Yet what he wrote should still be read by members of the younger generation. The Fine Arts Department and Office of the National Commission on Culture, Ministry of Education, still publish many titles of his English articles in pamphlets and his Thai books are still very much in demand. Although some facts are now out of date, the main theme of his writing is still relevant. His *Thai Customs* and autobiography already appeared in Japanese. Some of his writings have also appeared in other European languages and of course in Chinese. Phya Anuman's works will also be published in Hindi, Sinhalese , Vietnamese and Bhasa Indonesia as well as in Tagalog and three Nepalese languages.

In 1980 *Essays on Thai Folklore* was reprinted by Editions Duang Kamol, which unfortunately did not do a good job of it. Hence there were many printing errors etc. Since then, the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation have produced two more volumes of Phya Anuman's works in English: *Popular Buddhism in Siam* and *Some Traditions of the Thai*. As this year is his centenary, UNESCO and the Thai Government as well as many learned institutions within Siam and abroad will be celebrating that event, we feel we should bring out *Essays on Thai Folklore* once again, hopefully, in a better edition than previously. Thus, the three volumes could be had together for the English speaking public, while his complete works in Thai of more than 80 volumes will also be published under the auspices of the Ministry of Education.

As Phya Anuman is no longer with us, my lecture about him at the National Library about two decades ago ("Phya Anuman: A Common Man or A Genius") has been translated into English and is now included in my *Siam in Crisis*, (Suksit Siam 1980). The obituary on him is now added at the end of this volume, so that the reader will know more about the author. In fact I wrote about him again in my latest book: *A Socially Engaged Buddhism*.

Although this new edition is still not perfect, I trust it will be of some values to the reader who wishes to understand various aspects of Thai culture.

If the reader really wants to know the author, he has to read his other writing in Thai, and he will then be able to agree with UNESCO's citation that Phya Anuman was "**a great scholar whose contributions to the Literary world will always be remembered and appreciated and was the light that guided his contemporaries and the succeeding generation toward truth, goodness and beauty.**"

S. Sivaraksa

Chairman of the Administrative Committee
Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and
Thai Inter - Religious Commission for Development

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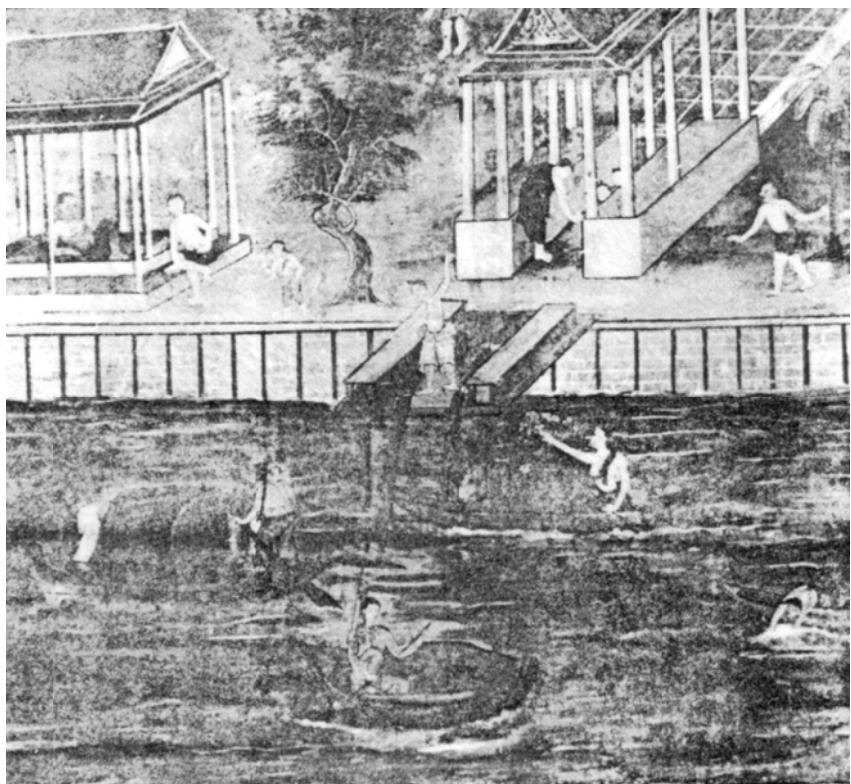
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Chapter 1

The Cultural





Introducing Cultural Thailand in Outline

The Land

Thailand is a country on the mainland of South-East Asia right in the middle of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. On the north and west she has Burma as her neighbor, and on the north and east she borders on the Kingdom of the Laos and Cambodia and on the south juts deep into the Malay Peninsula between the China Sea and the Sea of Bengal touching Malaysia. The total area of Thailand is roughly 513,000 square kilometers; her greatest length is about 1,650 kilometers and her greatest breadth is about 770 kilometers. She has also, on the south, the Gulf of Siam and the China Sea and to the west of the Malay Peninsula, the Bay of Bengal. Topographically, Thailand may be divided into four areas, the Central, the Northern, the North-Eastern and the Southern.

The Central Area is a large alluvial plain called the Menam, Basin which in most parts becomes inundated during the rainy season. The Basin is intersected by winding rivers and numerous canals and streams. Its principal and well-known river is the Menam Chao Phya or the river Menam as known commonly to the Western people. Menam means literally in Thai "Mother of Water" or river only. On the left bank of this river, some 40 kilometers from its mouth stands Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, while on its right bank stands the city of Thon Buri which for a short period of time was the capital city before it removed to

the present one some 186 years ago. Bangkok and Thon Buri form the Greater City of Bangkok. Its official name in an abbreviated form is Krungdep which means the capital city of gods.

The Northern Area is a hilly or mountainous terrain divided by four rivers into four relatively large valleys, which flow to the south and join the river Menam. It has also as its western and northern boundaries parts of the rivers Salween and Mekong. The well-known chief city of this area is Chiang Mai which is the second city of Thailand in the degree of its modern development.

The North-Eastern Area is a saucer-shaped plateau with the great river Mekong as its eastern boundary. It is a poorly watered region known to Westerners as the Korat Plateau, and is the largest of the four areas of Thailand. Its chief cities are Korat (Nakhon Ratchasima) and Ubon Ratchathani.

The People

The people of Thailand are called Thai. Before 1939 A.D. they were known politically as the Siamese and their country as Siam. The Thai belong to the same ethnic group as the Laos of the Lao kingdom to the North-East Thailand and the Shans of Upper Burma. There are also certain Thai minor tribes to be found scattered here and there over a large area of Southern China, Tongking of North Vietnam, and in Assam, the easternmost province of India. So far as they are known, most groups of these people called themselves Tai or Thai (*in its aspirated form*). There are many surmises as to the meaning of the word Tai or Thai; but its present meaning in its current use in Thai is “free” or “the free”

Physically the Thai are primarily of Mongoloid type, but since they came down from Southern China into Thailand or the “Land of the Free”, they intermixed freely with their forerunners *i.e.* the Mon-Khmer linguistic groups, particularly

the Mon of Lower Burma and the Khmer of Cambodia; and the Indonesian linguistic groups, the Malays and the Cham - a people who survived weakly in certain parts of South Vietnam and Cambodia.

In the old days there were raids and wars, both local and extra-territorial. The mass of the defeated groups were moved or carried wholesale in captivity by families, and domiciled far from their old homes. These peoples in the course of time married into the local groups of people to an appreciable degree, and gradually became culturalized and identified themselves as one with the local people. With such admixtures there are of course, variable physical types of the Thai people, particular types in different areas according to whatever race is predominant. What is true ethnically is also true culturally. In fact the cultures of the people to be found in most parts of the mainland of South-East Asia form one homogeneous whole with, of course, relative variations due to historical traditions and ecological surroundings. To add to such a pot-pourri of the Thai people, the influence of the Southern Chinese in this melting-pot of races in a later period of Thailand's history is by no means of no consequence.

The History

Before they migrated into Thailand the Thai lived within historical times in Southern China. Reliable recorded history of the Thai people of Thailand begins sometime in or about the 13th century A.D. Beyond this period, though there are recorded histories, especially of the Thai of Northern Thailand and also of the Laos and the Shans, we enter comparatively into the realm of myths and legends with exaggerated dates for self-glorification-a thing to be found in many a nation's history. Even so, these are to be found surviving in a few authentic records only; no doubt due to the pillaging and destruction of many wars in the old days and also to the ravages of nature. For what was recorded of Thailand in the earlier days which we may deem comparatively reliable, our thanks are due to the laborious work of many orientalists and archaeologists.

Long before the advent of the Thai into Thailand, there lived in Central Thailand or the Menam Basin, in or about the 5th to the 7th century A.D., a people probably akin to the Mons of Lower Burma. They are known archaeologically by the name of their kingdom, the so-called Dvaravati. On epigraphic evidences and Chinese records it seems that the Dvaravati kingdom had split into probably two or more smaller kingdoms, but no doubt still under one of the kingdoms as a paramount state whose capital was evidently at the present town either of Lop Buri or Nakhon Pathom. We know very little of this Dvaravati kingdom, save that it was a Buddhist kingdom of the Southern School or Hinayan, our knowledge being based on stone Buddha images and other archaeological remains found here and there mostly in Central Thailand. Later in the 11th century the Dvaravati kingdom was under the domination for a time being of the Javanese-Sumatran Empire of Sri Vijaya. This empire, a Buddhist state of the Northern Buddhists or Mahayan, later on degenerated in power and held on to a lingering life as a remnant in Southern Thailand and in the Malay Peninsula, and which two centuries later became part of modern Thailand. The Dvaravati kingdom in Central Thailand subsequently in the 12th century A.D. became part of the Khmer Empire and later on in the 13th century A.D. passed from the rule of the now decaying Khmer Empire to that of the Thai of Sukhodaya which finally became the nucleus of the present Thai kingdom. Such is the history in a nutshell of Thailand before the coming of the Thai as a dominant race. We now have to turn back in point of times to the Thai people in their earlier days.

Though there are many books written, both in Thai and other foreign languages, on the origin of the Thai race and of their earliest homes, the subject is so shadowy a field that we have to tread with wariness. The following are hard facts, not because ! they fit in with somebody's personal inclination but because I have been able to cull them.

In recounting the early history of the Thai of Thailand,

we deal with the common history of all Thai-speaking people to an identical extent as with the history of Laos and Shans in particular. Nobody, I believe, knows for certain the earliest home of the ancestors of the Thai-speaking people. Some authorities believed that the Thai's first historical appearance was in China some three thousand years ago. There are certain surmises that their earliest home was somewhere in the vast tract of land in West China, and from that time onwards, they appeared frequently in the Chinese records as "the Barbarians" south of the Yang-tse Kiang river. Whether "the Barbarians", as recorded by the Chinese, were the ancestors of the Thai is a matter of conjecture. However we will pass over this until we reach more definite ground in the 7th century A.D., evidence of a kingdom known to the Chinese as Nan-chao. The name Nan-chao is a hybrid combination of two words. "Nan" means south in Chinese, and "Chao" is a Thai word meaning lord, or in its present day meaning, among the Thai, the Laos and the Shans, a prince.

Before the kingdom of Nan-chao came into being, the Thai people in Southern China, evidently, lived in more or less independent groups. They were called by their neighbours by various names, and chief among them was the Ai-Lao tribe. The present name of the Lao kingdom and her people is said to have derived from this ancient word Ai-Lao. There were before the 7th century A.D., according to the chronology of the Chinese, six chieftainships of the Ai-lao people in Yunnan, and one of the southern-most of these six chieftainships, which was called by the Chinese "lok chao" or six lords, succeeded in unifying the other five chieftainships and the Thai kingdom of Nan-chao was born. There are challenges by some scholars that Nan-chao was probably a kingdom of Lolos, a tribe akin to the Tibetans who undoubtedly mixed freely with the Thai in Southern China. Here we enter into the realm of academic controversy which we had better leave forthwith.

Judging from the description of the Nan-chao kingdom as chronicled by the Chinese, we can say that the Nan-chao kingdom was a comparatively powerful state with a high level of culture.

It lasted for some seven centuries until it fell in 1253 A.D. to Kublai Khan, the great Mogul emperor of China. The Nan-chao kingdom during the zenith of her power, sometime in the 9th century A.D., might have extended her suzerainty southward to the sparsely populated territories in the North of Indo-China as hinted vaguely in the many earliest recorded histories and legends of the Thai, the Laos and the Shans. Hall in his "A History of South-East Asia" says that the Tai (*or Thai*) never ceased to be on the move (*from the earlier days of Nan-chao*), and slowly they infiltrated along the rivers and down the valleys of Central Indo-China. Small groups settled among the Khmers, the Mons and the Burmese, and, long before that, they had been crossing into the Menam valley (*in Central Thailand*) from the river Mekong and undoubtedly from the river Salween too.

Confining ourselves to the history of the Thai of Thailand, some tribes of the Thai migrated at different times and from different directions into present Thailand a thousand or more years ago. These are conjectural statements, compounded from inadequate evidence. At first they settled themselves in what is now the Northern Area of Thailand in many small independent states ruled by their own chiefs or kings. Not until the latter part of the 13th century A.D. did the Northern Area of Thailand, with Chiang Mai as its capital, become a relatively fair-sized kingdom under its first king Mengrai.

Further south, in which is now Central Thailand in the Menam valley or Chao Phya Basin, there were evidently some settlements of the Thai people. At first they were minority-groups, which probably later on, formed themselves into semi-independent principalities under the dominant rule of the Khmer Empire in about the 12th century A.D. The Thai of Central Thailand are named Thai-Noi or Minor Thai in contradistinction to the Shans of Upper Burma who are named Tai Long or Thai-Yai i.e. Major Thai. It is a traditional belief that the Thai-Noi or Minor Thai of Central Thailand came from the Thai of Northern Thailand and the Lao kingdom. This may be so; but on the other hand there are indications that the Shans of Upper Burma might have

had a share, if not much, in making up the ingredients of the Thai-Noi too.

There arose in the earlier part of the 13th century A.D. two chiefs of the Thai-Noi who wrested from the Khmers the area of Central Thailand and one of them became the first Thai King of Sukhodaya, a town some 250 kilometers as the crow-flies northward from Bangkok. Under the reign of its third king, Ram Kamhang the Great, a contemporary and friend of the aforesaid Thai King Mengrai of Northern Thailand, the kingdom of Sukhodaya became a relatively large empire stretching south-ward through the length of the Malay Peninsula which was the last remnant of the once Javanese-Sumatran Empire of Sri Vijaya. Northward, the Sukhodaya Empire touched that of Northern Thailand where reigned, as already mentioned King Mengrai. Eastward but in a northerly direction, through what is now the North-East Area of Thailand which was at that time partly under the spheres of influence of the now decaying Khmer Empire and of the Lao kingdom, the Sukhodaya Empire of King Ram Kamhang reached further beyond the river Mekong. Westward it included a part of the Mon country of what is now Lower Burma. Ram Kamhang's outstanding achievements in the realm of culture which have endured to the present day are his invention of the Thai alphabet in 1283 A.D., and the adoption of Buddhism of the Ceylonese Sect which has remained to this day. He also introduced the manufacture of glazed pottery by importing artisans, no doubt from China.

In 1350 A.D. there arose a new Thai power in the south of Sukhodaya proper, Ramadhibodi I, known vulgarly as King U-Thong, the first King of Ayudhya. Some 90 years later Sukhodaya was politically incorporated with Ayudhya. Ethnologically and culturally by this time the Thai had mixed to a not less appreciable degree with the Mons and the Khmers, their fore-runners in this part of Thailand. The Mons were Southern Buddhistic in culture while the latter were more Hindu-ized and at times Northern Buddhistic. In the south, the Thai were influenced in culture more or less in certain localities by the Malays.

Northern Thailand where King Mengrai reigned as its first king in the 13th century A.D. was ruled by many succeeding kings; but later on in the latter part of the 16th century A.D. it became a part of the Burmese Empire for some two centuries. Under Burmese influence the Northern Thai acquired certain characteristics of culture unlike those of the other parts of the country. Northern Thailand was finally relieved from the alien hold and formed part of the present kingdom of Thailand.

Thailand, with Ayudhya as its capital and its succession of kings both weak and strong, endured for 417 years and came to an end in 1767 A.D. through a war with Burma. One of the generals of the last king of Ayudhya, known vulgarly as Phya Tak Sin, succeeded by an heroic effort in driving the enemies out of the country. He became a king of Thailand but moved his capital from Ayudhya, which by now was in ruins and depopulated, to Thon Buri, a city on the right bank of River Menam (*Chao Phya*) of the present Greater City of Bangkok. King Tak Sin was succeeded by King Rama I of the present Chakri dynasty in 1782 A.D. Not until the reign of King Mongkut, Rama IV (1851-1868 A.D.) and his great son King Chulalongkorn, Rama V (1868-1910 A.D.) did Thailand pass from her medieval period and enter a new phase of progressive revolution following the Western trend which is a matter of modern history.

Relations with Foreign Countries

Not until the 16th century A.D. did Thailand come in contact with the Western nations. Before this period foreign culture that came in contact with Thailand and most of her neighbouring countries of South-East Asia, was in religion, art, science and writing, predominantly Indian in origin. Chinese culture was another factor which formed the background, though feebly, in the life of the Thai. It was in the earlier part of the afore-said century that the Portuguese came in contact with Thailand. They came to establish friendly relations and obtain permission to trade. Thereafter a large number of them followed

and settled in Ayudhya, the then capital of Thailand. Later on the Portuguese were given permission by the Thai king of Ayudhya to build a church there. It was the first Christian church in Thailand. H.R.H. Prince Damrong says in his paper “The Introduction of Western Culture in Siam (*Journal of the Siam Society Vol. XX pt. 2, 1926*) that “during that period the Portuguese appear to have brought to the Siamese three things, namely, the art of making fire-arms, the way to use fire-arms in warfare, and the adoption of fortifications against fire-arms.... Perhaps there were other things that the Portuguese brought to the Siamese and that we do not know today”.

Then to Thailand came the Dutch in 1604 A.D. the English in 1612 A.D., and the French in 1662 A.D. We need not go into details as to the mission of Roman Catholics sent by Louis the XIV of France to the court of King Narai, the then reigning monarch of Ayudhya, and the failure of the French missionaries to proselytize Thailand into a Christian state. Whatever European cultures were introduced into Thailand during this period there are few things only, as Prince Damrong has said, that survive to this day and they are the casting of cannon and the use of fire-arms in warfare for instance.

After the destruction of Ayudhya, relations with the West were interrupted for a time owing to the fact that “the Siamese were engaged in a war to regain their independence... . This period coincided with that of the Great French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic war”. Relations between Thailand and Western nations began to revive when in 1818 A.D. King Rama II of the present dynasty granted the requests of the Portuguese governor of Macao to trade and to construct ships in Bangkok. Then came the British in 1822 A.D. and the Americans in 1828 A.D. There had been impediments and interruptions in the negotiations of a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between the Thai and the British during those days but happily it came to an amicable conclusion when-King Mongkut made a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Sir John Bowring, an envoy of Queen Victoria. Subsequently, similar treaties were concluded

with the United States of America and other European governments. I have been very brief in recounting this subject for the reason that I cannot do better in only a pamphlet which deals with such a large subject as culture.

The Government

Prior to 1932 A.D. the government of Thailand had been an unlimited monarchy. It was changed in King Prajadhipok's reign in 1932 A.D. into a constitutional monarchy; the Constitution was signed historically and ceremoniously on the 10th December. By virtue of this Constitution the supreme power rests with the nation, and the King at its head exercises the legislative power by and with the consent of Parliament, the executive power through the Council of ministers, and the judicial power through the Courts.

The Language

The Thai language or to be exact the Siamese, as spoken in Thailand, forms a sub-division of the linguistic group known as the Thai language. This group includes also the languages of the Shans of Northern Burma with its subgroups in Assam and adjacent territories, the Lao of the Kingdom of the Laos, and the many isolated Thai groups in Tongking and Southern China. The Thai language, in so-far as it is known factually, has words in its original form of a monosyllabic type not unlike that of the Chinese. Each word is independent and complete by itself, and admits no modifications as do the inflectional languages. Such a feature is like that of the Chinese, but the arrangement of words in a sentence reveals a unity with that of most of the languages of South East Asia. The Thai language as spoken in Central Thailand has more words relatively than in other regions in its vocabulary of Cambodian, Pali and Sanskrit origins. This, of course, is due to the contact of cultures.

The Literature

Thai traditional literature is essentially religious. Most of the literature in the old days consisted of works on Buddhism and Hinduism directly or indirectly. Whatever culture the Thai people brought with them from their homeland in Southern China where they had been in contact with Chinese culture for centuries was adapted to its later conception of Buddhism, their adopted religion. Traces of their original culture may be found here and there in a disguised and weak form embedded in their literature. Most of the works of emotive literature were written in verse in various patterns. Five prominent examples of such works may be cited briefly.

1 . *The Romance of Khun Chang Khun Phan*, an indigenous story of love and pathos, at times humorous, of a triangular love plot of one heroine with two lovers. The story, apart from its beautiful expressions, contains a mine of information on old beliefs and social customs of the Thai before the impact of Western culture. The story as is known has been translated into English and French.

2. *Ramakian* (or Ramakirti in transliteration) is the story based on the famous Indian epic, Ramayana. It is unique, containing many episodes and details which are not to be found in the original epic, but showing traces of contact with certain versions of the Ramayana in India, Malaysia, Java and Cambodia. There is an English translation.

3. *The Romance of Inao* This is a translation from the well-known story of adventures of the national Javanese hero prince. It is written in a refined and perfect style of the Thai Language and meant for dramatic performance.

4. *Sam Kok*. This is a translation from San Kuo Chi, a Chinese historical romance of the Three Kingdoms. Unlike the three preceding ones, it is written in prose with perfect expressions of style of the language.

5. *Phra Abhaimani*. This is a romantic tale written in verse by one of the most famous and popular poets of Thailand. It is an imaginary tale of love, intrigue and adventure, and reflects some ideas of the people towards the Europeans of the last century. There is an English translation in concise form by one Prem Chaya.

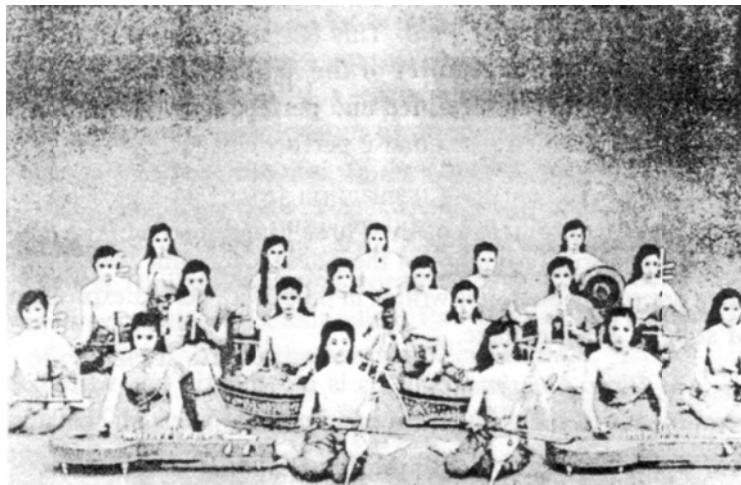
The employment of prose in Thai emotive literature along the lines of the Western style is of recent date due obviously to the influence of Western literature.

The Arts

The Thai means of subsistence for generations has always been an agricultural one. Such an occupation, though arduous at times , left the people ample time to confront life spiritually in contemplation of nature. Time belonged to them and they did not want to lose it in the modern hubbub of life. Now it is inevitably and gradually otherwise. The Thai are lovers and observers of nature, amiable, generous and mirthful to everyone with whom they come into contact, for their natural and pleasant surrounding makes them so. In Buddhism tinged with Hinduism and animistic ideas stemming from their long contact and free intermingling with the Mons and the Cambodians, Thai art has its birth and development. It has maintained, nevertheless, its own identity of racial character. Thai art in the old days served religion which formed the national ideal and conception of life. Modern Thai art with Western tendencies and conceptions is of a recent origin.



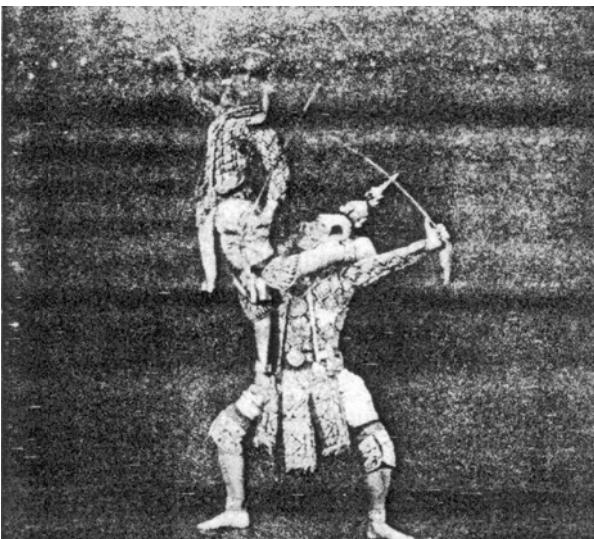
Wat Arun
the Temple of
the Dawn.



Thai Musicians



Chakri Palace - built in the early part of King Rama V's reign - a combination of Thai and Western style of architecture.



Khon - a mask dance drama.

Architecture

Thai classical architecture may be found in the building and structure of the temples and also of the royal palace buildings. There are two main types of such edifices. One of this is a building of bricks rectangular in plan and containing one large hall only. The roof is sloping, superimposed and arranged in three or five tiers. The other type of building is somewhat like a Greek cross in plan and composed of a cubical hall with four porches or less projecting on each side. It also has superimposed roofs surmounted by a high pyramidal super-structure culminating either in a tapering slender needle-like spire or a corn-cob-like structure. The roof of both types has glazed terra-cotta coloured tiles of various hues. The gables, stuccos, and other decorations are gilded in gold or in coloured mosaic glass. Under a tropical sunlight these buildings give out a dazzling and harmonizing artistic effect. Examples of these classical architecture may be seen in Bangkok and are represented by pictures in this Pamphlet of the Grand Palace, the Emerald Buddha Temple, the Marble Temple of Wat Benchama, and also of Wat Sudas and Wat Po.

Sculpture

Sculpture in Thailand was confined in the past to casting Buddha images. She carried this art to perfection both in technique and artistic expression. Some ancient specimen of this art can be compared favourably with other nation's classical arts.

Painting

Painting in Thailand was also in the past confined to mural tempera painting within the temple buildings. The style was more conventionalised and achieved some artistic manifestations to a high degree, but it cannot be compared to sculpture which was a perfect artistic achievement.

Modern Architecture, Sculpture and Painting

Modern Architecture, Sculpture and Painting of Thailand are of Western style. But in order to carry on her artistic traditions as peculiarly her own and enriching humanity, the problem is to preserve her own classical arts with the progress of the times in order to preserve her own identity of individual cultures suitably within the culture of a wider one, as a source of inspiration for evolving her own modern arts.

Music

Music of Thailand is akin to that of the Chinese. Thai music is a diatonic one, with neither major nor minor in the sense of Western music, but with a special diatonic scale characteristic of her own. Though music in the theoretical conception of Buddhism is not tolerated by the monks, by usage it is allowed in certain religious ceremonies, no doubt to promote religious emotions, and also on festive occasions.

Drama

Drama like her sister art, music, also served religion. Its technique was of Indian origin, but the Thai evolved the art peculiar to their own. The actions are very graceful, slow in motion but not unpleasant to sensible minds. Thai dramatic performance is called *lakhon* a word of Indonesian origin, and is well-known to enthusiastic lovers of this art both inside and outside Thailand. In former days, the people could only witness such performances in the compound of the monastery on festive occasions. Nowadays many new types of dramatic performance are usually adapted or copied from the West and the popularity of the cinema takes the place of the classical entertainment. The latter may be seen only occasionally as performed by the artists of the Department of Fine Arts.

Minor Art

The various branches of the decorative art may also be mentioned such as lacquer work, niello work, gold and silver work, and mother-of-pearl work. In all branches of the above art Thailand never lacks beautiful objects of high artistic value.

SANRASOEN PHRA BARAMI
(THE ROYAL ANTHEM OF THAILAND)

Andante maestoso

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The top staff is for a treble clef instrument, likely a flute or piccolo, and the bottom staff is for a bass clef instrument, likely a bassoon or tuba. The music is in common time. Various dynamics are indicated throughout, including **ff**, **ff**, **pp**, **2d.**, *****, and **2d. ***. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and the notes are represented by short horizontal strokes on the stems.

The Cultures of Thailand

For cultural purposes, Thailand may be divided into four areas, namely the Northern, the North-Eastern, the Central and the Southern areas.

The Northern area is a mountainous region and its predominant people are Thai, usually called *Thai Nuea* or Northern Thai. The Thai live in the lowland of the valleys, while on the uplands live a number of primitive tribes belonging mostly to the two linguistic families, the Mon-Khmer and the Tibeto-Burmans.

The North-Eastern area is a vast Plateau tilted towards south-east and drained by the river Mekhong which forms the eastern boundary between Thailand and French Indo-China. The People in this region are also predominantly Thai, usually called the Lao. Across the river Mekhong on the left bank also live the Laos of Lao State. Living in isolated groups are the Phutai, another tribe of Thai stock whose former home was in French Indo-China, and a number of minorities, mostly of the Mon-Khmer family.

The Central area consists of one west lowland plain watered by the Menam, or, to call it by the real name, the river Chao Phya, and other river systems. Here live the Thai or Siamese. There are in this area small communities of Mons and Cambodians of the Mon-Khmer family, Annamites, Malays and Burmans, mostly Tavoyans, a tribe akin to the Arakanese of Burma.

In the southern area, throughout the Malay Peninsula, are the Thai, but in the southernmost parts the people are mostly of Malayan blood. (See further details of the physical features and ethnology of Thailand in *Siam, Nature and Industry* published by the Ministry of Commerce and Communications, Bangkok, 1930.)

Ethnologically and culturally, these four areas overlap one another and affect reciprocally also Thailand's neighbours, *i.e.* the Cambodians in the southeast, the Burmans in the north-east, and the Malayans in the south. Later on come other races, the Chinese, the Indians, the Indonesians, and other Asiatic races, and lastly but in no way of least importance, the Europeans and Americans who affect radically the traditional culture of Thailand.

Now for a bit of history to complete the bird's eye view of Thailand's culture. A thousand or more years ago, most of Thailand apart from the southern area in the Malay Peninsula, was under the domination of the hinduized Mon-speaking people of Dvaravati (457-657 A.D.) and the Khmer or Cambodian Empires (957-1257 A.D.); while the Malay Peninsula was under the suzerainty of Srivijaya, the hinduized Sumatran Empire (657-1157 A.D.). During these times the Thai, as a race, emigrated gradually from their home in 'Southern China' into the Indo-Chinese Peninsula.

The Thai tribes in their early days some two thousand years ago or more had their home probably in the north-west corner of China which is now the province of Shen-si. The word Shen-si in Chinese means "West of the Shen". The word "Shen" so far I know cannot be translated as it is only the name of a province (one of my Chinese friends has told me that it means a "mountain pass"). The Chinese tribes had their old home here too. A few scholars, both European and Thai, have ventured to draw the conclusion that the word "Shan" which the Burmese have given to the Thai tribes in Northern Burma and elsewhere, and the word "Siam" (now Thailand) are one and the same word.

These two words no doubt derived their origin from Shen of Shen-si. I am inclined to agree with this view because of the fact that the name of the Kingdom of the Nan-Chao of the Thai in Yunnan in an earlier period was called "Shan San" by the Chinese. However, I will not go further into this intricate and purely philological question, but will continue my story.

In view of the above fact, there was no doubt that the Thai mixed and blended freely, whether as friends or as foes, with the Chinese of those days. The fortunes of the Thai were bound up with the Chinese every now and then in the episodes of Chinese history throughout those times. Gradually the fortunes of the Thai waned and by force of circumstances they had to emigrate further South until they finally established themselves as the Kingdom of Nan-Chao in Southern China. This Kingdom was subjugated by Kublai Khan, the first emperor of the Chinese Mongol dynasty some 700 years ago.

During these times many off-shoots of the Thai tribes migrated by slow degrees into the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. One of the western off-shoots became the Shans of Burma. On the other side of the Peninsula many of the Thai tribes came into Tongking, including the Laos of the Lao State who settled down in the Mekhong basin. Further west of the Lao State in a northerly direction were the northern Thai of Chiang Sen which was on the north border of Thailand. There is no doubt that the words Shan-san, the name of the Nan-Chao Kingdom and Chiang Sen may be identified as one and the same word. All these Thai tribes established themselves in the Peninsula in many small independent states or principalities which engaged in strifes and warfare not only among themselves but also with the neighbouring tribes (1117-1547 A.D.). Further south particularly in the now central area of Thailand the land was within the empire of the Mon (Dvaravati Kingdom), a race ethnologically akin to the Khmer, who subsequently became included in the Empire of the Khmer. By this time the Northern Thai of Chiang Sen had gone further South and founded the city of Chiang Mai, which means "new City" and succeeded in taking

away the northern remnants of the decaying Mon empire. The frontier of the Northern Thai now touched the border of the Khmer Empire in the Northern parts of Central Thailand which was called Siam or Pali-ized into Samadesa. There is no doubt that the Thai had been before that time already in the land of the Mon and the Khmer Empire but they were only a minority and formed themselves into semi-independent states under the suzerainty of these empires. Traditionally these Thai who settled in Central Thailand or Siam were called Thai Noi or Lesser Thai in contrast to Thai Yai or Major Thai who are the Shans of Burma. Traditionally the Thai Noi or Lesser Thai came from the north of Thailand. It was therefore presumed that they were the Northern Thai of Chiang Mai with the Laos or the Thai of Mekhong basin partly mixed; but to me the so-called Thai Noi or Lesser Thai had in their melting pot in no less degree the Thai Yai or Major Thai i.e. the Shan too.

By this time, in about 1257 A.D., one of the Thai princes within the Khmer-Empire, Khun Sri Indradit, a name of Sanskrit origin bestowed by the Khmer King, with the help of his able son named Khun Ram Kamhang, or popularly known in legends as Phra Ruang, succeeded in making himself independent of the Khmer and establishing Sukhodaya as his capital. Khun Ram Kamhang succeeded him as King of Sukhodaya and enlarged his territory further South into the Malay Peninsula and further west to Mataban, the Mon country, in present Lower Burma. This Sukhodaya Kingdom lasted nearly two centuries (1257-1438 A.D.) when it became a vassal state to King U-thong the founder of the City of Ayudhya in the lower part of the Menam Valley, which was subsequently merged into the Kingdom of Ayudhya (1438 A.D.). During this Ayudhya period Cambodia, the remnant of the Khmer Empire, became in turn a vassal state to Ayudhya. Ayudhya herself as the capital of Thailand in the course of history, gave place to Bangkok or Krung Thep as called by the Thai which was founded in 1782 A.D. and has since remained the capital of Siam or Thailand in its modern name of today.

In former days there were constant raids and wars of

conquest among the neighbours. The conquered people were removed wholesale from their old homes as prisoners of war and domiciled in various localities within the victorious lands. There came too every now and then emigrants from neighbouring countries due to accidents of history. These intermixed with the natives of their adopted land and became assimilated after a few generations into one whole. Such was the case with Thailand and the neighbouring countries as well. The ethnic elements of the race in Thailand are more mixed especially in the central and southern areas, while in others they are purer in mixture. The cultures of Thailand are therefore, due to the above facts, formed into one unity, but with their regional diversities in different proportions where alien elements are predominant or otherwise. Of the four areas aforementioned the central area is the most progressive and this influences other areas of retarded cultural development rapidly through convenience of communications.

The cultures of Thailand as expressed in her religion, arts and literature, social system, habits and customs, reveal a unity in a general sense with her neighbours, the Cambodians, the Mons, the Burmese and partly the Malays, but with varied characteristics. It can be said that the cultures of the above races are a homogeneous whole with local diversities and details thrown in. To study one nation's cultures, is to study them as a whole.

Fundamentally, the culture of Thailand may be summed up in one word, religion. For everything, arts and literature, social system habits and customs, is developed and clustered around her religion. It is in quite recent times only that there have been changes in the culture due to Western influence. Thai culture tends to become secular in the progressive Parts of the country; but to the people as a whole, religious culture is still a living force.

Animism, with ancestor-worship, is the primitive belief of the Thai and their neighbours as well, and this formed the first layer of Thai religion. Later on came Buddhism and the Thai adopted it as their national religion. Unlike their neighbours the Burmans, the Thai inherited a fair Proportion of Hinduism

through the influence of the Cambodians who were in former days a highly hinduized people. Whatever cults and beliefs are adopted by the Thai are readily modified to suit their temperament and surroundings. When they adopted Buddhism, they greatly modified their basic belief of animism into the fold of Buddhism. Likewise when they embraced Hinduism, they adapted it as a subordinate to the former. As Buddhism and Hinduism were evolved from one and the same source *i.e.* Brahmanism, there was no hindrance to their assimilation. They became in time intermixed completely, and of course tinged with the former animistic belief. There is a Thai saying, particularly among the Thai of the central area where Hinduism still has some force with the *elite* class, that "Buddhism and Hinduism usually uphold each other". In the northern and north-eastern areas, Hinduism has become weaker and gradually animism has come to the fore, especially in the folkways of the people, but modified greatly of course, through the influence of Buddhism. To complete the fact, Buddhism as the national religion of Thailand is of the southern school, the Hinayan; but it reveals some traces of the cults of the Mahayan or Buddhism of the Northern School unconsciously practiced. This was due historically no doubt, to the influence of the past Cambodian Empire and Srivijaya Empire of the Malay Peninsula, which for some time adopted the Buddhism of the Northern School. There are traces of Mahayanism too in the northern area; but this is no doubt derived from a different channel, namely from Burma and Southern China. There are too in modern times native Christian communities, but they are only minorities. Christianity has never made appreciable progress with the Thai people. Its converts are confined mostly to natives of alien ancestry and paradoxically most of them, instead of being converted, have converted their Christian belief in terms of their indigenous one. Living outside his community, the converted native, and even his children born in the fold of Christianity, will in time revert to their former belief within a few years. Such is the potent force that underlies naturally the culture of Thailand. Buddhism in a modified form is the mainspring of the national life. It has developed by slow creation

of centuries to meet every new need, formed her ideals, conceptions and safeguard. The problem is how far we can preserve this tradition against the aggressiveness of the new materialistic force of the present civilization. Thailand cannot neglect or ignore the powerful force which besets her with many dangers if her traditional ideals are not to be uprooted suddenly.

Now for arts and literature. In the olden days, the arts and literature of Thailand served her religion. The classical style architecture as revealed in her temples with their superimposed roofs and glazed coloured tiles is no doubt structurally akin to the Chinese. However, gilding and other decorative arts are typical of the Orientals. The gracefully tapering tiered roof of some of her architecture is evolved from the Cambodian *sikhara* of the Hindu temple. Although this tapering roof structure is typical of Thailand and Burma, it differs in style which may be compared profitably. Cambodia has it too, but its style is a copy from Thailand within recent times.

Sculpture in Thailand was confined in the past to casting Buddha images. She carried this art to perfection both in technique and artistic expression. Some ancient specimens of this art can be compared favorably with other nation's classical arts.

Painting in Thailand was also in the past confined to mural tempera painting within the temple buildings. The style was more conventionalized and achieved some artistic manifestations to a high degree, but it cannot be compared to sculpture which was a perfect artistic achievement.

Modern architecture, sculpture and painting of Thailand are of Western style. But in order to carry on her artistic traditions as peculiarly her own and enriching humanity, the problem is to preserve her own classical arts as a source of inspiration for evolving her own modern arts with the progress of the times in order to preserve her own identity of individual cultures suitably within the culture of a wider one.

The music of Thailand is akin to that of the Chinese. Thai music is a diatonic one, with neither major nor minor in the sense of Western music, but with special diatonic scale characteristic

of her own. (*See Thai Music in Theory and Practice by Phra Chen Duriyanga.*) Though music in the theoretical conception of Buddhism is not tolerated by the monks, by usage it is allowed in certain religious ceremonies, no doubt to promote religious emotions, and also on festive occasions.

Drama like her sister art, music, also served religion. Its technique was of Indian origin, but the Thai evolved the art peculiar to their own. The actions are very graceful, slow in motion but not unpleasant to sensible minds. Thai dramatic Performance is called *lakhon*, a word of Indonesian origin, and is well known to enthusiastic lovers of this art both inside and outside Thailand. In former days, the people could only witness such performances in the compound of the monastery on festive occasions. Nowadays many new types of dramatic performance are usually adapted or copied from the West and the popularity of the cinema takes the place of the classical entertainment. The latter may be seen only occasionally as performed by the artists of the Department of Fine Arts.

The literature of Thailand dates back to the 13th century A.D., when the present Thai or Siamese alphabet was formed. Owing to the havoc of time and tropical climatic conditions, the earliest works of literature that have survived are comparatively few. The earlier works were of a religious nature, They were written either in prose or Verse. The forms were mostly written in poetical prose, while the latter in their earlier forms showed a likeness in their patterns to the unwritten or oral folk literature, and they again may be compared in affinity to the Chinese. Later on through Indian influence, many rhythmic Patterns were introduced and these in time came to the forefront against the background of the former through the influence of the educated class. The language used is more artificial as more and more words from foreign origins, especially Pali, Sanskrit and Cambodian, were introduced into the verses, while the former are more natural and still popular with the common People. However both achieved their technique and emotional arts in

many of their works. The subjects of Thai prose and Verse in the earlier works were mostly inspired by Buddhist literature and meant to serve religion. Later on more secular subjects relating to episodes of history, legends and indigenous tales were introduced to serve dramatic art and reading. Of the two great epics of India, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, only the latter was turned in its entirety into Thai Verse in dramatic form, while only certain episodes were taken from the former. The *Ramayana* of the Thai version differs radically in detail from the original Valmiki version, but agrees here and there either with the Tamil, the Bengali, the Javanese or the Malay versions. No doubt this shows that at one time or other, there have been intermixtures of cultures going on among the South-East Asians and with India to an appreciable degree. The *Ramayana* is well known to the Thai People, especially in the Central and Southern areas. The Lao of the North-eastern area had a tale of Rama in their local literature, but they incorporated many of their local traditions and tales into the story, and in many places showed traces of Indonesian influence due obviously to the once highly hinduized Cham People whose country Champa is now Annam. The *Ramayana* of the Thai version is one of the literary achievements in the language.

Within the last century, there has appeared a new type of literature written in prose which has become very popular with the public. It is a translation of those popular Chinese historical romances. The translation is complete from the dawn of Chinese history down to the last days of the Ming dynasty. The Thai of older generations know the outline of Chinese history through these translations. One of them, the *San Kuo Chai Yue I* or the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, has been very popular and its merit, apart from the theme of the story, is the style of its translation. It is perfect and in the best prose style. The pronunciation of names of the various characters in this Chinese romances is Fukian, despite the fact that most of the Chinese who came in later days were Swatow People. The Swatow dialect has one peculiar tone in its phonetic System; while the

Thai language, although a tonal language like the Chinese, has not this tone. Nevertheless the Fukians pronounce this tone at a different pitch and the Thai have it too, hence the Fukian dialect was used in the Thai language, in order to avoid this difficulty. Phonetically Thai has six or probably seven pitch tones, but in theory there are only five tones. We know for instance the names of Liu Pei Kwanyu and Changfei as Lao Pi, Kwan-u and Tiohui.

In recent times Western literature has been introduced into the country and there have been constant translations mostly through the medium of English. There has arisen in quite recent times too Thai novels and short Stories in the Western style. Some of Shakespeare's works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, and *The Merchant of Venice* were translated by King Vajiravudh, so also a number of English and French plays. Many of them were adapted and staged, giving an impetus to a new kind of performance. King Vajiravudh also translated and dramatized, through English translations, a number of Sanskrit classical dramas, for instance, *Sakuntaly*, *Savitri*. Through King Vajiravudh's genius and influence, a new era of Thai literature has evolved and developed up to now.

In the Thai social System, the village is the unit. It was, in former days, a self-contained one in its economy and needs. The people's habits and customs were based mainly on agriculture and religion. Most villages had a Buddhist monastery and a shrine for a village deity. The monastery served their spiritual needs as well as the people's education. All arts, crafts and learning emanated from the monastery. From birth till death it centered round it. Its precincts were the meeting place for social gatherings on festive occasions. As to the village shrine it was used only occasionally in times of distress or on New Year's day when offerings were made. It had nothing to do with Buddhism. No doubt Buddhism softened and tamed animism in many of its cults. The above is only a fundamental and comparative statement which a student has to bear in mind when dealing with modern cultural problems. The social system, habits and customs as seen in modern times are superficial modifications of the fundamentals

and in a comparative degree only. In some outlying districts where there are retarded developments of culture due to lack of intercommunication and new ideas, the people are still in their primitive state, quite in contrast to the progress in the capital, towns and cities. In these progressive past "old times are changed, old manners gone" and a new type of culture fills its place. This is a sign of progress but it must come gradually. Adapt the old to the new but not in a revolutionary way. The new cultures have also their dangers with problems to be solved, because people take too much interest in politics. To adopt new cultures wholly unsuited to the needs which are peculiar to, and characteristic of each particular place is a danger. Culture ought to be varied with characteristics of its own in each locality and area, harmonizing, however, with the whole : a unity in diversity.

As will be seen from what has been said, the culture of Thailand is midway between the two great cultural Systems of Asia, China on the one side and India on the other. Chinese culture did not penetrate further west beyond Annam; nor did Indian culture go further north than the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. They came to a halt at one another's bulwarks and did not penetrate further. The Annamites, though ethnologically Indonesians, were domiciled in China far back in historical times as one tribe of the Yueh or Viet, and absorbed much of Chinese culture. When they came down to the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, they met the Chams who were highly hinduized culturally. After the Chams westward was another highly hinduized people, the Khmers or the Cambodians. Naturally Chinese culture could not penetrate further for it met an opponent of equal forte. Due to the nature of the country and to other facts peculiar to the north of the Peninsula, Chinese culture did not penetrate far for lack of easy communications. Whatever Chinese cultures the Thai brought from Southern China, they adapted to their needs, suitable to their tropical surroundings, developing them independently by using the old materials. In their way of life the Thai and the Chinese can mix very well but not with the Indians, even though they have imbibed Indian culture appreciably. The one drawback of the Thai is the climatic conditions of the country.

Living in the tropics where food is in abundance and the weather fair, they have become lethargic. But a taste for the arts has been developed by the leisured and *elite* classes, hence the arts as developed by the Thai though mostly inspired directly or indirectly by India, are uniquely their own. Buddhism suited their tastes and temperaments very well, so they readily adopted it. Accustomed to living in isolated groups in their mountainous districts of the North their political conception and consciousness were confined to their village and city only. But when they became masters of Central Thailand where there was one vast plain, they adapted Indian culture. Being still a virile race and with genius they evolved these cultures again as peculiar of their own.

Different from Thailand is Burma. Though Burma is a neighbour of India, she did not take much of Indian culture, especially Hinduism. They adopted only Buddhism tinged weakly with Hinduism. Judging by the physical features of the Thai or Siamese in Central Thailand they differ in stature and colour from their brothers in the north. They become shorter and darker gradually southward and there is no doubt that they mixed immensely with the Mon-Khmer and Austronesian families. They lost physically but gained intellectually through fusion of new blood. Thailand therefore formed the meeting place of the two great cultural systems which came to a halt and fused into a new one with double layers of culture.

The Traditional Culture of Thailand & Its Revival and Survival

The People of Thailand are called the Thai. On linguistic grounds they may be said to be composed principally of the three main ethnic groups of people; that is the Thai whose old home within historical times was in Southern China, the Austronesian and the Mon-Khmer. The latter two were the forerunners of the Thai who had migrated into Thailand and adjacent areas. With these people, the Thai, after their migrations from Southern China, mixed appreciably to form themselves into the Siamese, as the inhabitants of Siam were called before 1939 at which time the name was officially changed to Thailand. To add to such an ethnic blend, the Siamese in more recent times have intermingled, to some degree, with the Southern Chinese who migrated into the country. Such is ethnologically the composition of the population of Thailand which is composed of twenty million souls.

Basically the traditional culture of the Thai of these countries is an agricultural one. The Thai have lived relatively like their neighbours on the mainland of South-East Asia in an under-populated but fertile land, where their requirements for subsistence in the old days were simple and easily obtained. Rice and fish were their stable food and in fact in the vocabulary of the people, the word food is ‘ricefish “, which reflects their main physical needs apart from their cloth which they weave for themselves. Famine was comparatively rare in this sparsely populated but

fertile land. In such a self-sufficient economic life, to work more than one wants or to be thrifty and to accumulate wealth in the modern sense was senseless in those days. Though the life of the farming masses was at times arduous, there was still ample time left for the people to enjoy their leisured life.

Socially the Thai, to a certain extent, remain a village - centered people. In the Thai language the word village is ‘ban’, and the larger centres of population were ruled by a chief or a king; it was called “*muang*” in Thai. These two words formed the conception of the Universe for the older generations of the people. They were public-minded people in so far as their village was concerned. They worked and helped one another in time of need and enjoyed their life socially and aesthetically together. In such circumstances of life, money was valueless. And in fact there was very little currency in circulation. Of course, there were wealthy and poor people of the village, but the enjoyment of life was nearly on the same level. The individual villager calculated his wealth in arable land, oxen and buffaloes, implements and tools. In later times, when money was a medium of exchange, the wealthy people of the village would spend their money on public utilities such as building roads and bridges, public rest houses or a monastery. The surplus money in silver coins was either hidden under the ground or spent on gold jewelry. The poor villagers would contribute help in such an undertaking by their labour, the wealthy ones would supply the food and drinks. After the completion of such undertakings, there were celebrations and feasts supplied by the people themselves with the wealthy ones bearing the major share of expense. The Thai family structure is of bilateral descent, with an exogamous system where the male is married out into another village family. There are reciprocal and friendly meetings either at one or another village during the festive occasions.

Now we come to the village spiritual life. There are two strata of beliefs of the Thai people. The first stratum is animism, not unlike that of other peoples in their primitive days, and there are traces of their beliefs and conceptions similar to that of the Chinese, no doubt due to the earlier contact with and influence

of the Chinese in Southern China. Next Comes Buddhism, with elements of Brahmanism and Hinduism, which was mostly confined to the *elite* class. In Thai popular Buddhism, these two layers of beliefs and conceptions among the mass of the Thai People have become intermingled in an inextricable degree. In every village there is at least one Buddhist temple with a monastery called *wat* in Thai, and a shrine of the village tutelary guardian. An abbot of the village *wat*, if he is a man of age, full of lore and wisdom, is a highly respected person in the village. His counsel is eagerly sought in difficulties and difference. The villagers would prefer his advice and decision even in a serious case rather than refer the case to the official authority for decision. The abbot in his spare time will make a round of afternoon visits to the villagers, giving advice or distributing his home-made medicine or other things as needed by the people. Feasts and festivals as observed by the Thai Buddhists are mainly religious and connected with the changing seasons. The *wat*, or monastery, is therefore the centre of social meetings whether in life or in death of the folk. All traditional arts and literature of the Thai are essentially religious and most of them are dedicated to their religion-Buddhism. To sum up, Buddhism of the Thai on its popular side is tinged with Hinduism and animistic ideas stemming from their long contact and free intermingling especially with the Mons and the Cambodians. With the exception of the Vietnamese and the Malays, the people on the mainland of South-East Asia may be said broadly to have a unity of traditional culture.

All I have been speaking of here was of a time in premodern days, when the culture-pattern of the people in various areas of the country was more or less identical. It is still the culture-pattern of the personality of the Thai, despite the fact that there have been some radical changes in the last hundred years in behaviour and thinking particularly in modern towns or cities which have come into contact with modern civilization. In the old days, when schooling was practically the monopoly of the *wat* or monastery, it was no wonder that the people were desirous of having their male relatives become at least temporary novices or monks. When a man becomes old, he sometimes, as a devotional act,



Klong-yao, folk dances



Boat races

becomes a monk for life, or if, for various reasons, he is not able to do so, he will frequently on Buddhist holy days repair to the *wat*. He also observes certain religious precepts and hears sermons, thus detaching from himself all the worldly cares of the family life. This is no doubt due to the influence of the Indian four stages of life. Many retired officials even in Bangkok at the present day still observe such a practice. It was in such an economic and social environment that the Thai traditional culture evolved.

Someone has said that the Thai, in comparison with the Chinese, “*are indolent, unwilling to labour more than for immediate needs, contented with their lot, uninterested in money or economic advancement, conservative and satisfied with a dependent status.*” This is true - for the surroundings and condition of life had made him so. When the necessities of life in the old days could be so easily obtained and consumption and enjoyment of life was a *utopia* in itself, why should a man postpone them. In Buddhism all life is suffering; the Thai, though his life as above depicted is a somewhat *utopian* one, has also the other side of life relatively, for “*Every medal has its reverse side proportionately*“.

Such a life, though simple and primitive in a sense but full of enjoyment of life and contentment, is only a flux in the tides of life, for there has come a new type of civilization from the West through the Industrial Revolution, full of progress and wonder of its technological advancements. This is force with aggressiveness which cannot be ignored or neglected if one is to survive. To accept it is the uprooting of the Thai traditional culture which has been a safeguard to them for centuries. During the reign of the great King Chulalongkorn, one sees many great reforms to meet the advancement of such a new kind of civilization. Some of the reforms were radical ones in comparison to the old way of life, but they were done gradually, step by step, assimilating the new to the old with the least disturbances.

Now comes the culmination. Due to the rapid advancement of technological knowledge after World War II, many new and wonderful things have made a sudden impact on the traditional cultures of the Thai and other peoples of this part of the world.

Much technological progress has been witnessed in Thailand, but the old way of life suitable only to the former surrounding has in many instances outlived its usefulness and does not modify or adapt to meet the present condition of life. Hence a dislocation of the cultural value. Paradoxically every wave of progress intercepts all aspects of the Thai life. This, to me, seems beset with numerous degrees not only for Thailand but also for the world at large.

Among the literates in Thailand, there were in 1947 A.D. people with higher learning 0.7%, secondary learning 4.3%, and elementary learning 95%. I do not know how many are the illiterates. But suffice it to say that the mass of the people is in the elementary stage. In so far as I think the Thai are receptive to new things, the folk, though conservative, will adopt new things easily without selections and adaptations, while in the higher learning class or the *elite* many of them are more westernized rather than traditional in their culture. Although there may be only a few of them, the future of Thailand lies with the *elite* class who can steer with safety the ship of destiny Thailand. The mass of the people will follow them if the *elite* class will steer rightly.

To me, a liberal education and the exchange of cultures among the nations is much to be desired; not only with the Western ones but with our neighbours also. The Thai, prior to his contact with western nations, had long been influenced by the two great cultures of Asia - i.e. Indian and Chinese. Before the present generations, the Thai knew something of what was best of Chinese values. Why not revive it? To live amicably with other people with good understanding, why should the Thai not know something of the culture of, for instance, the Arab, the Japanese and others? Such a scheme, though an ambitious one, is worth carrying out though it will require persons learned in anthropology and other social sciences to tackle the problem by surveying, analyzing and interpreting the Thai traditional way of life in various fields of culture before any tangible result can be realized. There ought to be a shorter and a longer plan to cope with the present situation as devised and recommended by those experts. Confucius has aptly said "*Thinking without learning is dangerous*".

Loi Krathong

The full moon nights of the eleventh and twelfth lunar months, i.e. in the later parts of October and November, are the days of “Loi Krathong”. Loi is “to float” and Krathong is a “leaf cup” usually made of banana leaf as one often sees in the market. The leaf cup is used to hold something. Loi Krathong is, therefore, the floating of lights in a leaf cup. During October and November, all the rivers and canals in the lowlands are flooded and the waters in some places overflow their banks. The rainy season is now in a sense over. It is the time of rejoicing for the weather is fair after the rains. The sky becomes bright and clear, but without its dampness. After the strenuous labour of ploughing and planting rice for the last three months at a stretch from dawn till dusk, for the country-folk the heavy work is now over. The peasants have only to wait a month or more for the time of reaping. During this interval they have nothing much economically to do, but to spend a comparative time of leisure with feasts and festivals, of which there are many in these two months of October and November. But we will speak here of the Loi Krathong only.

If you go into a market just a few days before the full moon of October and November, you will see in some stalls or shops, displayed apart from other things, a number of krathong or leaf cups specially made for sale in this season. I will not describe these krathongs, for a representative number of their kind may be seen now. Some of the krathongs are not leaf cups at all, in the ordinary

sense of the word. Generally, some of them are in the shape of a bird or a boat. They are more of a toy than a krathong, and have only made their appearance in recent years. These are confined mainly to the town people. The country-folk usually have their own home - made krathong for the occasion, and perhaps there may be one or two progressive folk who make them in the shape of a bird or boat for the merriment of their children. Usually in a krathong, apart from a candle and one or more incense sticks, a small coin, say a one or five satang piece, is also put in, and sometimes a mouthful of betel nut and betel leaf for chewing purposes is added. I am being particular in this instance, as the addition of these two small particular things is not generally observed nowadays. They are clues, if any, of the origin of Loi Krathong in its far off days.

In the evening when the full moon begins to rise on October and November, the People, mostly old women and matrons with their children, carry one or two krathongs to the edge of brimful running water. After the candle and incense sticks in the krathong are lighted, they let it go gently on the surface of the placid waters. A few folk will sometimes raise their hands in worship to the floating krathong. They watch the krathong as they float sluggishly along the water for some time until they float far away or out of sight. The children to while away the time play with water fire - works. The fireworks, apart from amusement, are a part of any celebration secularly and religiously. We light fireworks sometimes in the same spirit as we light candles as an act of worship.

The floating krathong usually has a short life. As it floats far away from its starting place, the children further down stream will, in most cases, swim out to snatch the krathong. If it is a beautiful one there may be a scramble for it. They will perhaps ignore the common ones, but will not forget to snatch up the small coin, if any, in the krathong. It is an aesthetic pleasure to see many krathongs with their flickering candle lights bobbing gently up and down, borne along the silent and placid flooded waters under the light of a full moon. Of course, I speak of

this in the days there were no motor boats and outboards to disturb the peaceful waters with their waves and unpleasant sounds.

As can be gathered from the above description, there is nothing in the nature of a ritual and ceremonial act attached to the Loi Krathong. You simply light the candle and incense sticks and let loose all in the water. That is all you have to do. But the small coin that is put in, and the lighting of the candle and incense sticks betray that there must be a cult of some kind. If you ask the people for an explanation, the elder ones will tell you that the Loi Krathong is an act of remission to the Goddess Me Khongkha, the Mother of Water. Khongkha is the same word as the Indian “Gangs” or Ganges”, but in Siamese, it means water in general. They will further explain that in spite of the Mother’s bountiful gift of water to man, he sometimes has polluted her water in various ways, therefore it is only proper to ask her pardon. It is an explanation which, if not plausible, is one which the simple believing folk can explain. But why do it in two consecutive months? Another explanation is that the Lord Buddha printed his foot on the sand shore of the Nammada River or the Nerbudda River of India in the Deccan by request of the King of Naga, who wanted to worship the Lord Buddha’s foot-print when the Lord had gone. The Loi Krathong is therefore an act of worship of His foot-print which is a far cry from here to India. This is a religious but apocryphal explanation as to the origin of Loi Krathong which is not to be found in the Buddhist scriptures. It is in one way useful to preserve any tradition if a touch of religious explanation be given to it. There is another explanation in the nature of a folktale of the Buddhist Jataka kind, which lang story I need not go into for it will interest folklorists only. The Chiangmai folk of Northern Thailand have a different explanation for the origin of Loi Krathong which is, I think, identical with the Burmese.

I have now given you a description of Loi Krathong on its popular side, but will now try to give you another side of the Loi Krathong of the King. You cannot expect anything much from me as I witnessed it and only in part some fifty years ago during H.M. King Chulalongkorn’s reign when I was quite a young

boy. The Royal Loi Krathong has now disappeared even in the later years of the august monarch's reign. As far as I can gather, there was a revival once or twice during the reigns of Their Majesties King Vajiravudh and King Prachatipok. It was revived in one instance, on the occasion, if I remember rightly of the Lord Northcliff's visit to Siam. It was Loi Krathong on a minor scale. The Krathong on a grand scale was never in fact done, even in King Chulalongkorn's reign. What I know about the royal Loi Krathong is from an article written by H.M. King Chulalongkorn in his invaluable work พระราชนิพิธ์ ๑๒ เดือน or "the King's Ceremonies during the twelve months of the year". Dr. Quarich Wales has quoted copiously from this book in his interesting work "Siamese State Ceremonies", therefore I will not go fully into the subject. I think Dr. Quarich Wales has already said something of the royal Loi Krathong.

H.M. King Chulalongkorn says in his book that the Loi Krathong has nothing to do with any recognized ceremony or rite. It is merely a matter of rejoicing in which all the people take part and is not only for royalty; moreover it is concerned with neither Buddhist nor Brahmin ceremony. His Majesty thought that the Loi Krathong had some connection with the floating lanterns (ลอยโคมลงน้ำ) as observed by Siamese kings in the north when Sukhothai was the capital some six or seven hundred years ago. It was described ornately in a book written by Nang Nophamat, a beautiful and learned lady of the court of King Phra Ruang of Sukhothai's capital. The lady was the daughter of a Brahmin family priest attached to the Court. She said that in the twelfth month (she said nothing of the eleventh month) i.e. in November, the country was flooded. The king and his court went for a picnic on the river to witness the people enjoying themselves during the water festival at night. Nothing is said of the Loi Krathong of the people, but it can be taken as a fact that it took place. The krathong was most probably in the same shape as that which we see at the present day, for Lady Nophamat told in her book that she had introduced a new kind of krathong in a shape of a big lotus flower and many other styles for the king to float in the running stream, no doubt for his enjoyment. She

further initiated certain recitations and Songs to be sung for the king on the occasion.

As will be seen, the Loi Krathong had already by that time no meaning religiously or ritually. It was a matter of enjoying oneself leisurely and placidly during the flooded period under the light of the full moon in ideal weather. No hint is given as to a small coin being in a krathong. The origin of Loi Krathong as Lady Nophamat explains is the worshipping of the Buddha's Foot Print on the Sand shore of the Nammada River as already described. Now the Chinese have their own Loi Krathong too and it is a ritual act . They call the Krathong "lotus flower lamp" and call the floating "the floating of the lamps" akin to the old Siamese word of floating lanterns (ລອຍໂຄມ). Is there any connection ? I think there is. The Indians have their floating lights, but vary from one locality to another. They attach no meaning or importance ritually to the act, and in fact in Southern India it is done merely as a custom and a picnic on the banks of a stream when the water is full. Of course there may be many explanations, some say that they do it to honour their favourite gods or goddesses. That is all I can gather from my Indian friends.

I can remember rather dimly the King's Loi Krathong when I was a boy. The event took place on the river in front of the Royal Landing at the Grand Palace. Part of the river in front of the Royal Landing was reserved for the occasion. Two large boats were stationed midstream, one at each end. A long rope was attached to the two boats forming an outer barrier. There were many palace guard-boats patrolling the barrier and at both end openings of the water space where the Loi Krathong was to take place, in order to prevent unofficial boats trespassing this area. I obtained this description from a certain friend of mine in after years. At the time I was too young to note anything. I saw a number of miniature royal barges moored alongside the Royal Landing which I was told by my elders were the king's krathong. My attention as a small boy was naturally fixed on these particular boats more than on any thing else, hence I cannot remember what other things I had seen. H.M. the King and his

court would not arrive on the scene until after 9 o'clock in the evening. I left the place without seeing the actual Loi Krathong. Of course, there were crowds of people on the banks waiting to see the king and his court. This was all I saw and all I can remember, but I will supplement my incomplete description by and by with what I gathered afterwards.

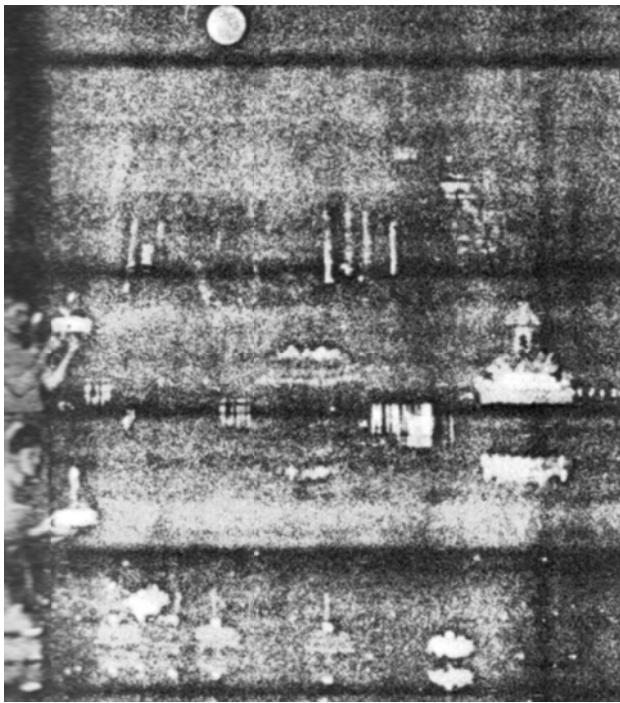
If my memory serves me right, on one occasion when I went in a paddling boat with my elders, I saw a great number of boats going to and fro on the river outside the barrier. It was a boat meet at night time. Every boat was free to ply happily without their powerful brothers, the launches and motor boats, to disturb the peace. The People in the boats were in good spirits. They sang and played music, in some cases with recitations and repartee. The children amused themselves with water fire-works of the kind you see now. There were moveable cook shops in boats of every description, and they found ready customers. If preferred, one could take one's own food and enjoy one's repast with one's fellows in midstream in ideal surroundings and amidst merry making. I long to witness such a scene again, but it will never come back, for it is of the past, for "Old times are changed, old manners gone" if I may be allowed to quote half remembered words from Sir Walter Scott's the "Day of the Last Minstrel". Now for my supplementary of the royal Loi Krathong which I have on good authority from my friend. He says that in old days the royal Loi Krathong was on a grand scale called krathong yai or big krathong. Some of the princes and ministers of state each made a krathong. They were big ones, so big that they could accommodate in each of them a number of artists playing musical instruments or performing Comic and practical jokes. The designs of the krathong were various, giant lotus flowers, junks and what not. Each owner competed with the others. No doubt there was fun and enjoyment but it was too costly to do every year. It was given up and real royal barges illuminated in designs were used as substitutes for the occasion during H.M. King Chulalongkorn's reign. This big krathong took place in the full moon of the twelfth month (November) while the Krathong

on a minor scale composed of miniature royal barges took place in the eleventh month (October). The king with his court viewed the display of Loi Krathong from a large floating pavilion having many large dug - out boats as pontoons. He dined and stayed there until past mid - night, while the royal children amused themselves with water fireworks.

The origin of Loi Krathong can be traced. Primarily it is no doubt a yearly offering to the water spirits or the floating away to the depths of all sins and calamities that may befall you. The people in Chiangmai and in the North Eastern provinces have one very big krathong made and in some places light it with torches. They put in the krathong some provisions and clothing. These will be taken by some poor people down stream far away from their starting places, an act which is equal to that to transferring sins to others using them as scapegoats. The Cambodian, apart from the Royal Loi Krathong similar to Bangkok one, have a special day during the autumn month for a Loi Krathong as an act of filial duty to their departed ancestors. They ask their departed ones to partake of a feast specially prepared for the occasion, which is no doubt an echo of the first-fruit feast of primitive days. After the supposed repast, the ancestors are sent away, imaginary of course, in a boat or krathong made of banana stems filled with provisions. The custom is still preserved by the people of Cambodian descent in some localities of the Country. But why has the Loi Krathong to take place in the evening when it is dark? Apart from aesthetic pleasure, I cannot see any other reasonable explanation than that anything pertaining to spirits is often done at night in order to give it an atmosphere of mystical effect. The Chinese popularly explain that the floating light is to guide the way for drowning spirits on their passage to the realm of darkness.

Secondly, the Loi Krathong is in a sense a thanksgiving to the Goddess of Water. It is probably confined to agricultural people who rely on the abundance of water as a source of economic life.

Thirdly, the Loi Krathong in its later development is a pastime for spending an evening outdoors amid pleasant surroundings near the brimming water which comes out twice successively in a year. The Loi Krathong is to me, therefore, a natural psychological feeling in us to let something float away as children often do. It is a mixture of a cult in a certain sense which has now lost its meaning, but which has survived only feebly in form to be added to the third surmise which you see today. That is why we have it in two consecutive months, October and November. I think the former month has something to do with the first and second explanations which subsequently merged to the later one.



Loi Krathong





Chapter 2

The Language & Literature



Thai Literature in Relation to the Diffusion of Her Cultures

It was in the year 1283 A.D., memorable for the cultural history of Thailand, that Ram Kamhang the Great, the king of Sukhodaya Kingdom invented the Thai alphabet. Prior to this date there was presumably some kind of alphabet as used by the intellectual class of the people, especially the clergy and the officials. What kind of alphabet was in use during those days ? No doubt it might have been the “Khom” alphabet. Who were the Khoms ? They were probably a race of people akin to the Mons and the Khmer or Cambodians of the present day. The old Mon alphabet and also the old Khmer alphabet were called Khom by the Thai. This type of alphabet derived, as scholars tell us, from the Grantham alphabet of the Tamils, a people in Southern India. The sacred writings of the Buddhist religion in Thailand as inscribed on palm leaves in the old days were mostly in the Cambodian script, miscalled by the Thai the Khom alphabet due to an accident of history in its later development.

Thai literature proper, as distinguished from the purely spiritual side, may be said, therefore to begin in its written form with King Ram Kamhang’s time, as evidenced in his famous stone inscription in the alphabet which he had invented. Dr. Cornelius B. Bradley in his “The Oldest Known Writing of the Thai” (*Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 6, Pt. 1, Bangkok, 1909), has discussed at some length King Ram Kamhang’s Thai alphabet.

It is a well - known fact that the Thai is instinctively a poet. The unlettered and unsophisticated folk of rural Thailand, who form a great part of the population, have their traditional past-times and recreations at social gatherings, one of which is singing their songs extempore. The wording of the song is composed in measured quantities of which rhyming and alliteration form the essential part of the poetry. As the Thai language is fundamentally a tonal one, the rhythm is marked by the selected use of pitch accents instead of stressed ones. Such songs as sung by the country folk form part of the Thai oral literature. A certain kind of Thai written literature developed from this class of folk poetry, but with further elaborations and embellishments.

Thai traditional written literature is in the main religious. Even stories of a romantic nature, which deal with kings and queens, with giants and divine beings, were inspired from Buddhist and Hindu mythology. In fact such stories are fairy tales in their developed form. At first these consisted of stories drawn from the well-known Jataka tales or Buddhist Birth Stories. Later on no doubt indigenous folk-tales were incorporated in this class of literature. They are written in a certain style of composition in the simple language of the people to be read for the benefit of the unlettered ones.

During the Buddhist lent period (*August-October*) when many people repaired to the wat (*Buddhist temple and monastery*) to hear sermons preached by the monks and to observe certain religious commandments and to do other merit making, certain literate persons, usually ex-monks, took the opportunity to read from a book of such kind of literature to the congregation during their leisured intervals. There used to be a number of these readers in corners of the corridor and other shaded places within the precinct of the temple, and the way they read was a sort of recitation with modulation of the voice. Hence such compositions of this class are called in Thai "Klon Suat" or intoned recitation. No doubt this was some sort of teaching, literature being used as a formative influence of Buddhist religion and other lores expressed indirectly to unlettered People in the old days. Such

a tradition has survived until modern days in two localities. One is in Nakhon Si Thamarat, the capital city of the Southern Area in the great temple of that city, and the other, only a revival, is in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, at the Royal Chapel of the Emerald Buddha. At the latter temple only the form of the tradition has been revived, but the literature as used for recitation is of a different kind, and in fact, few persons in the congregation have ever taken any notice of it. There are a number of examples of this class of literature in the National Library in Bangkok.

They are written by hand in an old style Thai book; some of them have already appeared in printed book form. Most of the Thai folk tales are embedded in this class of literature. Comparison in a haphazard manner of this class of stories with those of Thailand's neighbour, especially the Shans, the Laos, the Mons and the Cambodians, a certain unity of the theme of such stories is revealed. There is a book on "Siamese Folk Tales" narrated in English by J. Kasern Sibunruang (*Bangkok: Don Bosco Technical School and Orphanage, 1954*).

Another class of Thai literature is what is called, for want of a better word, romantic tales. These tales have nothing to do directly with religion; they are tales of the supernatural and of romantic adventures, mostly of a semidivine hero and heroine, based partly on inspirations from the Indian romantic tales like the famous story of Sakuntals, for instance; and partly on the above Thai folk tales. They were written in a certain pattern of Thai poetry which the mass of people could understand and appreciate. Many such works survived in time due to their high quality as literature.

The well - known Thai traditional dramatic performance known as "lakhon" draws most of its theme and story from this class of literature. The people in the past loved to listen to such stories read aloud to them. A young man in love with a girl who could not read herself, would volunteer to read for her as a step to his further love - making. In the absence of such a young man, any small boy who was able to read something would take the young man's place, not voluntarily, of course. Naturally

a boy loves play more than reading. If he by necessity had to read the book, he usually demanded a fee for the service. Not only the girl but sometimes a matron or a female elder of the house required such service of the boy. So infatuated with such stories have Thai women always been; but sometimes the boy himself, absorbed in the wonderful story, would demand no further fees for his service. The literature, therefore, had a strong hold on the mass of the people in the past, for it is the only way they could satisfy their taste, their imagination and aesthetic need which are all innate in man.

There is a large number of examples of this kind of literature. It has gradually been superceded by a new kind of literature, in prose instead of poetry as hitherto, on the line of the Western, the short story and novel. This is of recent date, with roots some time in the later part of the last century, and is due to the impact of Western literature. Nevertheless many of the afore - said traditional tales survived to the present day. It is the quality of the language as expressed that counts.

Another class of Thai literature is what is called the "Classic". It is written in a different kind of poetic composition. Many "classical" Poems are composed in strict metre thus they are poetry in the full sense of the word. Such a form of poetry often demands the use of words from Pali and Sanskrit, the classical languages of the Thai, in order to command the rhythms as prescribed in the prosody. This could not usually be done always with Thai words, which are tonic and mostly monosyllabic. Naturally such works are more for the intellectual class; they are comparatively difficult for the mass of the People to understand and appreciate, as they are so highly "literary". Here a remark in parenthesis is necessary. The division of the Thai literature as outlined above is a generalisation. It cannot be divided in its entirety like someone cutting a cake, for there are over-lappings as there are always in the field of human inventive composition. However we will, in this instance, confine ourselves to the literature of the mass of the people. There are, as selected for their prominence, seven works which can be considered as representative

of certain cultural influences in relation to the diffusion of Thai culture. They may briefly be commented on as follows.

1. Khun Chang Khun Phan

An indigenous tale of love, at times humorous, of the triangular love plot of a beautiful woman with two lovers. The Story has been dealt with briefly in English elsewhere (see *Thailand Culture*, Series No. 3). Apart from its high literary value, the story contains a mine of information on old Thai life, of social conceptions and beliefs, traditions and customs. The Story of *Khun Chang Khun Phan* is certainly one of the great works in Thai literature. It depicts the life of the Thai in its real setting before he had become, in a sense, westernized, which was inevitable. In many episodes of the story the diction is hardly equalled by anything ever written in the Thai language. The story is written in the style of every day speech of the people, hence its popularity. It is composed in a style purposely meant for recitation, to be sung by a solo reciter with accompaniment of two pairs of a certain kind of castanets made from blocks of hard wood for keeping time, manipulated, one pair in each hand, by the singer. Such a style of solo recitation, interspersed with song at the end of each interval, is called "sebha" in Thai, a word of unknown origin (see H.R.H. Printe Bidyalongkorn, "Sebha Recitation and the Story of Khun Chang Khun Phan". *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 33, Pt. 1, 1941). Many reciters of the sebha have been known to compose for themselves certain episodes of the story which they are accustomed to recite as their favourites, hence there have been from time to time elaborations of the Story until it has now become a lengthy romance with many versions of different episodes in the story. These were collected and re-edited in their present form by the then Royal Institute, now the Fine Arts Department. The book is widely read by the public, and many excerpts drawn from it serve as the wording of many Thai classical songs. Certain episodes are every now and then presented on the stage by the Fine Arts Department in Bangkok. A synopsis of the story has been rendered into English by Prem

Chaya, (*Bangkok, the Standard Nos. 1 and 2*), and a French one translated in a brief form by J. Kasern Sibunruang. It is renamed “La Fémme, le Héro et le Vilain” (*Musée Guimet Annales, tome LXV, Paris, 1960*). I am told there is the story of Khun Chang Khun Phan in the Mon language also.

2. Mahachat

A story of the Lord Buddha in his last - birth - but - one on earth before he had attained his Buddha hood. This birth is called Mahachat or the Great Birth, portraying the story of Prince Wetsandon who fulfilled his last mission on earth as a Bodhisata - would - be Buddha, thus preparing himself for the enlightenment in his last birth on earth. Hence the life of Prince Wetsandon is an ideal for the faith. His life the people like to hear recited, for the supreme sacrifice of Prince Wetsandon touches their hearts deeply. The Mahachat is, therefore, written for recitation by Buddhist monks who have been trained for such a purpose to be recited at the Mid - year Autumnal Festival of Thailand, or on other occasions as desired. Mahachat is a very well - known story throughout the mainland of South-East Asia wherever Buddhism is predominant. It greatly influences the life of the mass of the people. The story also serves as an inspiration to Thai poets and artists of the old classical art, for the reason that the story contains noble sentiments, pathos, humour and beautiful descriptive scenes which give free play to their power of imagination and artistic expression.

The original story of Prince Wetsandon was written in Pali, the sacred language of the Southern School Buddhist. There are many versions in Thai, written in many styles of composition. The one which has been selected by a committee of experts is in the style “Kham Thet” or preaching - language. It is divided into 13 cantos and is therefore somewhat bulky in size. Many Thai poets at different times composed either one or more cantos of Mahachat. Only the best of the cantos were selected and formed into one whole story. The style of composition is that of an

elaborate prose - poem full of beautiful and emotive words. It is a story which appeals to most Thai, and it is one of the books that no youth ever missed in school. There is an account in English on the origin of the recitation of the Mahachat with a description of the ceremony of the preaching festival by G.E. Gerini in his book the "Thet Mahachat," Bangkok, 1892 : and the "Thet Maha Chat" * by Phya Anuman Rajadhon.

3. Ramakian

This is a Story based on the famous Indian epic, the Rama - yana. The Ramakian is unique in that it contains many exotic episodes and details which are not found in the original epic : but identical to a certain extent here and there with the various versions of this epic to be found in India, especially the Tamil and Bengali Versions. The well - known "Khon" or dramatic masked performance in Thailand and the "Nang" or shadow play both of the Thai, the Malays and the Indonesians are also based on the story the Ramayana. (*See The Khon - Masked Play by H.H. Prince Dhaninivat Kromamüin Bidyalabh Bridhyakorn and Dhanit Yupho, Thailand Culture Series No. 11, and the Nang - Shadow Play by the said Prince Dhani, Thai Culture, New Series, No. 3.*)

As revealed from certain episodes of the story as narrated by the Malay manipulators of the shadow play in Southern Thailand, the Ramayana or in other words the Story of Rama, seems to be originally an oral one. Each troupe of the Malay shadow players knows possibly one or more limited episodes of the story which they are able to recite. No wonder such episodes in time past contained interpolations and elaborations. New episodes of an indigenous origin were probably added. When the whole story of Rama was put in book form, it became a story quite peculiar and on its own. What is probably true of the Malay versions of the Ramayana, is undoubtedly true of the Ramakian, the Thai Version of the Ramayana.

* cf. No. 21 in the series.

Rama I, the first king of the present dynasty of Thailand, wrote and edited the Ramakian. His chief aim, no doubt, was to include within the story state ceremonies and traditions as pertaining to the royal palace, of which, for the most part, nothing in book form had survived since the devastating war with Burma. Such treatises on state ceremonies and tradition undoubtedly survived only orally. These, as conjectured, were collected and verified and included in the Ramakian. Hence the Ramakian of King Rama I runs into many voluminous books, which are the source of information on the function of Thai court life in its medieval period. Later on his son, King Rama II produced another version of the Ramakian in an abridged form, which was meant exclusively for the masked play. This latter version of the Ramakian has a high literary value, for King Rama II the author of this version was, in his own right, one of the foremost Thai poets, but the people appreciate the former, not on aesthetic grounds but on the comprehensive story. Certain episodes of the Ramakian have been drawn from time to time by many Thai poets and put in many of the Thai styles of composition. References to certain characters and sayings in the Ramakian are to be found cited here and there as allusions in many poetical pieces of Thai literature. In fact in every day speaking some quotations from the Ramakian are frequently quoted. To appreciate Thai literature and to know the Thai language at its best, therefore, is to know something of the Ramakian.

Further, the Ramakian in its whole story is the theme of the mural painting along the length of the corridors of the Royal Chapel of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok. It serves as a means for People both young and old to learn something in pictures of the Ramakian, of its marvelous and supernatural tales which are the delight of the simple folk and children. In Thai painting, sculpture and decorative arts, references to certain episodes of the Ramakian are to be found not infrequently. Here one has to bear in mind that the Ramakian, though derived from the Ramayana, the sacred book of the Hindus, has no sanctity as such to the Thai. The Ramakian to the Thai has more of a

profane nature than a religious one, as evidenced in the concluding remark by King Rama I at the end of his version of the Ramakian that it is written only for entertainment of the people rather than for belief.

There is an epitome of the Ramakian by Swami Satyananda Puri and Charoen Sarahiran in “The Ramakirti (Ramakian) or the Thai Version of the Ramayana” (Bangkok, 1940).

4. Inao

This is a romantic tale from the well - known romance about the adventures of Pandji, the national hero - king of Java who flourished in history sometime in the 13th century A.D. At that period Hinduism was the religion of the island. Tradition says the story was told to two sister - princesses of a later part of the Ayudhya period (18th century A.D.) by their two maids of Malayan extraction. The story was first put into poem form by the two princesses in two versions, each with a different story but with the same hero. They are known one of them as *Dalang* and the other as *Inao*, another name for the hero king Pandji. These two versions of the Pandji - cycle tales by the two Ayudhya princesses did not survive, but the two versions were put in book form by, again, King Rama I. Later on his son, King Rama II wrote another version of the *Inao* for dramatic performance. It is this later version that is very well - known for its refinement and perfect style in the Thai language. Excerpts from this famous version are sung to many musical pieces to be heard frequently on Thai radio broadcasts. Words of Javanese origin are to be found in the Thai literary language, no doubt due to the introduction of this popular story. Most of these Javanese words are understood by the people even though they are words of a literary language. Obviously they are due to the dramatic performances of the *Inao* from the great work of the great poet - king, Rama II. Dramatic performances called lakhon in Thai are of two kinds : one called “lakhon nok” or lakhon for the outsiders and the other “lakhon nai” or lakhon for the insiders, *i.e.* in the Grand Palace. The

latter has a refinement in acting, singing and music as a contrast to the former which is meant for the common people who desire quick action and the common parlance of the language. The performance of the lakhon nai, draws its story and wording exclusively from a class of literary works, chief among which is the Inao. Thai versions of the Inao are to be found in English in the article "Siamese Versions of the Pandji Romance by H.H. Prince Dhani". (*India Antiqua, E.J. Brill, Leydp, 1957.*)

5. Sam Kok

This is a Thai translation of a most popular Chinese historical romance, the San Kuo Chi. It deals with the Chinese period of history (A.D. 268 to 265) during the latter part of the Han dynasty. Unlike the four preceding works, it is written in prose. So popular was the book with the Thai in the last generation that other translations of its kind followed. It was this class of literature, apart from what has already been said, that the people in the last century enjoyed reading. Most of these works were first printed in book form by Dr. D.B. Bradley at the missionary printing press, the pioneer of its kind, in the later part of the 19th century, A.D. The merit of the book, Sam Kok, apart from its highly interesting account of war and intrigue, is in its prose - writing which exhibits a perfection of style in the art of writing in this medium. One of the four translators, or rather editors, of the Sam Kok was the famous Thai poet, Chao Phya Phra Klang - Hon, who flourished in the 18th century, A.D. So strong is the influence of this work that the Thai have indirectly come to know and understand with appreciation something of Chinese history and culture. There was in the past a great demand for this class of book by the reading public, but it has gradually been replaced by the "Western" and the novels in the present generation. Nevertheless, a few of the Chinese historical romance survived, due to their high literary value in the Thai language. Chief among these few is Sam Kok. An excerpt from the Sam Kok forms part of a Thai literature series of selected texts used in schools. The others in this series include also Nos. 3, 4 and 6 of this

pamphlet.

6. Rajadhirat

This is a Thai translation of the Mon history which deals in a large part with the war between the Mon King Rajadhirat (*Razadarit* in Burmese) and the probably Burmanized Shan king of Burma named Farang Manggong (*Minhkaung* in Burmese) in their struggle for predominance between the Mons and the Burmese. The value of the book Rajadhirat is not in its historical facts as it reads like a historical romance, but in its perfect style of Thai writing. Here again like the former book Sam Kok, it is written in prose and its writer was none other than the famous Thai poet who edited the Sam Kok.

7. Phra Abhai Mani

We now come to the last of the 7 great works of Thai literature selected as representative of Thai culture in its homogeneity. Phra Abhai Mani or Phra Abhai to be short is a creative work of a Thai famous poet, popularly known as Sunthorn Bhu who flourished in the second and third reigns of the present dynasty. He wrote a vast number of books in a certain kind of Thai poetry which has hardly been equaled by anyone. Written in the everyday speech of the people, his works are household words in nearly every Thai home.

Phra Abhai is a romantic tale of love and adventure common to many such tales of a king's son, who left his father's court in order to acquire certain magical arts from a hermit in the forest, thus fitting himself for membership of the military taste. After gaining the desired acquirements he took leave of the hermit, and, after some adventures, met a beautiful maiden, (usually a daughter of a powerful giant), and married her, of course, without the consent of the giant, the maiden's father.

Subsequently the giant was slain in a fight with his human son - in - law. There are, of course, variations in the details of such Stories, but in essence the main theme of the story is similar. No doubt such Thai romantic tales were inspired by the many stories to be found in the "Jatakas" or Buddhist Birth Stories, and also those of the Indian romances.

The story of Phra Abhai, though adhering to such a tradition, departs somewhat from the run of such trite tales. Instead of adventures mainly on lands and forests, the Story of Phra Abhai deals with adventures on the seas, the then known world of the poet, both real and imaginary. The poet - author introduced certain principal characters in his story such as a malevolent giantess of the sea and a mermaid who both of them married the hero, Phra Abhai, and had by him each a son. The mermaid is an interesting figure which to me is of recent introduction in the realm of the Thai mythological story. There are included, also, a monster, half-dragon half-horse, a magical flying boat made of straw and a naked ascetic probably an echo of a Jain recluse. Also included in the story are the "Khek, Farang, Angrit". *Khek* are the Mohammedans, in particular the Malays and Javanese as known at that time as sea-farers; Farang are, of course, the Europeans and Angrit are the English. The most interesting characters in the story of Phra Abhai are, therefore, the Farangs, in particular the English. There was a Farang pirate with his enormous ship in which there was a garden of trees; there was an English queen, young and beautiful, with her Roman Catholic prelate as her adviser who ruled an island kingdom named (Sri) Lanka or Ceylon. Of course the English queen in a long war with Phra Abhai married him and had a son, who in a war with his Thai father sided with his mother's prelate, the Roman Catholic Father.

We need not go further into the story for it is a long one running into many volumes. In it one gains some glimpses on the conceptions of the Thai in the past century relating to people in foreign lands beyond the seas, especially the Farang, both real and imaginary, of course, during the author's time. As to the English queen in the story of Phra Abhai, no doubt the poet might have heard something about the great Queen Victoria from

some foreigners to weave his story. But where did he get his idea the country where the English queen reigned was (Sri) Lanka or Ceylon ? I think the following information may be a clue indicating from whom he had the idea.

“Bishop Middleton was said to have once asked him (*the Hindu pundit*) two very simple questions. (1) Whence are the English come? (2) What is their origin? The reply of the pundit was somewhat to the following effect. The English are come from somewhere in (Sri) Lanka or Ceylon and they are of mixed origin, springing from monkeys and cannibals, because they jabber like monkeys, and sit like them on chairs with their legs hanging down in an attitude peculiar to the monkey species”. (*The Hindoo As They Are*, by S.C. Bose.)

As known, the story of Phra Abhai was first printed by Dr. Samuel J. Smith, a Baptist missionary in Bangkok in his weekly Thai newspaper *Syam Smai* in a serial form, and afterwards reprinted in book form divided into parts of 48 pages each, which in a later period became a standard sized book containing this story so well - known to the people of the last generation. The book Phra Abhai is popular with the public not only because of the story but also due to the style of the poet’s writing, in which the genius of the poet has carried to a perfection inimitable even in the present day.

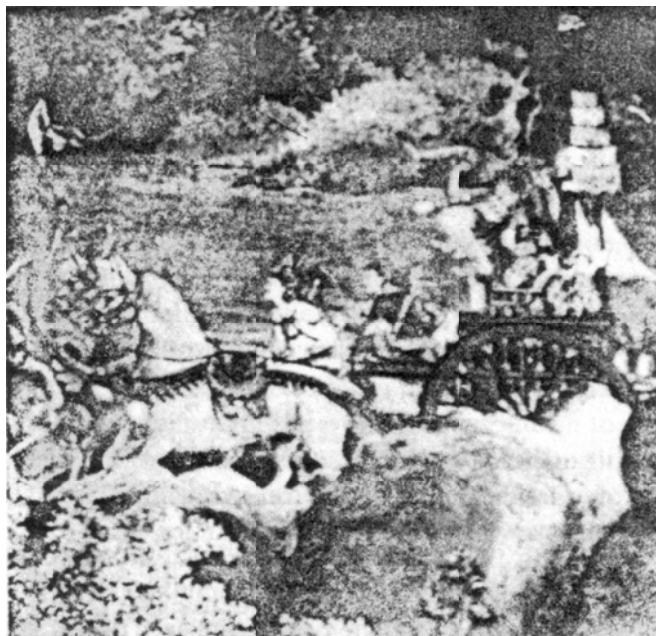
There is an English translation in a concise form *The Story of Abhai Mani* by Prem Chaya (Bangkok, 1952) and the poet’s life and work in French in “La vie du poet Sounthons - Bhou” by Camille Notton (*Rougerie*, France, 1959).



Khun Chang Khun Phan



Phra Samuthakhot



Ramakien



Phra Abhai Mani

From paintings by
Hem Vejakorn

Thai Literature

In 1914, the former Royal Institute, which is now the Fine Arts Department, appointed a committee of experts to select the best works of Thai literature from each of the various styles of composition in the Thai language. The selection of the committee was as follows:- *Phra Law, Phra Samuthakhot, Mahachat Kham Thet, Khun Chang Khun Phan, Inao, Hua Chai Nakrop, Sam Kok, Phra Rajaphithi Sipsong Duan*. These were selected presumably for the beauty of the language and their emotive value.

Phra Law is a romantic story dealing with the king of a small country in the north of Thailand. He was young and very handsome but married. The fame of his handsomeness sung by a minstrel reached the ears of two beautiful princesses, the only daughters of a neighbouring king whose father had been killed in war by Phra Law's father. Fascinated by Phra Law's wonderful handsomeness as portrayed by the minstrel, the two princesses fell madly in love with him and sent their two trusted maids to ask help from Pu Chao, the genie of the forest. By the magic of the forest genie, Phra Law was drawn irresistibly from his country and, further lured by a magic cock, entered the country of the two princesses with two of his faithful attendants and found himself in the royal garden. Before Phra Law left his country, he had heard through the minstrel, too, of the beauty of the two princesses and their love for him. But he could not ask for

their hands as the two countries were enemies. By the irresistible force of magic, he knowingly left his country. After a pathetic parting from his wife and mother, he found himself alone with his two faithful attendants in the enemy's country. It was dangerous if his enemies found out, and his reverie was a mixed emotion of love and peril. However, Phra Law and the two princesses met and made love clandestinely in the garden. The two faithful attendants also met their loves in the persons of the two trusted maids who were the main instruments bringing about this love affair. It was not long before this love meeting was known to the grandmother of the two princesses. With malice aforethought that her husband was killed by Phra Law's father, she saw an opportunity. She quickly sent a body of soldiers to the royal garden to kill the three men. Phra Law with his two faithful attendants and the two princesses with their two trusted maids withstood the attack with bravery to the end and were all killed. When the king, the father of the two princesses, knew of the tragic affair, he was very furious. The story ends after elaborate funeral ceremonies have been described and an alliance of the two conflicting kingdoms formed.

The Story of *Phra Law* as briefly told was no doubt based on a legend prevalent in the north of Thailand before it became the theme of the story. It is written in a mixed style of verse and poetical prose called in Thai *Lilit*. The expression is perfect in the language, though there are words and expressions which are now obsolete. Apart from its high literary value, much can be gleaned from it as to the beliefs, customs and manners of the Thai in the past. At the end of the work, in some of its stanzas, the author reveals himself as Maharaj or King, but unfortunately in a succeeding stanza, it says that the Yuvaraj or Crown Prince was the author. No date is given. These two stanzas might belong to the author or they might have belonged to other persons and were added afterwards in two different periods. Possibly someone added a stanza saying that the author of this work was the king, and then another added, "Yes, Maharaj was the royal author but he was Yuvaraj at the time when he wrote the story." Then

who was the real author ? Here opinions differ. Some say that it was King Boromatrailok (1463-1488 A.D.), but others say that it was King Narai (1647-1688 A.D.). *Phra Law* is one of the Thai classics and is popular with the literary class. It is used in higher schools as a text for literary studies. The Story of *Phra Law* is well known to the people through a dramatization some forty years ago. It has been staged as a musical play from time to time, and many of its songs are still sung by the people and heard over the radio. In 1936, Prem Chaya rendered the main story into English and named it *Magic Lotus*.

Phra Samuthakhot, or Samudraghoshha in Sanskrit, is written in one of the metrical patterns of the Sanskrit *Chanda*. Phra Samuthakhot was the name of the hero, and the tale was drawn from one of the 50 stories in the Pannas Jataka, a non - canonical Buddhist book prevalent in Thailand. Most of the stories are Thai folk tales. I will not attempt to tell the story of Samutha - khot, for it is on the same lines as the Stories to be found in the Indian *Katha Suritsugara* or Ocean of Stories. It deals with semi - divine beings, of *vidyadharis* and *yaksha* of Indian mythology. The work was written by a famous court poet of King Narai, but left unfinished. King Narai himself undertook the task in continuation, but it was again left unfinished. It was not until some time in the 19th century that the work was completed by a prince - patriarch who was himself a famous poet in this style of composition. Phra Samuthakhot is heavy in style and intricate in its construction, full of Sanskrit and pedantic words not easily intelligible even to the Thai intelligent class. It is more artificial than natural. It survives only as a classic of its class, and for its beautiful rhythmic Sounds of the many patterns taken from the India *chhanda* metres. It is concerned more with the ingenuity of diction, appealing more to the head than to the heart.

Mahachat Kham Thet (*Mahachat* or *Mahajat* in Pali and Sanskrit) is the story of the Lord Buddha in his last birth but one on earth before He attained his Buddhahood. This birth is called Wessantara Jataka and its story is very popular throughout the country. There are many versions in Thai and

they are written in many styles of composition. The one as selected by the committee of experts is the style *Kham Thet* or language used in preaching. It is divided into 13 cantos and is therefore somewhat bulky in size. Many Thai poets at different times composed either one or more cantos of *Mahachat*. Only the best of each canto are selected and formed into one whole story. The style of composition is that of an elaborate prose - poem full of beautiful and emotive words. Love, pathos, humour and descriptive scenes are to be found in the story, hence it gives scope for poets to express themselves. It is a story which appeals to most Thai, and it is one of the books that every youth does not miss in school. The country folk know the story, for there is a traditional festival in connection with the preaching of it in the preaching hall of monasteries throughout the country. The story also provided popular themes for Thai painting. G.E. Gerini has given an outline of the *Mahachat* and its descriptive ceremony of the preaching festival in his book *A Retrospective View And Account of The Origin Thet Mahachat*", Bangkok, 1902.

Khun Chang Khun Phan, a well - known and popular work, is the love - story of two men, Khun Chang and Khun Phaen, and Wan Thong, a woman. They lived in the same town and were playmates in their younger days. Khun Chang was bald - headed but rich. He was married and lived the life of a country gentleman with a happy - go - lucky air. Not long after his wife's death, he set his eye upon Wan Thong, his former playmate who had now become a beautiful damsel. But despite his wealth Wan Thong did not love him because of his baldness and ungallantry which were distasteful to her. She loved Khun Phan, the other playmate of former days. He had a gallant bearing, was a master of magical arts in love and in warfare, but he was a poor man. He left the town of his boyhood days with his mother, but came back as a young man, when he again met Wan Thong. The two did not recognize each other until they became lovers. In a romantic atmosphere, the two were subsequently married, to the distress of Khun Chang. Some time later, an insurrection broke out, Khun Phan was sent by the king to suppress it. He

parted from his young wife in a passionate and painful manner and left her with his mother - in - law. He came back successful and the king bestowed a title upon him. He brought with him another wife, but found on arrival that his house had been pulled down and another built instead. Much against her will, Wan Thong was in a few days going to be married to Khun Chang because of a rumour that Khun Phan had died in the campaign. This was a ruse brought up by Khun Chang. There was a jealous quarrel between Wan Thong and Khun Phan's second wife. Khun Phan could not stop the quarrel and was angry with Wan Thong, so he left the place. A day later Khun Chang married Wan Thong despite her hard protest that she was still the wife of Khun Phan. Next day Khun Phan appeared on the scene and demanded back his wife. There were difficulties but in the end Khun Phan relinquished his claim and withdrew. Khun Chang was a good husband. Wan Thong loved him as such, but in her heart she still admired Khun Phan. The plot thickened through the adventures of these three characters until Wan Thong, in the prime of life, was punished for her inconstancy in love, for she could not decide for one or the other when questioned by the king. The story does not end here, but the climax ends with the death of Wan Thong.

The Story of *Khun Chang Khun Phan* is composed in a style which is meant for recitation, with two pairs of pseudo - castanets made of hard wood for keeping time. The story itself is in the main presumably taken from real life. The king in the Story was one of the Thai kings during the later Ayudhyan period some two centuries ago, and Khun Phan might have been one of his able soldiers. Through poets, the real story has from time to time been elaborated until it has now become a lengthy romance. Hence there have been many versions of different episodes in the story. These were collected and re - edited by the Royal Institute in its present form. King Rama II and Sunthorn Bhu, two of the foremost Thai poets, composed many of the episodes. The composition is written in the style of the everyday speech of the people, hence its popularity. The Story is full of love, pathos and at times humour, and there are mines of information on old

belief, social customs, habits and manners of the Thai, embedded throughout the story. The book, so far as I know, has been translated or is in process of being translated into the French language by a French resident here, and there is also an English translation by an American Professor from Yale University and another one by an English professor of the Chulalongkorn University. (A synopsis in English was published in *Standard*, Nos. 1 and 2, now out of print.)

Inao is the story from the well - known cycle tales of Panji, the famous Javanese hero and king before the Majapahit empire. Tradition says the story was told to two sister - princesses of later Ayudhyan period by their two maids of Malayan extraction. The story was first put into poem form by the two princesses in two versions, each with a different story but with the same hero. Only one of the stories of these two versions survived, and it was again put into book - form in a style meant for dramatic performances. The version composed by King Rama II is now known as Inao. It is beautiful in artistic expression and the language is refined. No student of Thai literature ought to miss it.

Hua Chai Nakrop is a modern play written by King Vajiravudh. The title means “The Soul of a Warrior”. King Vajiravudh himself was a pioneer in this style of composition. Apart from rendering and adapting a number of famous English and French plays into the Thai language, King Vajiravudh created and produced many original Thai plays, and all of them have been staged from time to time. His “The soul of a Warrior” is one of the best from the royal pen. It deals with an imaginary enemy invading the country, and the story comes to a happy ending through the conversion by the hero of his future father - in - law in zealously defending the district from falling into the hands of the enemy until help arrived.

Sam Kak is a Thai translation of the Chinese historical romance “San Kuo Chai Yeu I”. The merit of *Sam Kok* is not its literal translation of the original, but the adaptation of it to such an art, that the style of its prose is considered to be one of

the best in the Thai language, for it reads more like a prose poem than prose. The translator-author is the famous poet of the early Bangkok period, Chao Phya Phra Khlang (Hon).

Phra Rajapithi Sipsong Duan means the Royal Ceremonies during the twelve months of the year. It is a treatise on Thai state ceremonies which the people, with a few exceptions, do not fully know or see in their entirety. With his facile pen and erudite knowledge, King Chulalongkorn wrote his famous book. But he left it unfinished owing to his demise, although the work had already run into many hundred pages. The work is generally read and consulted by students for knowledge of the past dealing with one of the most important phases of Thai cultures. The style is clear and precise for it is addressed to the general reader.

I may add to the above list the following: *Phra Abhai Mani* and *Ramakien*.

Phra Abhai Mani is a romantic tale written by Sunthon Bhu,* the famous poet. It is an imaginative tale created of love, intrigues and adventures. An English summary of the Story appeared in the *Standard*, in 1948-1949.

Ramakien is the Thai Version of the Indian epic *Ramayana*. It is very interesting to note that it differs substantially from the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, but agrees, as far as I know, here and there, with the version of the *Ramayana* of the Tamil, the Kashmiri, the Bengali, the Malay and the Javanese. It is the longest Story in Thai and runs into many volumes. It was summarized in English by Swami Satyananda Puri some years ago, and a second edition was printed in Bangkok in 1949.

To sum up, the knowledge of most of these books is indispensible for one who desires at best to understand Thai literature, arts and cultures; for these are the great Thai books, both ancient and modern, and belonging to all classes.

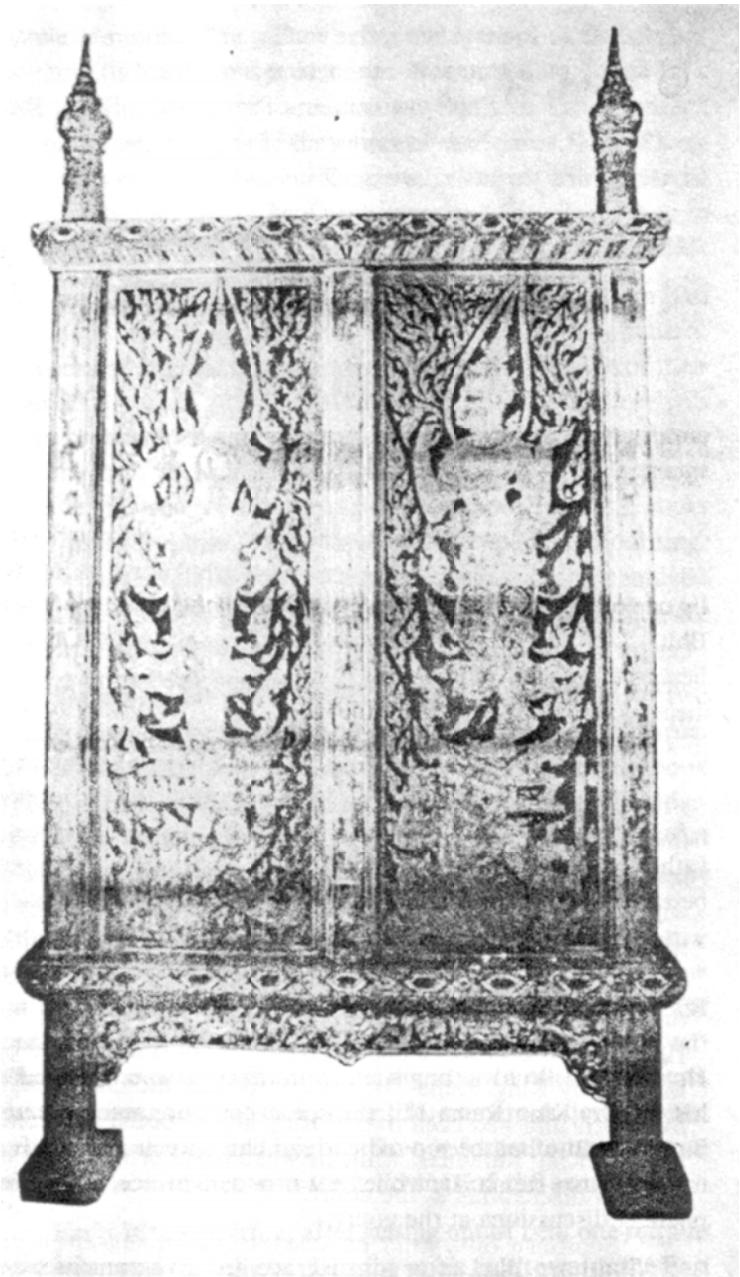
* See Life of Sunthorn Bhu in his work *Swasdi Raksa*.

With the exception of two, *Phra Samuthakhot* and *Sam Kok*, they ought to be translated into other languages as representative of the national genius of the Thai. Arrangements can be made in securing the best edition for translation purposes, for the Royal Institute, whose successor is the Fine Arts Department, has published most of the books. Methods of translation should be along the lines set forth in the Report of the Meeting of the International Comité of Experts on translation Problems, UNESCO House, 21-25 November, 1949.

The Standard, No. 165, February, 2493



Thai manuskripts written on palm leaves in a bookcase



Traditional bookcase with gold and lacquer

Swasdi Raksa

Swasdi Raksa (Sanskrit : *Swasti Raksha*) means the safe - guarding of one's welfare. It is the name of a short poem written by one of the foremost Thai poets, popularly known as Sunthorn Bhu. Bhu is his personal name and Sunthorn is a part of his title bestowed on him by the King. Sunthorn (Sanskrit: *Sundara*) means melodious or eloquent; the word appeared as his pen-name in some of his works.

Sunthorn Bhu was born in 1786. As a young man, he was a favourite at the court of King Rama II (1809-1824), the august father of King Mongkut. King Rama II, himself a great poet, bestowed favour and kindness on Sunthorn Bhu, who was quick - witted in finding the right word in the right place in any poem when consulted by the royal master. Both the King and Sunthorn Bhu produced a great number of enduring literary works, enriching the best Thai emotive literature. After the death of King Rama II, Sunthorn Bhu was banished from the court and deprived of his title by King Rama III, the succeeding monarch, because Sunthorn Bhu had been overbearing in his Speech and conduct towards King Rama III, while he was a royal prince, over some poetical discussions at the court.

Sunthorn Bhu, after his disgrace, led a vagrant life, not daring to Show his face before the new King. He even for a time

became a monk. The yellow robe, the symbol of Buddhism, gave him the traditional protection. Not until King Rama III's death and King Mongkut's accession was Sunthom Bhu re - instated as a court poet, this time in the Service of the Second King of King Mongkut's reign. A Second King was in fact an heir - apparent but raised to the rank of king with more royal privileges than in the case of an ordinary heir - apparent. Sunthorn Bhu died in 1855.

The little poem *Swasdi Raksa* was written by Sunthorn Bhu in a kind of verse of eight syllables to a line with a rhyming pattern. By the use of internal rhymes in the pattern, and because of their melodious sound, Sunthorn Bhu has succeeded excellently in his art. His style of writing as appears in his various works shows a peculiarity of its own, and he speaks expressively in the language of the people which everyone can understand. Hence his works have become popular. Many have imitated his style of writing, But few have attained it to perfection. Sayings and expressions as gleaned from his many works are well - known; for they are frequently quoted in everyday speech.

Swasdi Raksa was meant as a didactic discourse for two royal princes of the highest rank whom he loved and admired. He had drawn the theme of this little poem from an old book written in high - sounding words difficult for a layman to understand; as he explains in the last lines of the poem. Much of what he wrote in this poem was superstitious lore which reflected the people's beliefs of that time.

Here is a free translation in prose of *Swasdi Raksa*:

"Sunthorn writes *the safeguarding of one's welfare* for the royal Princes according to the Sacred Texts. They are observances fit for persons of rank and dignity. In observing them, one will meet enduring luck, long life, numerous descendants, increased happiness and might. Do not forget to uphold your welfare in accordance with the teachings of the ancients.

Early in the morning, after getting out of bed, one refrains from anger and touchiness. Turning one's face towards the East and South, one pronounces thrice an incantation according to

the Buddhist formula over the water for washing the face. After washing one's face with the water, the first word or sentence to be uttered ought to be nice and good. It will increase and enhance one's noble dignity. For splendour, which upholds a man's characteristic properties, resides in one's face in the morning. During the day, the splendour resides in one's body. One is to take a bath and sprinkle one's breast with scented water. By observing this, one will be healthy and happy. During the evening, the splendour resides at both feet. One must wash one's feet. No woman's foot is allowed to be placed over one's own.

When partaking of food, if facing East, one will have power and long life. If facing South, one will be beloved by everyone. If facing West one will be happy and healthy, one's sufferings, if any, will be decreased, one will have honour and dignity. If facing North, one will meet with ill - luck; one's life span will be shortened year by year.

While sitting, one must not look downward nor spit. Such an act will spoil one's dignity. Facing the North on such occasion is good and keeps one immune from evil spirits and the black arts. Then wash one's face. It will become bright and clear. Before going out, first take a bath and sprinkle one's face and body with scented water. Victory will be with one.

One must not allow one's wife to sleep upon one's arm (as a pillow for her head), and always wash oneself after sleeping. Fortune will smile, driving away mishaps. Washing one's hair on Saturday frees one from calamity. Paring one's nails on Monday and Wednesday prevents all accursed things coming into contact .

When going to war, the garments to be donned each day during the seven days of the week are to be of seven colours:

Sunday,	Red is auspicious
Monday,	Light yellow is to have a long life
Tuesday,	Purple is lucky
Wednesday,	Yellow - red or glittering multi - coloured
Thursday,	Yellow - green

Friday,	Bluish - gray
Saturday,	Black is a terror to the enemy.

The colour of war steeds ought to be also identical with that of the day.

In taking a bath at a riverside or stream, one should face the direction of the running water. The voiding of nature is prohibited. Do not face against the running water for one may accidentally be the victim of the black arts. After a bath, always pay respect to Ganga, the Water Goddess.

The knowledge of magical arts is good, and incantations ought always to be recited every evening. They will become potent and effective against enemies and increase one's dignity and power. When a dog continues to bark and howl, do not say harsh words against it. For such a speech will spoil one's splendour and court calamity. No one will respect one's word. Do not spit while there is a wind. If the saliva falls on any animal, then the *mantra* or mystic spell will become impotent.

When meeting a monk and paying no customary respect due to him, one's dignity will be weakened. Do not abuse the sun, wind or rain. Do not hasten the day to come to an end. Pay respect every daybreak and dusk to the sun and the moon. When getting in to bed do not fail to make obeisance on the pillow (with one's hands in salutation) to one's parents and preceptors, extolling their graces and virtues.

If, when wearing a *phanung* or loin - cloth after twisting its two ends together in front, one end is tucked finally on the right side, one will be free from harm of the teeth and claws of crocodiles and other ferocious animals. Do not pass under a bridge across a creek or canal, a trellis supporting climbing plants, a wooden prop of a house, or a fence of an animal enclosure. Whoever passes under such things will lose his splendour and dignity and his *mantra* and magical incantations will become impotent, defeating their own ends.

When seeing a corpse while going out, do not make a remark. It is very unlucky to do so. One is to wash one's face as a counter act. Do not sleep with one's charms and amulets. They will be impaired of their magical properties. Do not step over weapons. Do not lie on the left side of a woman, for harm will come to you. On New Year's Day, *Sat Day* (Mid-Year Feast), a day when there is an eclipse either of the sun or the moon, the lenten full moon day, and one's own birthday, sexual intercourse is prohibited. For one's age will be shortened. To sleep with a woman during her menstruation, if one does not die, one will lose one's eyesight and have a boil full of pus. On one's birthday, do not kill any animal. One's life will be shortened and one will lose one's glory and dignity. One will also suffer from sickness and pain.

While sleeping, if one's inspiration and expiration flow easily in and out of both nostrils, do not put one's left foot over the right one. If the air flows freely in the right nostril only, the right foot must be placed on the left one. It is very auspicious to observe the rule. While walking, sleeping or sitting, if a crashing or creaking sound is heard, it is prohibited to make a remark. The noise may be produced by magical art or evil spirits which can harm one if one makes a remark.

Listen attentively, Royal Princes, to such observances, which are called *Swasdi Raksa*. It is meant for the Princes for their auspicious welfare and to prevent harm. The old wording in *Chanda* verse was difficult to understand, hence I turn and simplify it into popular verse in order to make it more clearly understood. It is an act of recompense to the royal favour and kindness. May the Princes increase in their high dignity, success and prosperity. If there are any mistakes variable to that of the ancient lore, I crave kind indulgence."

Some of the recommendations in the poem are still observed as a rule of life by conservative people; such rules, for instance, as to wash one's face after rising from bed in the morning, though veiled in superstition, is indisputably good. To sleep on the left hand side of a woman is unlucky. It was a sound advice in the old days.

Your right hand would be free for any emergency, not enfeebled by being too long under a bodily pressure. The right hand could handle a weapon readily in case of a sudden danger. It was a rule in the past for a man to have his weapon ready near hand while sleeping. Every man in the old days must keep himself against danger, for there were no police. Most of the advices in the poem are old - time superstitions which are world - wide and may be compared to the superstitions of other nations.

That the garment to be worn when going to war must be of a colour peculiar to the day of the week is in connection with the seven planets which, in astrological belief, influence a person's life. These seven planets have their own particular colour identical to the colour of each day of the week. In the old days, when the King went to war, he donned a jacket, as an under-shirt, of the particular colour of the day. The jacket had mystic drawings as charms. These royal war jackets, though not used nowadays, are still in existence. Commoners also had their own coloured war jacket with mystic charms. Some pugilists, even today, don such jackets of their own when in the ring. Some people, particularly of the lower class, have mystic drawings tattooed on their breasts and backs, thus relieving them of having to don mystic jackets. In the last two decades, people generally wore coloured *phanung* as nether garments. The *phanung* was usually of the colour peculiar to the seven days of the week. One could tell at a glance from the *phanung* what day it was. A man usually chooses his favourite colour in relation to the colour of the day of his birth. In fact, everything pertained to colours, for one's inclination was to select the colour of one's birthday or the colour of the day; not that one was superstitious about the colour, but one observed it merely as a tradition. The custom is now weakened, but many people still observe it when they can.

To a person with unprejudiced mind and generous thought, the poem, though it deals with superstitions, is of much interest. For superstition is fundamentally a primitive belief of mankind as accumulated and developed through the ages.

Social behaviour is the product, though sometimes changed in forms and interpretations, of the race. To understand man in his thinking and behaviour, look into his deeply hidden past. “Our progress is but the surface turbulent of a sea which in its depths is change - less and still.... What is, has been and will be. Only fashions change.” (Durants’s *Mansions of Philosophy*).

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The Nature and Development of the Thai Language

1. Word and Sentence

The Thai language as spoken by the people of Thailand is, in its original structure, to a certain extent comparable with Chinese. Hence the two languages, i.e. the Thai and the Chinese, are philologically grouped together into the same family of languages. There are in both of these languages a number of similar words running to many hundreds. No doubt these words are in most cases due to cultural borrowings after long and continual contact of the two peoples historically in the old days both in peace and war. Nevertheless, there are certain classes of words which apparently might have come from a common source in remote times.

The Word. Fundamentally the Thai language is mono-syllabic in its formation of words. It is a characteristic to be found also in Chinese and, more or less, in other language groups of South - East Asia. Due to the limited number of combinations of sounds which the consonants admit, there arises naturally a multitude of words with the same sound but with a difference meaning (= *homonyms*). With such a phenomenon the Thai language has availed itself of the used tones as a primary feature of the language to differentiate meaning in homonymous words. Each word is complete in itself and admits no modifications as in the inflectional languages with their differentes of case, gender,

number, etc. There is no hard and fast rule that makes Thai words belong to a particular part of speech. Any word may become a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb, etc., simply through the position of the word in the sentence. Each word stands distinctly and independently, and concedes no joining of sounds or assimilations between words. There are five tones in the standard Thai language, but in actual speaking there may be six or even seven tones varying in certain dialectical areas.

Even though differentiation of words by tones has been introduced into the system, there is still a considerable number of homonymous words. Unless the context of a phrase or a sentence shows otherwise, the meaning of the word may still be ambiguous. In such instances, some other word or words have to be introduced to clarify the meaning. There are three devices for doing this, viz.

1. By prefixing a meaningful word to indicate the class of objects to which the word belongs.

For example: “Yang” (ย่าง) may mean *a bird* such as a heron, egret or bittern; *a tree* such as a *dipterocarpeaeii*, rubber tree; an *oily and sticky substance* such as resin, gum, latex, or wood oil. If the word “nok” (นก) meaning *bird* is prefixed it becomes “nok yang” (นกย่าง) which means either a heron, an egret or a *bittern*. If the word “ton” (ตัน) meaning *a bole* or a *trunk of a tree* is prefixed to the word “yang” in “ton yang” (ตัน ย่าง) it means a species of trees (*Dipterocarpus alatus*).

We may call such prefixed words *Classifiers*.

2. By juxtaposing two meaningful words of the same or allied meaning to clarify a certain word.

For example: “Kha fan” (ฆ่าฟัน) means *to kill*. The word “kha” has a number of meanings, and one of them is *to kill*. If the word is juxtaposed together with the word “fan” meaning *to slash with a weapon*, the word cannot mean otherwise than to kill only. The word “fan”, as juxtaposed, serves to clarify the meaning of the word “kha”. Some juxtaposed words have

sometimes lost their individual independent meanings in current use and have become merely a juxtaposing word only.

Sometimes two words of the same or allied meaning are juxtaposed to form a new meaning of an allied kind.

For example: “Ban müang” (บ้านเมือง) means *country, nation* (ban = *village*, müang = *city or town*).

Sometimes four words are joined together to form a phrase but with a single meaning.

For example: “Khao yak mak phaeng” (ข้าวยากมากแพง) means *famine* (khao = *rice*, yak = *scarce*, mak = *fruit*, phaeng = *dear*).

In forming such words or phrases there is an unconscious selection of sounds. A word with a prominent or more musical sound is selected always as a second of the two words. In the joining of four words in the form of a phrase as cited above the two words between the first and last word are mostly rhymed. The juxtaposed words as described may be called *Synonymous Compounds*.

3. By joining into a compound a simple verb to which is added the Object logically inherent in it.

For example: “ying pün” (ยิงปืน) literally “fire gun” = to shoot, “kin toh” (กินໂຄ ”) literally “eat (on) table” = *to dine on a table*.

“Non sua” (นอนเสื่อ) literally “sleep (on a) mat”. One is apt to recognize such compound words as one factor that makes pidgin English. Karlgen in his book “Sound and Symbols in Chinese” gives such compound words in Chinese also. He call them *Elucidative Compounds*.

Thai, like Chinese and other languages of South East Asia, uses enumerative words when using numbers with nouns. There are a large number of this category of words for each appropriate noun. If in some nouns no numeral descriptive noun can be appropriately used, or one cannot remember if there is such an appropriate one, the noun is repeated after the number.

For example: “Khon si khon” (คนสีคน) i.e. “man, four men”. “Ma sam ma” (ม้าสามม้า) i.e. “horse, three horses”

In this instance the appropriate numeral descriptive word is “tua” (ตัว) which will be “Ma sam tua” (ม้าสามตัว) i.e. “horse three bodies”, but the former phrase can be tolerated as Thai also.

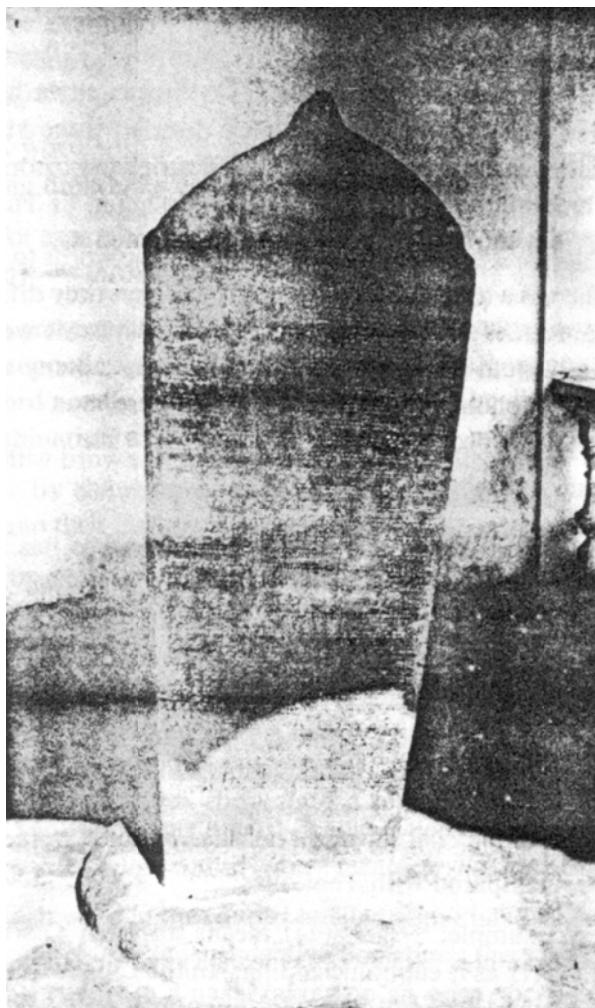
There is a tendency for Thai monosyllabic words to become dis - syllabic ones similar to those of Malay, but they differ fundamentally from Malay in that the Thai dis - syllabic words are mostly of euphonic couplets only. There are many ways of creating such words. A few examples may suffice.

1. By variation of the vocalic sound in a word with vowels adjoining in articulation sequence.

For example: “Non” (นอน) meaning *sleep* has “naen” (แน恩) or “noen” (โน恩) as its couplet. The second word or syllable has no recognized meaning in the language; an omission of it would leave the meaning intact. There are a large number of this kind of dissyllabic words unconsciously uttered by speakers mostly in colloquial use. These euphonic words or endings are sometimes to be found as actual words in certain dialects and also in some of the Thai languages outside Thailand.



Ram Khamhaeng's stone inscription



An inscription from Wat Chiengmun

In fact some of these euphonic words remind us equally of certain Chinese words as compared with Thai ones.

For example: “Ngo” (ນົງ) means stupid in Thai and has “ngau” (ແກ້ວ) as its euphonic ending. In the Chinese Cantonese dialect a stupid or a dull fellow is “ngau”. Among the Chinese dialects there is the same tendency to vowel mutation. Tooth in Cantonese dialect is “nga”, but becomes “nga” in Swatow dialect. “Nga” is identical with the Thai “nga” (ນາ) meaning tusk, ivory.

2. By varying the vowel of a word with its corresponding but not necessarily adjoining vowel sound. Such vowel sounds are “aw-ae” (ອອ - ແອ), o - e (ຫອ - ເອ), u - i (ອູ - ເີ).

For example: “Ngawn-ngan” (ນົກນັກນັກ) = *infirm, un-stable*; “tong-teng” (ຖອງຕອງ) = *to sway to and from in a dangling position*; “Chu - Chi” (ຈຸຈີ) = *peevish, fretful*.

A word with a vowel - diphthong may also have a corresponding diphthong as its euphonic ending.

For example: “Yua-yia” (ຍູ້າຍື້າຍ) = *swarming*; “mau-mai” (ມາມາຍ) = *intoxicated*.

A great number of this class of euphonic endings are mostly onomatopoetic words, and with a few exceptions, neither the first word nor its second word or ending can be divorced from its combination without losing its particular meaning.

3. By changing words ending in unexplosive consonants *k*, *t*, *p* into their corresponding nasal endings *ng*, *n*, *m* respectively. For example: “Saek-saeng” (ແສກແຊັງ) = *intervene, interfere*, “Saek” alone means *insert, squeeze in*, while “saeng” means *interpose, insert*.

“Thot-thon” (ຕອດຄອນ) = *remove*. “Thot” means *take off* as a garment, *dismiss, discharge* while “thon” means *pull out, root out*.

“Yap-yam” (ຍາບຍາມ) = *contemptuous, insult*. “Yap” means *crude, rough* while “yam” means *revile, look down on*.

Each word in the couplet as cited above has a slight shade of meaning if used independently. Sometimes there is a change, the word ending in a nasal taking on an open vocalic ending.

For example: “thon-thoi” (ຕອນຖອຍ). Thoi = *to with - draw*. Thus we have a set of three different words “thot, thon, thoi” (ຕອດ, ຕອນ, ຕອຍ) with a slight difference of sound and meaning to each of the words in the set.

To sum up there are many types of these dissyllabic words. The above three types are quoted as certain examples only, and there are numerous others mostly in colloquial use. There is no difficulty in commanding such dissyllabic words, for they will come unconsciously to the speakers. Many of these words have become everyday speech of the people. Foreigners who can speak Thai and command such words in their daily speech are admired by the native speakers of the language as people who speak Thai like a Thai.

As the Thai language has no method of forming new words by means of additions to a word like the inflectional languages with their affixes and case endings, the various processes described above are evidently devices by which the Thai have formed derivatives and new words.

The Sentence. The arrangement of words in a sentence in the Thai language is fundamentally “Subject-action-object,” with qualifying words, adjectives and adverbs, which, as in most of the languages of South - East Asia, follow each appropriate word. There is no hard and fast rule relating to “parts of speech” in the actual sense of the word. A word may be noun, adjective, verb, or adverb only in relation to other words in a phrase or a sentence. Hence the important thing in the Thai language is the Word Order. “Grammatical words”, such as articles, prepositions, conjunctions, etc. which serve as a help to clarify the “real words”, i.e. nouns, verbs, etc. in a sentence, are not necessary if the context in the sentence is logically clear.

For example: If we want to say “a father and a son sit on chairs”, this will be in Thai “father Child sit chair” (พ่อลูนงเก้อ).

As many words of the same part of speech may be strung together as desired, provided each word is in its logical position or sequence of time in the case of verbs.

For example: If we want to say “a big black dog chases a small white cat and bites it”, in Thai this will be “dog black body big run chase bite cat white body small” (หมาคำตัวโคลิ่ง ไลกัดแมวขาวตัวเล็ก).

Frequently two or more words are combined to express one notion, when the second and subsequent members stand in adjectival relationship to the first.

For example: “Fai fa” (ไฟฟ้า) means literally “fire-sky” (i.e. sky-fire) = electricity. “Mai kheet fai” (ไม้เช็ดไฟ) means literally *stick - strike - fire* = a match or matches.

As already stated the Thai words admit no modifications respecting differentes of case, number and gender. For example: “Khon ma ha khao” (คนมาหาเขา) may mean a *man* (or men, woman, women) *comes* (or come, coming, came, has come, etc,) *to see him* (or he, she, it, they, them). If the meaning is not clear in the mind of the hearer then “grammatical words”, or “help words” as the Chinese call them, are introduced

in to the sentence.

For example: “Khan song khon cha ma ha khao” (คนสองคน จะมาหาเขา) literally means *man two men will come see him*.

The word “Khon” in this case is men, and the word “khao” is him or them etc.

It will be seen that Thai “words are symbols of concept *per se*, being wholly devoid of inflectional apparatus to express and define their relations with other words in the sentence. There are, therefore, free to function in any syntactical relation not incompatible with their essential meaning”. (*Some Features of the Siamese Speech and Writing* by Comelius B. Bradley, J.R.A.S. 1923, Century Supplement .)

Student of the Chinese language will readily recognize a close similarity in the construction of words and sentences between Chinese and Thai. Perhaps due to a long standing intercourse between the Thai and the Chinese, the two languages, if not akin, have acquired a tendency to affinity in character.

The Thai language has one of the simplest grammars of all languages as far as inflections are concerned. It is not tied by rules and conventions. But in the course of its historical and cultural development, the Thai language has suffered at the hands of Thai grammarians, through exotic rules and restrictions based on English, Sanskrit or Pali grammar.

2. The Development

Based upon somewhat scanty data of certain basic words and the linguistic formations of the languages of the many Thai minority groups to be found scattered here and there in the present day in Southern China and its adjacent lands, we may presume that the language of the Thai of Thailand is still similar in its fundamental aspects to that of the ancient languages of their ancestors.

In the course of history many groups of Thai speaking People, who also called themselves Thai (*or its unaspirated form "Tai"*) migrated into the Indo-Chinese Peninsula from their old home in Southern China in different groups and in different directions and periods of time. We do not know for certain when and how the earlier migrations of these groups of people took place, but let us say with diffidence that these migrations happened some time not less than ten centuries ago. One group of this people became the Shans in Upper Burma, another became the Thai of Thailand, another became the Laos of the Lao Kingdom, not to speak of other minority groups with many local names to be found here and there in the Northern parts of the Indo - Chinese Peninsula.

Confining ourselves to one group in particular, the Thai of Thailand, we can say that they have mixed freely with the People of the Mon - Khmer linguistic group, their fore - runners, both ethnically and culturally. By "Mon-Khmer" linguistic group here I mean the Mons and the Khmers in particular. Through the close contact of the Thai with these peoples, firstly with the Mon - speaking race, akin perhaps to the Mons of Lower Burma, and secondly with the Khmers, the ancestors of the Cambodians, the Thai in Thailand have acquired a blending, predominantly in Central Thailand, making certain racial and cultural traits peculiarly their own. They were known thereafter and until recently as the Siamese. The Thai language of the Siamese had by this time seen a substantial change in vocabulary, by far the greatest influence being that of the Mon-Khmer languages.

Mon - Khmer languages in certain aspects are similar to Thai. Their basic words are largely monosyllabic and isolating in character with respect to word order, but unlike the Thai, they have prefixes and infixes to form their derivative words, while Thai had none in its original language system. The Mon - Khmer languages also admit certain initial consonantal clusters of two or more nonsyllabic sounds to many of their words. Thai, on the other hand, apparently lacks such a feature in words as occurring in the various dialects, with the exception of the Siamese and the Ahom of Assam. Some scholars have maintained that old Thai had such features too, but lost them at a later date. Anyhow, through contact with the Mon - Khmer, the Siamese language, especially in Central Thailand, has absorbed, to a great extent, these two features of the Mon - Khmer, i.e. the use of prefix and infix and initial consonantal clusters in words.

Central Thailand roughly in the 5th to the 13th century A.D. was within the political orbit of the Mons and the Khmers successively. The Mons at that time were a comparatively civilized race in the Indo - Chinese Peninsula. They had received their civilization from India and had adopted Buddhism ; while the Khmers; another civilized race of that period, were a highly hinduized people. Consequently, the Mons and the Khmers had in their language a considerable number of words derived from the Pali and Sanskrit languages. As the Mon and Khmer languages are largely monosyllabic, loan words from Pali and Sanskrit are usually clipped and reduced, if possible, to minimum monosyllabic form, and sounds are changed to meet the phonetic system peculiar to the language.

Although in time the Siamese became the paramount race in Central Thailand in succession to the Khmers, it is reasonable to suppose that the bulk of the population might still have been predominantly Mons and Khmers. These were gradually and naturally absorbed by the Thai, and as an important ingredient, became part and parcel of the race known as the Siamese. The Thai language had by now changed much through the influence of the Mon - Khmer. More and more Mon and Khmer words were adopted into the Thai language.

Moreover, words of Sanskrit and Pali origin were introduced into the Siamese language, at first through the medium of the Mon and the Khmer languages, and later through direct borrowing from India and Ceylon. Sanskrit and Pali are at the opposite pole from the Thai languages. The former are grammatically inflectional languages where words are bound by cases and other endings, while the latter is an analytic one with words that are independent and free in their grammatical form. Words from Sanskrit and Pali borrowed by Thai do not, therefore, strictly adhere to the rules of inflections; such words become isolating when naturalized as Thai, and words of Sanskrit and Pali with many syllables are clipped and reduced, if possible, in the same manner as in the Mon and Khmer languages. Likewise Sanskrit and Pali Sounds are changed naturally to conform with the Thai phonetic system.

Going back to the Mon and Khmer languages, we can say that the Thai, after their consolidation as a paramount race in Thailand, had gradually absorbed in their Thai languages a fairly large number of Mon and Khmer words as revealed in their current use both in speaking and in Thai literature. In fact, the Thai had even adopted the device of making derivatives from their indigenous words with prefixes and infixes of the Mon - Khmer language. In a later period of history the situation was comparatively in reverse. Instead of the Thai borrowing words from the Mon - Khmer language, in particular the Khmer, the latter drew on a fairly large number of Thai words as part of their vocabulary. Paradoxically, many Thai words of Khmer origin were borrowed back by the Khmer unconsciously in new phonetic forms peculiar to the Thai pronunciation. The mutual borrowings of both languages are clear and discrete for the borrowed words were fully naturalized in both of the two languages. At the present day intelligent Thai, when reading Khmer writing in Thai transliteration, will be able to identify easily many words as identical with his own; not to speak also of works drawn from Sanskrit and Pali from which the two languages have borrowed abundantly. It is in speaking only that the two languages are mutually unintelligible because of different phonetic systems.

In adopting words of exotic origin into the Thai language, the Thai have made use of their old device of forming “synony-mous couplets”, probably to translate their newly adopted foreign words by juxtaposing them with the Thai indigenous ones which had similar meanings.

For instance: “Ton-doem” (-tondeem) in Thai means origin. “Ton” is a Thai indigenous word meaning *hole, base*; while “doem” is Khmer in origin meaning *beginning or first cause*. “Thiang - trong” (เที่ยงตรง) means *upright, just*, “Thiang” is a Thai word meaning *correct, sure*; while “trong” is a Khmer word meaning *straight*. There are a large number of Thai words of this type. The same was done, also, to words of Indian origin.

For instance: “Sap - sin” (ทรัพย์สิน) means *asset*. “Sap” in “dravya” is Sanskrit meaning *wealth*, while “sin” is Thai meaning money. (Compare Chinese “t’sin” in Cantonese dialect-which means money.) “Rup - rang” (รูปร่าง) means *feature, shape, form*. “Rup” is “rupa” in its Sanskrit and Pali form, while “rang” is Thai meaning *structural form*.

One feature of the Mon - Khmer language, as already mentioned, is the use of the prefixes and infixes. An infix is an insertion of a sound into a radical or basic word to form a variation of meaning. Such a feature the Thai language did not originally have. Through the intimate contact of the Thai with the Khmer in the past, a large number of such words are to be found in the Thai language.

In Thai words taken from Khmer, for example: the word “truat” (ตรวจ) means *examine, inspect*; With a sound “am” (อា) infix into it, it becomes “tamruat” (คำตรวจ) and means *police, guard*. “Phak” (พัก) means *rest*. With “n” as an infix it becomes “phnak” (พนัก) meaning a *support* as for instance of a chair. With “am” as an infix it becomes “phamnak” (phanak) meaning *a support* (in time of distress or difficulty).

Sometimes the meaning of such Khmer infix words, when introduced into the Thai language, does not change from that

of the radical words. For example: “Charoen” (เจริญ) means *increase, prosper*, with “am” as an infix it becomes “chamroen” (จำเริญ) which has the same meaning as “charoen” in Thai, while in Khmer “charoen” is a causative, *to make an increase, or cause to prosper*.

In certain cases the Thai used such Khmer infixes to form their own words. For example: “Siang” (เสียง) in Thai means *noise, sound*. With an infix “amn” it becomes “Samniang” (ສາເໝີຍງ) which means *voice, sound, timbre*, (compare the Chinese word, pronounced as “seng” in the Cantonese dialect, which means, *Sound, voice, noise, speech*).

In the Thai language there is a conventionalized set of words called “rachasap” (ราชศัพท) or court language. Certain basic words such as *eat, walk, sit, sleep, head, hands, hair, feet, etc.*, have special words appropriate to the king and princes. These words are in the main Khmer, Sanskrit and Pali in origin. The rest, a fair number, are Thai words which have been coined so as to differentiate them from the ordinary words. Khmer words belonging to the Thai Court language are interesting ones, for they are common words of the Khmer language used currently. Perhaps in the old days when the Thai became a ruling race in Central Thailand displacing the Khmers, the Thai ruling class had probably been enculturised to a certain extent by Khmer culture.

Hence certain Khmer words were elevated in meaning through the medium of the literature of that period, which mostly dealt with divine beings, kings and princes.

We now come to another language, the Malayo - Javanese, which played a not unimportant part in the development of words in the Thai language. Through the medium of this language, the Thai have received a fairly large number of foreign words of Semitic origin, namely, Arabic and Persian Arabic of later periods, and also of Portuguese origin.

Malayo - Javanese language groups, with the exception of their dis-syllabic words and the use of affixes, i.e. prefixes, infixes and suffixes, agree substantially with Thai and most other language groups in South - East Asia. We do not know how much their people, particularly the Malays, have mixed in blood and language with the people on the mainland of South - East Asia in ancient days, in particular, near the seacoast. In fact some scholars think that the Thai language bears a striking resemblance to Malayo-Javanese or Indonesian. They further state that there is an affinity existing between these two language groups. This may well be true to a certain extent, if it is true at all, where the two races have mixed to a considerable degree.

By comparing in a haphazard manner, there emerge a large number of Malay words in Thai common to other language groups of Thailand's neighbours. No doubt most of these words are due to cultural borrowings. In the 18th century A.D. the well - known Javanese Panji Cycle Tales were introduced into the Thai language and became one of the popular romances in Thai literature (*see Thai Literature in Relation to the Diffusion of Her Cultures* No. 9 in this series). Through the introduction of these stories a fairly large number of Javanese words are to be found in the Thai language which are understood comparatively well by the Thai people, though most of such words are of a literary kind.

Like the Indonesian language group, the Thai language in a later period had adopted Chinese words, relating to names of certain articles and of food peculiar to the Chinese race, and a number of words in connection with trade and commerce.

Most of these words are used colloquially, but many of them have also been naturalized fully into the Thai languages. Chinese words in Thai are of the Tie - Chiu or Swatow dialect while in Malay they are of the Fukianese one. This is due to whichever speakers of either of these dialects are predominant in the land.

Last of all, and no less important in the development of the Thai language, is English. Though there are comparatively few English words to be found in Thai, the influence of expression in Thai both in speaking and writing among younger generations along the lines of English or American form of sentence and idiom is seen more and more obviously through the medium of television;radio and translation.

3. The Thai Alphabet

The Thai alphabet is indirectly of Indian origin. In 1283 A.D., the great King Ram Khamhaeng of the Thai of the Sukhothai Dynasty of Thailand (*see Introducing Cultural Thailand in Outline*, No. 1 of this series), instituted the present Thai alphabet. Though modelled on the Indian one through the medium of the old Khmer characters, the Thai alphabet differs from the Indian and the Khmer source in two essential points.

In Indian and Khmer writing when two or more consonants come in contact as an initial or an ending of a word or a syllable, they coalesce into one whole when written : a certain consonant (*or consonants*) becomes abbreviated in form when juxtaposed - with the main one. Suppose the English word “grasp” is to be written in the Indian or Khmer style, the initial *gr* of the word *grasp* and also of *sp* of its ending will have to be coalesced as one whole by abbreviating the *r* and the *s* and blending them with their respective *g* and *p*. King Ram Khamhaeng split them each into independent characters, like the Roman alphabet, in the same manner as one writes the English word “grasp” above.

The vowel signs of Indian and the Khmer form a different set to that of the consonants. They are written, as if as an after - thought, either before, after, above or below the consonants. It is so in present Thai writing. But in Ram Khamhaeng's scheme of writing it was otherwise. It is not out of place here to quote Dr. Cornelius B. Bradley, an American philologist, who says in his article "The oldest known writing in Siamese, the inscription of Phra Ram Khamhaeng of Sukhodaya" (*The Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. VI, part 1, p. 11, Bangkok 1909), thus :

"But the most original as well as the most interesting feature of his (*i.e. King Ram Khamhaeng's*) scheme of vowel-notation was his bringing of all the vowel signs into the written line along with the consonants, and so practically into the alphabet itself. Inclusion of the vowels in the alphabet was a master stroke of the Greek genius, when once for all it adapted oriental letters to the needs of a new world of life and thought. It is that alone, for example, which has made possible for all Western tongues the immense advantage of a perfectly fixed order of words in vocabularies, and lists. The lack of such absolute word - order is a difficulty and hindrance to scholarship more or less distinctly felt throughout the Eastern world, and everywhere for the same reason : the vowels have no place in the alphabetical order. Prince Ram Khamhaeng, so far as we can learn, is the only man in all this interval who has come at all near to duplicating that old Grecian thought. But he did not carry his thought through to its logical conclusion. He did not give the vowel their place in the sequence of elements in the syllable, as he had given them in their place in the line. Siamese scholars, unlike the Greek, were conning oriental scriptures. They thus kept ever alive the old tradition, and obscured the new. Very few years passed before the vowels which had been brought into the line were back in their old stations in the field. Thus it is that for Siamese of today, type that can be conveniently cast and set and dictionaries where words may be easily and certainly found, seem as unattainable as ever."

In 1917 A.D. King Vajiravudh revived this vowel scheme of notation of King Ram Khamhaeng as an experiment, but found no success.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE THAI ALPHABETS

CONSONANTS

k	kb	km'	k'	kb'	z'	ch'	c'	ch'	y'	d'	t'	th'	n'	l'	th'	b'	p'	ph'	l'	ph'	m'	y'	r'	l'	w'	s'	h'	i'
1	ก	ກ	ກ	ກ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ
2	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ	ດ
3	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ
4	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ
5	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ
6	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ
7	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ
8	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ	ນ

1 King Ram Kamhaeng, 1283 A.D.

2 King Lu Thai, 1357 A.D. (Grandson of above)

3 Chiang Mai Area, 1518 A.D.

4 Lao script.

5 King Narai, 1660 A.D.

6 Compressed Thai Characters.

7 Thai Writing. Tamarind leaf shape.

8 Thai Writing. King Rama I (1782-1809)

VOWELS

NUMERICAL FIGURES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
1	ສ	ີ	ຶ	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ຼ	ົ	ົ
2	ັ	າ	ິ	ີ	ຶ	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ົ
3	ຳ	ິ	ີ	ຶ	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ົ	ົ
4	ິ	ີ	ຶ	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ
5	ີ	ຶ	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ
6	ຶ	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ
7	ື	ຸ	ູ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ
8	ູ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ	ົ

1 King Ram Kamhaeng, 1283 A.D.

2 King Lu Thai, 1357 A.D. (grandson of above)

3 Chiang-Mai Area, 1518 A.D.

4 Lao script.

5 King Narai, 1650 A.D.

6 Compressed Thai Characters.

7 Thai Writing Tamarindleaf shape.

8 Thai Writing King Rama I (1782-1809)

No doubt the old tradition of writing the vowel signs, like the original Indian and Khmer Source, is still strong.

With the exception of vowel notation as mentioned above, the writing of the Thai follows, fundamentally, King Ram Kham-haeng's writing up to the present day with certain modifications and additions due, of course, to the development of the writing.

As already mentioned, the Thai language is a tonal one where words of the same sound vary in meaning relevant to their tone. With the exception of the Thai of Thailand, all the written Thai words in different dialects, and also of the Shans and the Lao, have no written signs to make the different tones of a word which sometimes varies from dialect to dialect. The Thai word for the verb to come (မာ) or for horse (မာ) and dog (မာ) is written as "ma" but pronounced in a different pitch. One cannot tell which "ma" is intended in writing. Only the context in the surrounding words will give a clue to it. But in Ram Khamhaeng's writing it is otherwise. He invented two tonal signs to make the tone different in the word. In its development present Thai writing has four signs to mark the tones. Any person interested in the tonal System of the Thai language, can investigate the subject at some length by consulting the introduction to the *Thai - English Dictionary* by George B. McFarland, M.D. (Bangkok, 1941; 2nd edition, Stanford, 1944).

There are in the modern Thai or Siamese alphabet 44 consonants. Of these 16 of them are redundant, leaving in all 28 basic consonantal sounds. The redundant consonants are used chiefly in transliteration of Sanskrit and Pali words. In fact there are two consonants in this redundancy which are now obsolete. The arrangement of the letters of the alphabet follows the Sanskrit and Pali scheme, i.e. a division into six series related to the different places of contact in the production of consonantal sounds, and the language is written from left to right like English. Of the vowels there are 24 of them with 9 simple vowels and 12 diphthongs with corresponding relative long and short sounds. There are also 3 diphthongs, making in all 45 vowels both long and short.

The final consonants of words or syllables are *h*, *t*, *p* or their corresponding nasal consonants and the two semi - vowels *y* and *w*. Such endings have unexplosive sounds. Words of foreign origin, especially Sanskrit and Pali, if ending in consonants other than *h*, *t*, *p* are usually pronounced like the above three consonants nevertheless. The writing and reading of words in a sentence are also from left to right, and there are no spaces or intervals between words. To a practised eye this is no great difficulty to be surmounted.

By using the invention of Ring Ram Khamhaeng's alphabet with each independent Character like a Roman letter, the difficulty is alleviated to no less an extent in printing and typewriting. In 1892 Edwin McFarland, who was born in Thailand, the son of an American missionary, brought with him after his return from America, the first Thai typewriter, which he had succeeded in making. Owing to the array of the numerous characters of the Thai alphabet with its 24 consonants, 24 vowels and four tonal signs, he could not find any typewriter on the market that could accommodate all the Thai alphabet. At last he took a bold step by eliminating two Thai characters of the alphabet, i.e. ყ . ໝ , which were rarely used in current writing. "Incidentally, these two letters gradually ceased to be used at all and today there are few who know that they ever existed". (*McFarland of Siam* by Bertha Blount McFarland, Vintage Press, N.Y., 1958, p. 105)

(For bibliography of the Thai language see *Bibliography of material about Thailand in Western languages, section language and literature* p.p. 99-120, Chulalongkorn University. Bangkok, 1960.)

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The author

The Royal Institute, Bangkok
6th February, 1961

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Modern Thai Alphabets Written Script Elaborate Style

Written Script Running Style

న న న న న న న
ప ప ప ప ప ప ప
శ శ శ శ శ శ శ
ర ర ర ర ర ర ర
వ వ వ వ వ వ వ
య య య య య య య
ఇ ఇ ఇ ఇ ఇ ఇ ఇ
ఎ ఎ ఎ ఎ ఎ ఎ ఎ
ఒ ఒ ఒ ఒ ఒ ఒ ఒ
ఓ ఓ ఓ ఓ ఓ ఓ ఓ
ఔ ఔ ఔ ఔ ఔ ఔ ఔ

Printed Type Script

ກ ຂ ແ ດ ດ ນ ສ
ຈ ຈ ຜ ທ ປ ວ
ຝ ຝ ພ ຖ ຕ
ດ ຕ ດ ທ ບ ນ
ບ ປ ຜ ພ ພ ກ ມ
ຍ ວ ຕ ລ ກ ວ ຕ ພ ສ ອ ພ ວ

ອະ ອາ ອໍາ ອີ ອື ອີ ອີ ອຸ ອູ ເວະ ເວ
ແຂວ ແອ ໂອະ ໂອ ເເວະ ອອ ເເວວະ ເເວ
ເວີຍະ ເວີຍ ເວີອະ ເວີອ ອັວະ ອັວ ໄວ
ເວາ ອາວ ອຸຍ ໂອຍ ອອຍ ເວຍ ເວີຍ ອາຍ
ອິວ ເວິວ ເວາ ແຂວ ເວີຍວ ດ ດາ ກ ກາ

ຮ ແ ຕ ແ ແ ຕ ແ ຕ ແ ຕ ແ

King Rama VI's handwriting

ອັນດີ
ຮອນທີ່
ນິກ: ດົງລະບຽນ

ຕໍ່ຫຼັກສູງປົກເມສາດ ອາວ ນັກສາຫຼັກສູງສະຫະລຸງ
ຜົນຕັ້ງການໃນຫຼາຍໆ

ແກ່ອນສໜາຍເກົ່າເປື້ອມາດ
 ໄກນຄະເຄວນໄປນີ້,
 ເນື່ອກ່າຍໆ ດີ້ແລວໃຈລົງຊາວ
 ໄນທີ່ຫຼັກສູງກ່າວໆກ່າວໆໄວ້ຂົນໄວ້?
 ຂັ້ນໃຈ ສັງເພື່ອໄລ້ຈຳເປົດ
 ພົບປັກຕົກນີ້ລົງດີ່ຈົບໄວ້?
 ຮຸ່ມີ້ກໍ່ໄຟໄຟກ່າວໆໃຈ່ຈົບ
 ມອກກາກກົ່າລົມແລວໃໝ່ຖານກອດ;
 ຕະລະນຸກາກວັດຕົກລົງຈູ້
 ດັກງູກົ່າວ່າຄຸມປີ່: ດັກ
 ດູກກົດຫົ່ານີ້ ດັກວັນຫົ່າ,
 ກົດຕົກຫົ່ານີ້ປົ່ງຕົ່ນຫົ່າ:
 - ສັງເພື່ອສົ່ວພາວລາວກົດເຫດ:
 ທີ່ຕັ້ງການເຕີ້ມາລົງຈູ້ຫົ່າ
 ສົ່ງກ່າວໆຕົກເງົາຢືນໃຈ
 ກົງໃຈໄວ້ໄດ້ແພັກແລ້ວກົງກອດ.
 ອົກຕາກເຫຼື້ອ໌ເຫັນວ່າ ຕົ່ງ
 ມັກຕົບຄກກໍາເຕັກໄປຫົກກໍາສົກ
 ແລະ ປິຍາສົກ, ໃຫວ່າເກົ່າກົ່າທັກຄາດ
 ກົບປົ່ງພາຫລະດູບແລງໃຫ້ອົງນັກ: *
 * ຊົງລຸໄຟໃໝ່ນັ້ນເຫັນວ່າເຮັດວຽກນີ້ມີຫຼັງຈາກ ເນື່ອກ່າຍໆໄດ້ກົດກົງກອດ
 ໂດຍໃຈ; ທີ່ສັງເກົ່າກົ່າພລວມນີ້ແລ້ງ ສົ່ງຄົມຕົກຄາ, ໂດຍໃຈໄປ້ເກົ່າໄວ້ບຸນດີ.

A translation of Shakespeare's "As You Like It" in Thai rhyming poem by King Vajiravudh, Rama VI (A.D. 1880 - 1925) of Thai - land. A facsimile of his running handwriting in Thai.

**GENERAL SYSTEM OF PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION
OF THAI CHARACTERS INTO ROMAN**
(As devised by the Royal Institute, Bangkok; 1954)

Consonants

Note: *English consonants except that*

Initial k p and t are unaspirated as in French

Final k p and t are unexplosive and unaspirated

kh = k *aspirated*

ph = p *aspirated - not English ph.*

th = t *aspirated - not English th.*

vh = *hardened or of - as the cz in Czech.*

ch = *always as in English 'church'.*

ng = *as in English 'singer', never as in 'linger'*

	Initial	Final
ก	k	k
ຂ ທ ດ ນ	kh	k
ງ	ng	ng
ຈ	ch	t
ණ ທ ແ	ch	t
ຢ	y	n
ດ ປ ຖ (when pronounced d)	d	t
ຕ ປ ບ	t	t
ທ ປ ຖ ພ ພ	th	t
ນ ນ	n	n
ປ	p	p
ພ ພ ຜ	ph	p
ຝ ພ	f	p
ມ	m	m
ຢ	y	-
ຈ	r	n
ລ ພ	l	n
ວ	w	n

ຫ ກ ຕ ຂ ສ	s	t
ຫ ອ	h	-

Note: In typing ch may be used for ch ae u oo

Vowels

Note:- *Italian Vowels except that*

=	sound of ea in English ‘bear’
.o	= sound of aw in English ‘dawn’
oe	= sound of eu in French ‘peuple’
u	= a sound more open than German ii

ອະ ວ້ ອາ	a
ອໍາ	am
ອີ ອື	i
ອື ອື	ü
ອຸ ອູ	u
ເອະ ເເຟ ເອ	e
ແອະ ແເອ	ae
ໂອະ ອ (-) ໂອ	o
ເອາະ ອອ	o
ເອອະ ເອ ເເອ	oe
ເອີຍະ ເວີຍ	ia
ເລືອະ ເລືອ	üa
ອັວະ ອັວ	ua
ໄອ ໄອ ອັຍ ໄອຍ ອາຍ	ai
ເອາ ອາວ	ao
ອຸຍ	ui
ໂອຍ	oi
ອອຍ	.oi
ເອຍ	oei

ເອື່ອຍ	üai
ອາຍ	uai
ອິວ	iu
ເອົວ ເຂວ	eo
ແຂວ	aeo
ເອີຍວ	ieo
ຖ (when pronounced rü) ຖາ	rü
ຖ (when pronounced ri)	ri
ຖ (when pronounced roe)	roe
ກ ກາ	lü

Transcription of Words

Each syllable is to be separately transcribed in accordance with the characteristics of the Thai language.

Examples

ກະຊັດວິຍ	kasat
ປະກາຕ	prakat
ຮາຫບຸຣີ	Ratburi

The hyphen is to be used where in case of its omission the word may be read in another way.

Examples

ສະວັດ	sa - ing
ປາກລັດ	pak - lat

Marks of Quantity

If found expedient, short vowels may be marked (˘).

Thai Language

1. The Language

The Thai language belongs to a type of language technically called in philology as Isolating Language. Such a language has words each of which is free to enter into the construction of sentences without any modifications as to case, gender, number, mood or tense. Each word, therefore, is independent as a unit in a sentence. A language of this type does not require, in a sense, any grammar.

The Thai language is spoken in Thailand, the Shan States in Burma, the Lao Kingdom and many isolated groups of the Thai race in Tongking and Southern China. A comparison of the languages of these peoples reveals a uniformity as to vocabularies, formations of words and constructions which leave no doubt that they have come from a common source. Through the process of time due to accidents of history and due to differences of localities, the Thai language of each geographical area of the Thai race mentioned above becomes inevitably differentiated and modified to some extent. Nevertheless each group has retained most of the original characteristics of the language i.e. monosyllabic and tonal.

The Thai language, not to go further into a controversial academic realm, in its original form was composed, like the Chinese language, of words of one syllable. It makes use of tones

as a primary feature of the language to differentiate meanings in a homonymous word. Each word is complete by itself and admits no modifications as do the inflectional languages with differences of case, gender, number, etc. There are no hard and fast rules that make Thai words belong to a particular part of speech. Any of them may be noun, adjective, verb, adverb, etc. through their positions in a sentence. Each word stands distinctly and independently and concedes no joining of sounds or assimilations between words, with the exception of comparatively few words which are restricted to occurrence with certain other words. Thus *Tham Klang* (ทามกลาง Tham = place; Klang = middle) means in the midst. The first word *Tham* though an independent word is not free to enter into other words except the word *Klang*, not unlike that of the English word “lurch” which cannot enter into other words except “in the lurch”. Through a development of the language when two monosyllabic words are joined together to make a compound word, the unaccented one becomes shortened, technically called phonetic decay, and merges into a dissyllabic word, i.e., a word of two syllables. For instance *Tawan* (ตะวัน) in Thai means the sun. This is composed of two words *ta* = eye and *wan* = day. The former word *ta* is shortened into *ta*. There is another tendency which makes the Thai words dissyllabic not unlike Malay words, but it is different from the latter, for the Thai are mostly of euphonic couplets i.e. for musical sound only. For dissyllabic words are for instance, *kin* (กิน) means to eat, may become *kinkaen* (กินแก่น) or *kinkoen* (กินแก่น) colloquially. The last syllable has no meaning but is only added for euphony. There are many types of words like this and they are numerous in the Thai language. Some of them appear in either one or another of the dialects such as *hen* (เพ็น) = to see, becomes *han* (หัน) in the Northern Dialect of the Thai of Chiangmai. There is no difficulty in commanding such dissyllabic words, for they will come unconsciously to the speaker as the words are only a substitution of one root vowel for another but with no change of meaning.

The arrangement of words in a sentence of the Thai language is fundamentally “Subject-action-object” like English, with qualifying words such as adjectives and adverbs which, unlike Chinese or English, follow each appropriate word. Words of the same part of speech may be strung together as many as desired, provided that each word is in its logical position or sequence of time in the case of verbs. Frequently two words or more are combined to express one notion, when the second and subsequent member or members stand in adjectival position to the first, for instance *fai fa* (ไฟฟ้า, *fai* = fire; *fa* = sky) means electric, *mai kheet fai* (ไม้เผาไฟ = stick-strike-fire) means a match or matches.

It will be seen, therefore, that the Thai language is simple and very easy to learn when one knows the arrangement of words in a sentence and can master their tones, which are not difficult to acquire in the same manner as one learns the stress accents of words in the English language. In fact the tone of Thai is in a certain sense a pitch accent. There is no need to bother about grammar with its parts of speech, declensions, conjugations, derivations, etc. Such languages as Thai and also Chinese are called therefore technically analytical languages, in contrast to the Indo - European language which is called a synthetical language.

The late Dr. Cornelius B. Bradley said in his “Some Features of the Siamese Speech and Writing” (J.R.A.S., 1923, Century Supplement) that “the words are symbols of concept *per se*, being wholly devoid of inflectional apparatus to express and define their relations with other words in the sentence. They are, therefore, free to function in any synthetical relation not incompatible with their essential meaning”.

Aleather Chaplin in his *Romance of Language* (Chapter III, English in the Making) says that “the English Language is the richest of all tongues : eminently practical, expressive, and the simplest in grammar of all the great languages (Danish and Cape Dutch are much simpler still and Chinese has no grammar so far as inflections are concerned).

Whereas some languages are rather tied in by rules and conventions, English is free with the old English love of liberty and elastic enough to admit new and convenient forms and additions which chance throws in its way though since the day of Shakespeare it had suffered considerable restrictions at the hands of grammarians, school masters, self - constituted stylists and other pedants". Like - wise Thai, particularly the Siamese version, like Chinese, has no grammar and is without inflections. But it has suffered through her deve - lopments of exotic rules and restrictions of grammar also.

It is a fact that a language which utilized words of one syllable in its original vocabulary and admits no variations of sound to form grammatical relations of words, will contain an abundance of homonyms, i.e. words with the same sound but different in meaning. No doubt the tones were introduced into such homonymous words to avoid ambiguity of meanings. How many tones there were in the original Thai words it is impossible to know. In theory, at present the Thai language has five tones, but in actual speaking there are six or perhaps seven, for there ar slight variations in some dialectical areas of Thailand, particu - larly in the North and North - East.

Even though differentiation of words by tones had been introduced in the system, there were still comparatively a fair number of homonymous words. Unless the context in a phrase or a sentence shows otherwise, the meaning may still be ambiguous. For instance *ta mai hen* (ตาไมเห็น) means either "eyes do not see" or "grandfather (maternal) does not see", for the words eyes and grandfather are identical in sound and tone. In such instances which fortunately are not numerous, should the context in other phrases or sentences not show, some other word or words have to be introduced to clarify the meaning. There are two devices for doing this, viz.

1. By prefixing a meaningful word as a determinant or classifier. For instance anything in a fluid state, the word nam (น้ำ = water) is prefixed to the ambiguous words.

For example, rain water is *nam fon* (น้ำฝน *nam* = water; *fon* = rain). It is like the English but in a reverse order. A tear is *nam ta* (น้ำตา *nam* = water; *ta* = eye). Dew is *nam khang* (น้ำค้าง *nam* = water; *khang* = dangled). Ice is *nam khaeng* (น้ำแข็ง *nam* = water; *khaeng* = hard or solid). Will is *nam chai* (น้ำใจ *nam* = water; *chai* = heart).

2. By juxtaposing two meaningful words of the same or allied meaning. For example, *yai toe* (ใหญ่โต) means great (*yai* = big or large, *so also toe*). *Ban muang* (บ้านเมือง) means a nation or a country (*Ban* = village; *muang* = town), *kha fan* (ฆ่าพัน) means to kill (*kha* = kill; *fan* = to chop with a sharp instrument). As the second word juxtaposed serves to clarify the ambiguous meaning of the first word, it sometimes loses its own meaning in every day speech; the word has become a meaningless word, for instance *sua saeng* (เสื้อแอง) means clothing (*sua* = coat; *saeng* = trousers), but *saeng* now has lost its meaning in everyday speech and becomes merely a sound added for euphony only. In joining two words in this manner there is an unconscious selection of sound. The prominent or musical sound is always selected as the second or the end of the new word. For instance *phak ya* (ผักหญ้า) means vegetable (*phak* = vegetable; *ya* = grass).

Sometimes four words or more are joined together to form a phrase but with a single meaning. For instance *khao yak mak phaeng* (ข้าวยากหมากแพง) means famine (*khao* = rice; *yak* = scarce; *mak* = betelnuts or fruits; *phaeng* = dear). The words within the first and last words are always rhymed.

Like the Chinese and the South - East Asian languages, the Thai language uses descriptive words when using numbers with nouns like English, as seven heads of cows.

But in Thai there are a number of them for each appropriate noun. If you want to say seven heads of *cows*, you have to say in Thai *ngua chet tua* (วัวเจ็ดตัว *ngua* = cow or cows; *chet* = seven; *tua* = a body which is a numerical descriptive noun for animal). Seven trees is *ton mai chet ton* (ต้นไม้เจ็ดต้น *ton mai* = trees; *chet* = seven; *ton* is a trunk of a tree which is a numerical descriptive noun). If in some words no numerical descriptive noun can be used appropriately the first noun is repeated after the number thus *khan sam khon* (คนสามคน) means three men (*khan* = man; *sam* = three; *khon* = man).

The word does not indicate number or gender but the sense points it out. Thus *khon ma* (คนมา) *khon* is man in a general sense and *ma* is to come. If it is desired to point the word *khon* expressively as to number the word *lai* (หลาย) or many is added as a prefix to *khon* as *lai khon* (หลายคน) i.e. many man = men. If a gender is required the word *phu chai* (ผู้ชาย) = male or *phu ying* (ผู้หญิง) = female is added after *khon*. It then becomes *khon phu chai* (man or men) or *khon phu ying* (woman or women). The word *chai* or *ying* may be used for man or woman as the case may be.

As to tenses, no modification to the verb is necessary if the context is clear. For instance *he came yesterday* will be in Thai *mii wan khao ma* (เมื่อวานเช้านา *mii* = time; *wan* = yesterday; *khao* = he, him, she, her, it, they or them; *ma* = come, comes, came). The word *mii wan* = yesterday points to the time in the past, the word *ma* or come is logically used in the sense of came. If it is desired to clarify the past tense when the context does not indicate the time the word *dai* (ได้ = have) is prefixed to the word *ma* = come. Then it becomes *dai ma* (ได้มา) i.e. = came.

In the arrangement of words into a sentence, if there is any ambiguity in the sense, a certain class of words to help the sense is inserted. Such words may be classed as grammatically, prepositions, conjunctions or articles. But the Thai language originally knew them not as such. They are words called “help words” by the Chinese. Thus *paw luk* (พ่อลูก *paw* = father; *luk* = child or children) mean either father or son; or father and son or father of a son. To make the sense clear a “help word” *riü* (หรือ) = or; *le* (และ) = and; or *khong* (ของ) = of, is inserted. If the context of the sentence is clear, no help - word is necessary.

2. The Development

The Thai people in historical time lived in Southern China. Consequently the Thai language in its original structure was, speaking generally, identical, if not in affinity, with Chinese in its forms and words. Hence in philology, both languages, Thai and Chinese, are grouped into one family as Isolating or Analytical Language. There are in both languages a number, running in hundreds, of identical words in the vocabularies. No doubt these words are in most cases due to cultural borrowing from one to another after a long contact in time of peace and war. But there are certain classes of words which as appeared, might likely come from the same source in a remote time. For instance the words for one, two, three and so on up to one hundred are similar. In Chinese, especially in Cantonese dialect, which retains the original sound of the language, the cardinal numbers from one to ten are *yat*, *i*, *sam*, *si*, *ng* (*Ngo* in Swatow dialect) *lok*, *t'sat*, *pat*, *kau*, *sap*, and one hundred is *pak*. In Thai they run thus: *nüng*, *song*, *sam*, *si*, *ha*, *hok*, *chet*, *paet*, *kau*, *sip* and one hundred is *roi*, *Nüng* or one in Thai has its synonym of “*et*” which is similar in sound to the Chinese, *yat* (In Swatow dialect the word becomes *it* like the Thai). *Nüng* may be compared to the Chinese *ling* or *feng* (???) which means alone. *Song* or two in Thai has *yi* as its synonym. *Song* may be compared to the Chinese *song* (???) which means a pair.

Three, four, seven, eight, nine and ten are of course, identical in sound and meaning; whereas five in both languages differ, but in old Thai the fifth number was *ngua* and six was *lok* like Chinese. A hundred in old Thai was *pak* (ປ່າກ) instead of *roi* as it is in the present day. A captain of a hundred men was called in old Thai as *hua pak* (ທັງປ່າກ *hua* = head; *pak* = hundred) and Chinese has *pak* (???) which means chief of a hundred.

In the course of history many of the Thai tribes emigrated into the Indo - Chinese Peninsula in different periods of time and groups, and into different parts of the Peninsula. One group became the Shan of Burma; another group became the Siamese or the Thai of Thailand, another became the Lao and a number of the Thai with many tribal names in Tongking and Southern China, and even in Hainan Island. Each group of the Thai as mentioned fared different fortunes in their history and ways of life or cultures. Unlike their brothers the Shan in Burma, in Tongking and in Southern China, who no doubt mixed freely with the Kha (Moi in Annamese) tribes and perhaps also with the Proto - Austronesian race, especially the Malayo - Polynesian, the Thai of Thailand mixed freely with the Mon - Khmer race, especially the Mons and the Khmer (Cambodian) and predominantly in the central part i.e. in the Menam Chao Phya valley more than in other parts of the country. Through a close contact of the Thai of Thailand with the Mon and the Khmer, it affected radically the Thai, physically, linguistically and culturally. The Mon - Khmer language is an isolating one in so far as its word order; but unlike Thai, it has certain prefixes and infixes as a peculiarity of its own which Thai originally had not in its system. It also admits initial clusters of two or more non - syllabic sounds of certain words which by comparison to the various dialects of the Thai language, such sounds do not comparatively enter into the old Thai ones. The non - syllabics that occur in initial position appeared as members of an initial cluster are *k*, *t*, *p*, and their corresponding aspirates *kh*, *th*, *ph*, which may be followed by the semivowels *r*, *l*, *v*. By contact with the Mon - Khmer, the Thai language of Thailand, especially in the central part, absorbed to a certain degree such features of the language into its system.

Central Thailand, roughly in the 5th to the 13th century A.D., was within the empires of the Mon and the Khmer (Cambodian) successively. The Mon was a comparatively civilized race in the Peninsula. She received her civilization from India and had adopted Buddhism of the Southern School. While the Khmer, another civilized race of that period, was a highly Hinduized race, and at times adopted Buddhism both of the Northern (Mahayana) and Southern School. Southern School Buddhism used Pali as its vehicle of thought and language, while the Northern School and Hinduism used Sanskrit. Here they became mixed through their tolerations of one another, unlike that of the religions of Semitic origins; and to add into its melting pot, the indigenous and popular belief of animism was also thrown into it. This conglomeration affected in no less degree the thought and belief, the language and the literature of the people.

When the Thai in the 13th century A.D. became a paramount race in central Thailand in succession to the Mon and the Khmer, they adopted as their heritage their predecessors' culture and adapted them as characteristics of the Thai. Racially they mixed freely too, and affected radically their racial features. The mixture, like the English, is complete. One cannot distinguish superficially most of the cultural contents of these three races in Thailand. The Thai language had by this time and after, changed much as to its vocabularies. More and more words of Pali and Sanskrit origin and also of Mon and Khmer, particularly the latter, had been added. Some of the old Thai words had lost their ground and became obsolete. Their places were taken by exotic words of Pali, Sanskrit and Khmer. Whatever words Thai had adopted, the sounds were changed into the Thai phonetic system. Words with initials and endings of sound of Pali or Sanskrit origin, and words of many syllables were shortened, thus the Sanskrit *manusya* (มนุษย) which means man become *manut* in Thai.

Rashtra (ราชภูมิ) in Sanskrit means a nation, subject, kingdom, became in Thai as *Ratsadon* or even shortened in speaking into their accustomed monosyllabic words as *rat* which means people only. *Kshatriya* (กษัตริย) in Sanskrit is a warrior class became

Kasat and means king only. The Thai language though it adopted a large number of Pali and Sanskrit, did not take the inflection of words into its system. Thus *manusya* (man) may be used either collectively or in singular or plural number, or in masculine or feminine gender. It requires no change of form in different

grammatical cases. Though the Thai word for man is *khon* (ຂອນ - soft aspirated sound of k), it adopted the Sanskrit word *manusya* as a synonym of the word *khon* only to differentiate shades of meaning and selection of its use in an appropriate sentence. This is also true with words adopted from Khmer. There are roughly, in every day speech of the Thai of Central Thailand i.e. the Siamese proper, at least one third in number of words of Khmer origin. Some fundamental words of Thai such as *hua* (ຫຸ້າ = head), *kin* (ກິນ = eat), *fin* (ດິນ = foot) became degenerated through the adoption of foreign words. You have to change the word *hua* into *sisa* (ສີສະ - Sanskrit), *kin* into *rapprathan* (ຮັບປະຫານ - coined word) and *tin* into *thau* (ເຫຼວ - etymology doubtful). For princes you have to change these words into *sian* (ເສີຍາ - Sanskrit *sirasha* = head), *sawüy* (ເສ້າຍ Khmer word of Sanskrit origin) and *bad* (ບາດ - Sanskrit *padu* = a foot).

In adopting Pali, Sanskrit and Khmer words into the language the Thai have enriched themselves not in the least in the expressions of the words in their varied shades of meaning and conceptions. In fact they have coined numerous new words to meet new needs of modern times by taking Pali and Sanskrit as their raw material. Here a comparison to the English is not out of place. In the English language the making of compound words in technical terms is to draw material from Greek or Latin. The English have probably lost the power of making their own compound words by their own native material. So is it with the Thai.

In the past they coined such words as ice, electric, gramaphone, match in pure Thai words respectively as *nam khaeng* (ໜ້າເຂົ້າງ = solid water), *fai fa* (ໄຟຟ້າ - sky fire), *heep siang* (ທີບສີຢັງ = sound box), *mai kheet fai* (ໝ່າຍືກີໄຟ = stick-strike-fire), but now this power of making such words is lost. Their new words are now coined from Pali and Sanskrit material. Making such compound words has obviously one advantage; the words are compact ones, not loosely knitted like making a compound word with isolated ones which ambiguously may become a phrase or a sentence. As already mentioned, the Mon - Khmer use prefixes and infixes in forming their words, for instance *pen* in Cambodian means full *bampen* (with *bam* as prefix) means to make full; *truat* means inspect *tamruat* (with *am* as infix = *t - am - ruat*) means a person who inspects i.e. police in modern Thai sense. The Thai have adopted such kind of words, with its differentiation of meaning into the Thai language in some instances, but in most cases such words are introduced freely into her literary language merely for euphonic purpose in poetry, ignoring the different shades of meaning when a prefix or an infix is added. Thus *charoen* in Khmer means *increase*, and *chamroen* (with infix *am*) means to make an increase, but in Thai these two words have exactly the same meaning as to increase, to expand and to grow greater, and also means to prosper which meaning is in everyday use. Consequently the Thai language'as it is, to quote Dr. Cornelius Bradley, "is by no means absolutely monosyllabic. In it, as in other languages, words that are frequently associated together in speech tend to combine, forming first a recurrent phrase then a quasi - compound, then a definite compound. The heavy stress that falls on the distinctive member presently obscures the other member, so that it still forms a syllable, it is no longer recognizable as ever having been a separate word. Such dissyllabic compounds are common features of the Siamese vocabulary" (Some Features of the Siamese Speech and Writing, J.R.A.S. 1923, Century Supplement).

To sum up the Thai language, through its development after a long period of contact with the Pali and Sanskrit inflectional languages, and the Mon and Khmer semi - agglutinative languages, has become, unlike that of Chinese and other Thai dialects, more and more a dissyllabic speech. Thus *thuang* (ຫວັງ) means to warn has *prathuang* (ປະຫວັງ) by introducing the Sanskrit prefix *pra* into the word and means to protest. By analogy in the language there are to be found a large number of dissyllabic words which have *kra*, *tra*, *pra* as prefixes and in no way change the meanings of the basic word. Such phenomenon does not appear in other Thai dialects. Thus the word bone in Thai is *dook* (ດູກ) but in Thai of Central Thailand it is *kradook* (ກະດູກ). The word *kra* is a so - called prefix which gives no modification of meaning to the basic word *dook*. Such kind of words are to be found in the Thai (or academically, Siamese) language of Thailand.

3. The Alphabet

The Thai alphabet is of Indian origin. In A.D. 1283, Ram Kamhaeng, the great King of the Thai of Sukhothai dynasty (see the *Cultures of Thailand*, Thailand Culture Series, No.I) instituted the present Thai alphabet. Though modelled on the Indian one through the medium of the Khmer or Cambodian characters, the Thai alphabet differs from the Indian and the Cambodian sources in two essential points.

In the Indian and Khmer writing, when two or more consonants come in contact as an initial or an ending of a word or a syllable, they coalesce into one whole when written, certain consonant or consonants become abbreviated in forms when juxtaposed to the main one. Suppose the English word *grasp* is to be written in the Indian or Khmer style, the initial *gr* of the word *grasp* and also of *sp* of its ending will have to be coalesced as one whole by abbreviating the *r* and the *s* and blend them to their respective *g* and *p*.

King Ram Kamhaeng separated them into independent characters like the Roman alphabet, in the same manner as one writes the English word *grasp* above.

The vowel signs of the Indian and the Khmer form a different set to that of the consonants. They are written either before, after, above or below the consonants. Likewise is the present Thai writing. But in King Ram Kamhaeng's scheme of writing it was otherwise. It is not out of place here to quote Dr. Cornelius B. Bradley (The Oldest Known Writing in Siamese, the Inscription of Phra Ram Kamhaeng of Sukhothai, J.S.S. 1909, p. II.) who says:

"But the most original as well as the most interesting feature of his (i.e. King Ram Kamhaeng) scheme of vowel notation was his bringing of all the vowel signs into the written line along with the consonants, and so practically into the alphabet itself. Inclusion of the vowels in the alphabet was a master stroke of the Greek genius, when once for all, it adapted oriental letters to the needs of a new world of life and thought. It is that alone, for example, which has made possible for all western tongues the immense advantage of a perfectly fixed order of words in vocabularies and lists. The lack of such an absolute word - order is a difficulty and hindrance to scholarship more or less distinctly felt throughout the Eastern world, and everywhere for the same reason:- the vowels have no place in the alphabetical order. Prince Ram Kamhaeng, so far as we can learn, is the only man in all this interval who has come at all near to duplicating that old Grecian thought. But he did not carry his thought to its logical conclusion. He did not give the vowels their places in the sequence of elements in the syllables, as he had given them in their places in the line. Siamese scholars, unlike the Greek, were conning oriental scriptures. They thus kept ever alive the old tradition, and obscured the new. Very few years passed before the vowels which had been brought in to the line were back in their old stations in the field. Thus it is for that Siamese of today, types that can be conveniently cast and set, and dictionaries where words may be easily and certainly found, seem as unattainable as ever".

In A.D. 1917 King Vajiravudh revived this vowel scheme of notation of King Ram Kamhaeng as an experiment, but found no success. No doubt the old tradition of writing the vowel signs like the original Indian and Khmer source is still strong. With the exception of vowel notation as mentioned above, the writing of Thai follows fundamentally King Ram Kamhaeng's writing up to the present day with certain modifications and additions, due of course, to the development of writing.

As already mentioned the Thai language is a tonal one. With the exception of the Thai here, all the written Thai words in different dialects and also of the Shan in Burma have no written sign to mark the different tones of a word. For instance the words come (ມາ), horse (ມ້າ) and dog (ແມ້າ) are written as *ma*, but pronounced in different pitch of tones. One cannot tell which mu is intended in writing. Only the context in the surrounding words will give a clue to it. But in King Ram Kamhaeng's writing it was otherwise. He invented two tonal signs to mark the different tones in the word. Through development, the present Thai language has now four signs to mark the tones. Any person interested in the tonal system of the Thai language can consult the subject in the Introduction to the Thai-English Dictionary by Dr. George B. Mcfarland M.D. (Bangkok Times Press, Ltd; Bangkok 1941 pp. X-XII).

There are in modern Thai 44 consonants. Of these 16 of them are redundant consonants, leaving in all the basic sound of 28 consonants. The redundant consonants are used mostly in transliteration of Thai words from Pali and Sanskrit origin. In fact there are two consonants among the redundant which are now obsolete. The arrangement of the letters in the alphabet follow the Pali and Sanskrit scheme, i.e. into 6 series as to the different places of contact in the production of consonantal sounds. As this pamphlet is intended only as a popular survey of the Thai alphabet in its outline, there is no need to go further into the intricacies of its technicalities.

K	କ	D		M	ମ	A	ା
K _H	ଙ	D _H		Y	ୟ	I	୦
K _H	ଝ	N	ନ	R	ର	I	ୟ
G	ଗ	D	ଦ	L	ଲ	ସୁ	୪
C _H	ଚ	T	ତ	V	ବ	U	୩
C _H		T _H	ଠ	C	ଚ	୪	୧୯
N	ନ	D	ଧ	S _H	ଶ	E	୧୦
C	ଚ	D _H	ଝ	S	ଶ	େ	୧୧
C _H	ଛ	N	ନ	H	ହ	A _i	୨
J	ଝ	B	ବ	L		A _i	୩
S	ଶ	P	ପ	O	୭	୦	୩
J _H		B _H	ଘ			A _o	(ଜ)
N	ନ	F	ଫ			A _m	୫
T		B	ଫ			A:	୧୩
T _H	ବ	F	ଫ				
T _H	ବ	B _H	ବ				

The Thai Alphabet of King Ram Kamhaeng, A.D. 1283

K	କ	D		M	ମ	A	ା
K _H	ଙ	D _H		Y	ୟ	I	ି
K _H	ଙ	N	ନ	R	ର	I	ି
G	ଗ	D	ଦ	L	ଲ	U	ୁ
G _H	ଙ୍ଗ	T	ତ	V	ବ	U	ିଜ
G _H	ଙ	T _H	ଠ	C	ଚ	U	ିଶ
ଝ	ଝ	D	ଧ	S _H		E	ୟି
C	ଚ	D _H	ଙ୍ଗ	S	ଶ	ିଏ	ିଏ
C _H	ଛି	N	ନ	H	ହ	Ai	ିଇ
J	ଝ	B	ବ	L		Ai	ିଇ
S	ଶ	P	ପ୍ର	O	ଓ	ିଓ	ିଓ
J _H		P _H	ଯ	O	ଓ	Ao	ିଏ
ଝ	ଝ	F	ଫ୍ର			Ai	ିଫ୍ର
T		B	ଫ			A.	ିଫ
T _H	ତ	F	ଫ				
T _H	ତ	B _H	ଗ				

The Thai Alphabet of Phya Lii Thai, A.D. 1357

K	ກ	D		M	ມ	A	າ
K _H	ງ	D _H		Y	ຢ	I	ି
K _H		N	ນ	R	ର	I	ି
G	ଘ	D	ଘ	L	ଲ	ୟ	ା
G _H		T	ଘ	V	ବ	ୟ	ା
G _H	ଙ୍ଗ	T _H	ଘ	C	ଚ	ୁ	ି
N	ଙ୍ଗ	D	ଘ	SH	ଶ	ୁ	ି
C	ଛ	D _H	ଛ	S	ଶ	E	ୟ
C _H	ଙ୍କ	N	ଙ୍କ	H	ହ	ୟ	ା
J	ଝ	B	ଝ	O	ଓ	Ai	ି
S	ଝ	P	ଝ			Aj	ୟ
J _H		P _H	ଘ			୦	ି
N	ଙ୍ଘ	F	ଙ୍ଘ			Ao	ା
T		B	ଙ୍ଘ			Am	ମ୍ବ
T _H		F				A:	ୟ
T _H	ଙ୍ଘ	B _H	ଘ				

The Thai Alphabet in the reign of King Narai, A.D. 1660

K	ก	TH	ຂ	I	ີ			
KH	ຂ	dH	ດ	BH	ບ			
KH	ຂ	dH	ດ	M	ນ	A	າ	າ
G	ກ	N	ນ			I	ີ	ີ
GH	ງ			Y	ຍ	Ī	ີ	ີ
CH	ຈ	T	ຕ	R	ຮ	Ü	ູ	ູ
Ñ	ໜ	T	ຕ	L	ລ	Ū	ູ	ູ
		TH	ທ	V	ວ	U	ູ	ູ
C	ຈ	d	ດ	C	ຄ	Ӯ	Ӯ	Ӯ
CH	ຈ	dH	ດ	S	ສ	E	ເ	ເ
J	ຈ	N	ນ	S	ສ	Ē	ໝ	ໝ
S	ສ			H	ຫ	AI	ໄ	ໄ
JH	ຢ	P	ປ	L	ລ	AI	ໄ	ໄ
N	ຢ	P	ປ	O	ອ	Ӧ	Ӧ	Ӧ
.	.	PH	ພ	H	ຫ	AO	ເ	ເ
T	ຖ	f	ຟ			AM	ຳ	ຳ
T	ຖ	b	ບ			A:	ຳ	ຳ

Current Thai writing in shape of tamarind leaves.

K	ກ		D		M	ມ	A	ଆ
K _H	ຂ		D _H		M _H	ມ	I	ି
K _H	ଙ		N		R	ର	I	ି
C	ଚ		D	ଢ	L	ଲ	U	୦
C _H			T	ତ	V	ବ	U	ୟ
C _H	ଷ		T _H	ଠ	G	ଗ	ଶ	୪
N	ନ		D	ନ	S _H	ପ	E	୬
C	ଛ		D _H	ଛ	S	ସ	ଏ	୮
C _H	ବ		N	ବ	H	ହ	Ai	୯
J	ଝ		B	ବ	L		Ai	୯
S			P	ପ	O	୦	ଶ	୩
J _H			R _H	ର			Ao	୧
N	ନ୍ୟ		F				Ai	୫
T			B _H	ବ			A:	:
T _H			F					
T _H	ବ୍ୟ		B _H	ବ				

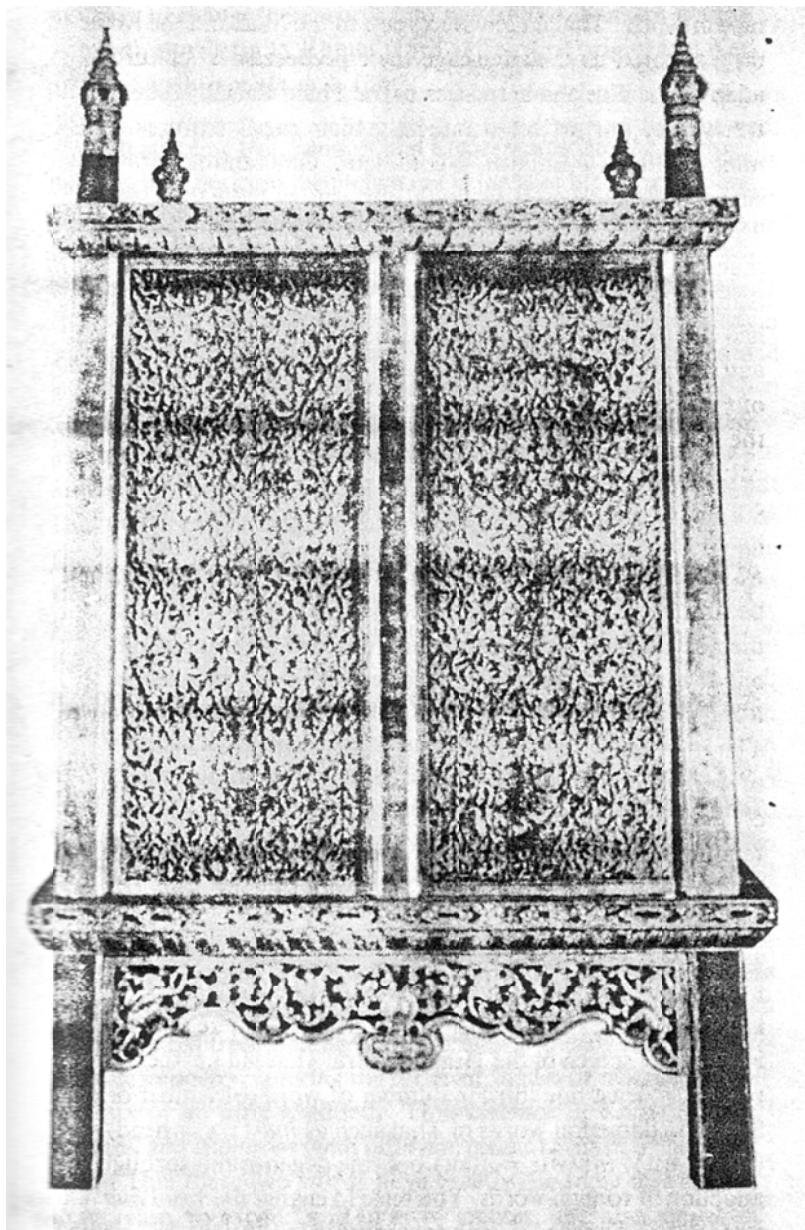
The Thai Alphabet of Chiang Mai, A.D. 1518

K	କ	P	ପ	A	ା
KII	କ୍ଷ	PII	ପ୍ର	I	ୟ
G	ଗ	PII	ଗ୍ର	ି	ୟ
N	ନ	f	ନ୍ଦି	ି	ୟ
		b	ବୁ	ି	ୟ
C	ଚ	f	ଚ୍ଚି	ି	ୟ
J	ଜ	M	ମୁ	ି	ୟ
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North - Eastern Thai Letter, Profane Writing.

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Compressed Thai Letter



A traditional bookcase with gold leaves on laquers



Chapter 3

The Folk Tale



A Study on the Thai Folk Tale

Ayudhya, the former capital of Thailand preceding Bangkok, was founded by King Ramadhibodi I in 1349 A.D. Before he became the first king of Ayudhya, Ramadhibodi was a ruler of the city U-tôn, succeeding his father-in-law the then ruler. U-tôn is now an *amphoe* (district) of the same name in the Province of Supanburi some 130 kilometres by road north-west of Bangkok. Who was the father of Ramadhibodi and where did he come from? History does not tell.

King Ramadhibodi is known popularly in folk tales as Tao U-tôn ; a designation commonly bestowed on all rulers of U-tôn by storytellers. *Tao* means in one sense “king” in romantic tales, and U-tôn means a cradle made of gold which Ramadhibodi had in tradition as his cot when he was a Child. A well - known legendary tale gives the following account.

Once upon a time there was a miserable man in an abject state coming from nowhere. He lived in a hovel in the city of Traitrüms. Where Traitrüms was, no one knows for sure except it must be one of the ruined cities somewhere in Central Thailand, of which there are many. *Traiträums* means the thirty - three chief Vedic gods which buddhism had adopted in its mythology; it therefore also meant the “City of gods” or heaven.

Now, this man had fleshy knobs all over his face and body.

He was therefore, nick-named *Sēn-pom* meaning a hundred thousand knobs. To eke his scanty living the man grew vegetables for the market. In one place nearest his hut he planted *makhüa*.¹⁾ He planted and watered it with his urine as fertilizer. The plants thrived and bore abnormally large fruits. The king of the City of Traitrüms had a beautiful daughter. One night she dreamt through the inspiration of Indra, the chief god of the Buddhist Pantheon, that she had eaten a wonderful and delicious *makhüa* fruit. To fulfil her dream the princess's maid went to market but found no such wonderful thing. At last *Sēn - pom* came to hear of it; he presented the princess through her maid with one fruit from his abnormal *makhüa* plant.

Many months passed by and the princess became pregnant after partaking of the *makhüa* fruit and a male child was subsequently born. The king on hearing the news was very angry, for the princess could not explain who the father of her child was. Indeed, no one could enlighten the king about this mystery. At last the king commanded that a proclamation be publicly made to find out the identity of the child's father. "Let all the men in the city each bring a piece of sweetmeat and hand it to the child," so the proclamation ran. If the child accepts readily anyone's sweets, he will be recognized as the child's father and become a royal son-in-law." Everyone failed for the child never accepted any of the sweets handed to him. The last person to come was *Sēn - pom* who had no sweets to present to the Child. The only thing he had with him was a piece of cold cooked rice (*khao yen*)²⁾ which he handed to the child who readily accepted it. The child's acting in such an undreamed of manner made the king very furious, but he could not do otherwise than what he had promised as a king, so he gave the hand of the princess to *Sēn - pom* and at the same time banished *Sēn - pom* and his newly won bride with her child from his city.

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1. Name for a species of eggplants or brinjals, of which there are many varieties. Its fruits are often dipped in a certain kind of Thai sauce called *nam - prik*, etc.
 2. *Khao Yen* is the remainder of cooked rice in a pot after one has eaten one's meal; hence it is a left - over fit only as beggar's food.

Sên-pom with the princess and child had to leave the city immediately. After wandering for sometime, the three came to a forest and settled there. Now, as is usual for the hero and heroine in Thai folk tales, Indra, the chief of the gods, felt uneasy, or in the Thai idiom *felt hot* when any unusual thing was happening and demanding the god's attention. He looked down on the earth with his divine eyes and saw the plight of Sên-pom who was destined to become a king later on. Transforming himself into a monkey after descending to earth he presented a magic drum to Sên-pom and told him that whoever beat the drum would have his wishes instantly realized. But the drum would have effect three times only and no more. After having given the drum and the instructions to Sên-pom the divine monkey disappeared.

Sên-pom beat the drum wishing firstly that all the fleshy knobs on his face and body would disappear; and lo! and the blemishes on his face and body were gone instantly. He became a handsome young man. He beat the drum again for the second and the third time wishing for a city and gold and they came true even as he wished them. He named the city Thep Nakhorn or "the god's city" and ruled it as its first king with the royal name of Siri Jai of Chiensên.¹⁾ As for the gold, he built a cot for his child who subsequently succeeded him as King U-tôn (= gold cradle or cot), and who also was, historically, the founder of the old capital of Thailand, Ayudhya.

Now, there are two motifs relevant to my study of this folk tale, i.e. *the person with a hundred thousand fleshy knobs* and *the three wishes*. In a Mon story there was a person with warts all over his body who afterwards became a Mon king. I heard the story orally from a Mon monk and scholar²⁾ some twenty years

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1. Traditionally Thep Nakhorn City was built by King Siri Jai of Chiënsen in 1319 A.D. and King U-tôn, his son, succeeded him in 1344 A.D. Undoubtedly the legendary tale of King U-tôn bears some traces of historical fact, but it is so mixed up with fiction that it is hard to unravel. It is still a moot point among Thai historians. King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) had in 1913 A.D. written a theatrical play entitled *Tao Sén-pom* in which he offered certain historical suggestions. Thai history is outside the theme I am writing on and my aim is a comparative study of Thai folk tales only.
 2. Pra Sumedh Muni, late abbot of Wat Jana Sonkrām, Bangkok.

ago but unfortunately I have forgotten the story, for at that time I was not interested and did not take notes of it. It is a historical fact that the central part of Thailand, the Menam basin, a thousand or more years ago was peopled by a Mon - speaking race who later mixed freely, racially and culturally, with the Thai, late comers from North Thailand and beyond. Historians tell us that the Mons at those times were a relatively civilized race as compared to the Thai and other neighbouring races. Probably the Thais got the Story of Sén-pom from the Mon; and no doubt the Mon, chronologically in turn, got their story of a person with numerous warts from India, for the Mons were the first bearers of Indian civilization, especially Buddhism, to this part of the world. Only this year, 1963 A.D., I met a noted Indian folklorist,¹⁾ who had made a suggestion in reply to my inquiry for some traces of the story of Sén-pom. He said that it might originate from a certain episode concerning the god Indra as depicted in Hindu mythology. The Story runs thus:

“According to the Mahabharata he (Indra) seduced, or endeavored to seduce, Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama, and that sage’s curses impressed upon him a thousand marks resembling the female organ, so he was called Sa-yoni: but these marks were afterwards changed to eyes, and he is hence called “the thousand eyed” - John Dowson, *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion* etc.

The noted Indian folklorist further informed me in reply to my question that in the Story of Indra as told by the folk, the thousand-eyed marks on Indra were changed into a thousand fleshy protuberances.

The resemblance between the idea of a hero having a hundred thousand fleshy knobs (which simply means “very numerous” in the Thai idiom), and the story of the Indian god Indra having, incidentally, a thousand eyes on his body through a curse is very obvious. Presumably such a motif in the story is

1. The late Dr. Kali Prasad.

of Indian origin, and perhaps the story of Sén-pom is a development of the former one. Naturally the story adopted has its modifications; names are sometimes altered, scenes are changed, and certain circumstances are added or omitted to suit local surrounding and tradition.

The next motif, the three wishes, is to be found also in one of the Thai droll stories orally narrated among young men in their social company. The story is humorous but borders on vulgarity and offends propriety. It is therefore not to be found in print. However, the gist of the story can be told here at the sacrifice of certain humor. Naturally, a story with such crude humor found ready hearers among the young People if left exclusively to themselves. The story runs thus :

A man of a humble class received a magical Object as a present from a supernatural being in return for the man's good-will. This magical object had a certain potency for the owner by which he could make successively only three wishes for things he desired. After the three wishes had been fulfilled, the magical object would lose its potency. Like many other tales of the type portraying a low estimation of the weaker sex, the men divulged the secret of the three wishes to his wife. She, like her kind, wanted him to wish for too many things pertaining to the adornment of the fair sex. There was, of course, a disagreement and high words passed between the two. In a fit of anger the man invidiously wished for numerous male generative organs to adorn his body. Instantly his body became studded with the objects he had wished for. He was very frightened by the consequence and so was his wife. Both of them were now in a sober mood and thought of a way to get rid of the obnoxious objects. The wife proposed that the man make a second wish for the disappearance of these unpleasant things. He agreed and at once all the unpleasant things on his body were gone, together with his own natural one too. He was compelled to make the third and the last wish recalling by right his own identical characteristic to be re-instated as a man. The magical object then lost its potency and the man was not richer than before.

In the *Book of Sindibad*¹⁾ there is a story of a “holy man” who spent all his time in devotion, and had a peri for his constant and familiar companion for many years. At length the peri was obliged to leave him, word having been brought her of the illness of her children. On parting, she taught him the ‘Three Great Names’ (of God), on pronouncement of one of which, on any great emergency, his wish would be immediately granted. One night the sheikh communicates the circumstance to his wife, who dictated to him what he is to wish for. The result shows the folly of consulting with women; but is unfit to be repeated. It is sufficient to say that the tale is similar to that of the “Three Wishes”, by La Fontaine, to Prior’s ‘Ladle’, and to that given in Syntipas (Greek Version of the Book of Sindibad).

JSS, Vol LIII, Part 2, 2508

1. The Book of Sindibad or the story of the King, his sons, the damsel, and the seven vizirs, by W.A. Clouston, pp. 71-73, privately printed 1884. There is an old version of this book in Thai which bears the name of Paduma Jataka.

In appendix XV of the Book of Sindibad, W.A. Clouston says:

It may possibly interest some students of comparative folk lore to know that the Persian version of this Story (the Peri and the Devotee) the First Wish of the devotee is similar to that in the old Castilian version, *Libro de los Engannos et los Asayamientos de los Mugeres*, appended to Professor D. Comparetti’s most valuable *Ricerche intorno al Libro di Sindibad*. And it is perhaps worthy of note that the Turkish rendering of the Story agrees, in this respect, with the Persian and old Castilian versions: which seems to show that the Ottoman translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* was made from a different text from the Culcutta or the Bulaq.

Data on Conditioned Poison

A Folklore Study

“Conditioned poison” is a translation of the Thai word *ya sang* (ยาสัง) meaning literally ordered or directed medicine, or in this particular instance it means poison which, if taken, will become operative only on certain conditions as ordered or directed in the prescribed formula. If anyone inadvertently eats or drinks anything in which there is such a poison, he will eventually die in a specific period of time or when partaking a certain specific food as conditioned in the poison. I heard of this type of poison quite a long time ago in my boyhood days. It was supposed to be prevalent somewhere in outlying districts where rustic People lived. If a city or town dweller intended to make a trip to such localities, he would be forewarned by well-wishing persons to be careful about taking any food or drink as offered. By a mishap he might be poisoned with *ya sang* administered in the food or drink he was partaking. This was not done by the folk in the district to a sojourner through malice, but only to make a test of the potency of the *ya sang* prepared by the folk on a stranger. Normally the *ya sang* would be administered solely in vengeance to a person who had done an injurious wrong to the owner of the poison. Hence the formula of *ya sang* was well-guarded and known to a few persons only. If by chance the secret of the formula fell into unworthy hands and any misdeed was done, the owner of the secret would be held to have sinned implicitly

as a party with the guilty one. If by necessity or otherwise the owner of the formula had to impart the secret to someone, he would demand the usual promise from the sharer of the secret not to utilize the poison in an unworthy cause or to divulge the secret to another person. Such was the information I had by hearsay about the poison *ya sang*.

In the year 1952, I made a holiday trip to Korat, a chief town in North-East Thailand some 250 kilometers from Bangkok. One morning I and other members of the party were in Pak Tong Chai some 20 kilometers from Korat and a district well - known for its silk weaving industry. One of the party made a well - intentioned remark to me to be careful in taking food or drink in the district which had been known notoriously as a place where the poison *ya sang* was prevalent. No one could be sure whether a food or drink offered by the local people would not contain *ya sang*. At once my memory of the poison of my younger days was revived and aroused my curiosity. Here I was actually in the locality where the *ya sang* was known in practice. I began to seek more information on this famous or infamous poison. Fortunately the then Officer of Education of Korat Province,¹⁾ who acted as our guide, knew something about the *ya sang*. Upon request he later on after the trip gave me a typescript copy of the formula in his possession.

He said in it that the word *ya sang* was peculiar to Korat Province for a certain type of poison which might be sub - divided into three sub - classes, namely:

1.) *Ya pit* (ยาพิษ) or “poison”. It is made from certain poisonous plants of the genus of *wan* plants,²⁾ powdered and mixed with bones of a species of cobra called *hao fai* (เห่าไฟ = fire cobra).³⁾ Put a little amount of this mixed powder in spirituous liquor and whoever drinks it will suffer great pain and die within 4 to 5 hours if the right anti-dote against the poison is not admi -

1 Nai Thawin Chanlawong, now Officer of Education of Uthaidhani.

2 See “Thai Charms and Amulets” IV *Wan Ya* by Phra Anuman Rajadhon.

3 “Fire Cobra” is believed to be a highly poisonous snake. While moving over the grass it leaves a scorched trace on the grass in its trail.

nistered in time.

2.) “Stomach-destroying poison” (ยาทำลายกระเพาะอาหาร).

This sub-class of poison is prepared with a certain kind of poisonous *wan* plant which grows wild in a highland jungle. In fetching such a *wan* plant there is a complicated ritual process.¹⁾ If it is desired that the victim should die after taking the poison when eating a specific food, usually, for example, the ground bone or dried smoked flesh of poultry to which the poisonous herb is added, the prepared poison will react fatally on the victim after a duration of time varying from 7 to 120 days depending on the constitution of the victim, or the age or potency of the poison. If the right antidote is not administered in time, the victim will die or become impaired in strength both physically and mentally throughout the rest of his life.

3.) “Intoxicating or fumigative poison” (ยาเบื้องหรือยาเม).

The poison is also prepared from a certain *wan* plant. It is mixed with the food which the victim is partaking. The poison will react detrimentally against the victim, putting him in a state of morbid drowsiness or profound sleep within a specific time from one to 10 hours relative to the strength and the amount of poison. Beyond this limit of time the poison will lose its effectiveness.

If the poison is meant as a fumigator, the skin of a kind of jungle toad called *chong-kroang* (จงครอง) is added to the poison. This species of toad is the size of a man's palm in circumference, its skin is rough and nodular, exuding a nauseate odor. It is to be found wild on the banks of mountain streams and has as its abode a hollow of a big tree in the highland jungle. Only the male species is required and dried over the fire, the person preparing it being careful to avoid inhaling the smoke during the process. Its dried skin is powdered and mixed with the *wan* poison. Sprinkle a certain amount of the mixed poison powder over a fire, and let the wind blow the poisoned smoke towards the victim or victims.

1 The formula does not give a detailed ritual process. Probably it is similar to the one given in my “Thai Charms and Amulets” for the three formulas for making a *nang kwak* charm.

As noted above, these three sub - classes of *ya sang* are made of a certain kind of *wan* plant which had different names in various localities, but by a collective name it is called merely *wan ya sang* i.e. the conditioned poison *wan*. Only its root stalk is required; and it is to be uprooted when the plant is in bloom. There are two varieties of the root-stalk, white or reddish white in colour, the former one is better but rare. The leaves of the plant when in bloom are poisonous, harmful to the touch and give ulcerous pains. Most of the wild animals through instinctive experience avoid coming in contact with the plant in bloom.

The root-stalk after it has been powdered has a white, yellowish or reddish white colour. If a quantity is mixed with an alcoholic drink, instead of impairing the quality of its taste, it will heighten its intoxicating strength. The poison will retain its poisonous strength for a period of up to sixty days, and beyond this limit it will lose its potency. It is to be kept completely hidden, in a cool place; but generally the country folk keep it in a quill of a fowl. When in use the hollow under a finger nail is utilized as a carrier, and secretly dipped in a drink of any kind. The effect of the poison is instantaneous after it reaches the victim's stomach. He will "feel sour in his mouth" (เปรี้ยวปาก) due to hyperacidity in the stomach, there will be an abnormal flow of saliva in the mouth, nausea and swimming of the head, continued pain and weariness or the jaws with subsequent rigidity of the jaws' movements, abnormal cold in the belly area, heavy sweating all over the body, vomiting with the characteristic smell of the *wan* plant quick pulsating of the heart, and a feeling of weariness in all parts of the body, the leg joints becoming stiff and bearing the body's weight with difficulty when rising or standing. The victim will die soon after if no right remedy to counteract the poison is found in time. However there are certain precautions before taking any drink. Always keep the *wan* plant called *rang chüit* (ราช济ด) handy about one¹⁾ or use a piece of ivory dipped into a drink as

1 Wan *rang chüit* is a kind of climbing plant to be found sometimes grown in certain houses in Bangkok. It is a well - known medicinal plant, as far as I know, for counteracting certain poisonous agencies. Probably it is the same

a test to see whether it contains poison or not; or have a cup fashioned from ivory to hold the drink. (Perhaps the ivory functions as a neutralizer of poison.) On the other hand, if a person shows a symptom of being poisoned as afore - mentioned there are three ways to counteract it, namely:

- (a) To apply an emetic agent to the poisoned person in order to make him vomit.
- (b) Have a root-stalk of the “*wan* counteracting the poison” (no specific name is given) rubbed with water on a hard material and then mixed with alcoholic spirit. Pour the liquid down the victim’s throat.
- (c) If the victim suffer a rigidity of the jaws, have seven fresh field-crabs pounded and mixed with water. Pour the mixture forcibly down the victim’s throat once only. The victim will revive instantly. Have a cup of boiled ash-pumpkin or white gourd¹⁾ water given to the sufferer to drink, and he will be cured from the poisonous effects. The above information is meant for the poison in sub - class (1) “*Ya-pit*” only.

Now we come to the poison in sub-class (2), “Stomach-destroying poison”. It is mixed either with solid food or drinks. The country folk call this sub-class of poison *ya-yen* (= cooling poison) or *ya ngulüam* (= python poison). The victim inadvertently taking such poison will show a sign of the symptomatic effects after he has eaten certain kinds of food as tacitly specified in the poison. He will become giddy; there will be pains in the throat or on the back of the neck, flatulence in the stomach with a hard mass felt in the abdomen, continual high sensitivity of the teeth, abnormal falling of hair from the head and the nails from both hands; the feet stop growing and Start shrinking gradually, there is yellowness of the eyes, white spots appear all over the nails of the hands and feet, the edges of the ear - lobes

plant *ventilago calyculata* (*Rhamnaceae*) given in McFarland’s Thai-English Dictionary, Bangkok, 1941, under the word *rang-daang* p. 707. McFarland does not give the word *rang-chüit* in his dictionary.

1. *Benincasa cerifera* (*Cucurbitaceae*) - McFarland.

become red in colour and begin itching, and there is a feeling of weariness all over the body.

The antidote is the same as in sub-class (2). If in doubt whether one has been poisoned with the *ya-sang*, have a few drops of the sap of sweet potato poured into alcoholic spirit or drinking water and let the sufferer drink it. If he is really being poisoned with this sub-class (3) of *Ya-pit*, he will show a sign of high perturbation or will eructate with the smell of the *wan* poison. Rub some ivory with water and mix it with alcoholic spirit or lime juice. After drinking such an antidote twice or thrice, the victim will revive and finally be cured.

Sub-class (3), "Intoxicating or fumigative poison". The victim of this poison will have a symptom of becoming sleepy, feeling dazed before the eyes, giddy, with a headache and weariness all over the body. If it is known that one is being poisoned, the first aid is to make the person vomit. Subsequently let him drink either boiled ash pumpkin¹⁾ water, boiled *phak boon*²⁾ water, boiled sweet potato water, or certain specific *wan-ya* boiled. He will be cured. As this class of poison is not fatal, the victim will be in a stupor for a period of time, but will gradually become normal in self even if no antidote is used. The thing to do is simply to have plenty of rest.

Though all three of these sub-classes of poison as described are collectively called *ya sang* or conditioned poison, it is sub-class (2), the stomach - destroying poison only that is relevant to the subject I am writing about. I have translated the notes given to me in full, for the reason that it is more or less informative for the study of folk medicine.

Though *ya-sang* or conditioned poison is well-known, the People know it only in name; no one as yet can enlighten me with a satisfactory answer to verify the fact of the practice of this well-known kind of poison. As Korat is geographically the main gateway from lower Central Thailand to the North-Eastern part

1. *Benincassa cerifera* (Cucurbitaceae) - McFarland under the word ພົມ p.606.

2. *Ipomoea aquatica* (Convolvulaceae) - McFarland under the word ພູມ p.484.

of the country, one naturally thinks the practice of conditioned poison must have prevailed in some localities of the latter area. A friend of mine ¹⁾ who was a *Nai Amphur* or district officer in Chaiyabhum, one of the North-East provinces adjoining Korat, wrote me in answer to my inquiry that during the past twenty-three years of his career as a police and district official in many localities ²⁾ of the North-East Area he had never come across any case relating to conditioned poison. Only cases in connection with *yang nong* (upas tree poison) had come to him in his official capacity. He further states that the *ya-sang* or conditioned poison is to be found only as hearsay in Korat. The people there told him that the *ya-sang* is made from a kind of animal like a toad which has a skin the colour of a “newly-made earthen pot” (whitish-red). Its name is *Katang-fai* (กะทังไฟ). It has very poisonous knobs on its skin. Have this *katang fai* dried and then pounded into powder. Secretly put a certain amount of the powder in a spirituous drink, and whoever partakes it will die within two or three hours after drinking it. This is an ordinary poison in the simple sense of the word, but there is another kind of poison named *ya-sang* or conditioned poison. It is made with a certain kind of plant like *wan petchahung* (วนเพชรหึง)³⁾ to be found on the mountains. This is mixed with poison from a certain kind of poisonous animal, and it has to pass through a magical process to arouse its potency by the use of a spell or incantation. If the poisoner wishes his victim to die conditionally when eating a certain kind of meat after a specific number of days or months, such a kind of meat is to be added to the poison. Have this poisonous mixture inserted into the mouth of a cobra (dead?), cut the cobra's throat and bury its head for the same number of days or months after which the poisoner desires his victim to die. The cobra's head is then dug up and pulverized into a powder.

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1. Police Lt. Busya Chintana, now Deputy Governor of Udorn Dhani Province in the North-East Area.
 2. In the provinces of Nakhon Panom, Khon Kaen, Nongkhai, Udorn Dhani, Chaiyabhum.
 3. “A species of giant orchid (*Grammatophyllum speciosum*). ” McFarland, Thai-English Dictionary.

Secretly mix it with food or drink and its effect on the partaker of the food or drink is death if the victim eats a certain meat as specified by the poison after a certain conditioned time period.

Further enquiry from another friend who was then district officer of Aranyaprades,¹⁾ a border district adjoining Cambodia, elicits the following facts:

The practice of *ya-sang* is to be found prevalent among the folk in nearly all parts of the country. In some places it is called *ya klom nang non* (ยาคลอมนางนอน = medicine to lull a maiden to sleep). Prominently it is to be found in certain Parts of the provinces of Chantaburi and Prachinburi.²⁾

The ingredients of the *ya-sang* as practised by the folk are as follows:

(1) Bile from a pea-fowl.

(2) *Ching-kroang* (จิงโกรง), a species of spider, smaller in size than the common spider but with longer legs. It is found in a hole in the forest or in a mountain cave. It moves slightly similar to common spiders when approached by man. (The word *ching-kroang* and the afore-said *chang-kroang* - a kind of jungle toad have nearly identical pronunciation.)

(3) Bile from *mang-han* (ໂມງຫານ), a species of small caterpillar which gives a severe smarting pain if touched.

(4) *Rang-hae fungus* (ເໜັກຮ່າງແກ) to be found wild on the ground with hangings like meshes of a net.³⁾

(5) Arsenic

(6) Acid (in liquid form)

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1. Nai Thiam Ajakul now Deputy Director General of the Department of Public Welfare.
 2. These two provinces adjoin Cambodia on their north-eastern and eastern frontier respectively. The localities where the practice of *yu-sung* is myre frequently in the province of Chantaburi are: Ban (Village) Sam Phan Ta (ບ້ານສາມພັນຕາ) in Krabinburi district; Ban Nong Yai (ບ້ານນອງໄຫຍ້), Ban Chong Kum (ບ້ານຈອງຄູມ) and Sre Or (ແຊຣອ່) in Watana district; and Tambon (Commune) Klong Nam Sai (ຄໍາມ່ລຄລອງນໍ້າໄສ) in Aranyapades district.
 3. A species of fungus having poisonous or intoxicating properties - McFarland's Thai-English Dictionary on word ຮ່າງແກ (*rang hae*).

Have ingredients (Nos. 1 to 4) roasted separately and then pulverized each into powder. Mix these with the other ingredients (Nos. 5 and 6) and store it in a glass bottle sealing it with a glass stopper. The poison cannot be wrapped with paper or cloth for it will corrode the wrapper. While preparing the mixture care must be taken not to be against the wind lest the poison will be borne along with the wind with harmful effect to a person nearby.

If it is desired that the intended victim should become sleepy and then die in his sleep through the effect of the Said *ya-sang*, add roasted *lampoang* seeds¹⁾ and ganja.²⁾ The victim will become mad and subsequently die. The *ya-sang* tan be used as a purgative by adding a certain amount of quick-silver . The victim will have a morbidly profuse discharge of blood from the intestines through the corrosion of the poison in the stomach.

The *ya-sang* can become a conditioned poison when the victim is eating a certain kind of food or fruit; in this case have such food or fruit roasted and mixed with the *ya-sang*. The person will die only after being poisoned when he eats such food or fruit as conditioned. The *ya-sang* can be secretly mixed with food or drink, preferably an alcoholic drink which has an instantaneous effect.

The victim will be in a state of perturbation within 3 hours after having taken the *ya-sang* (with acid mixture) with burning pain in the throat and breast, suffering from a colicky pain and severe headache. If the *ya-sang* is mixed with quick-silver he will have an acute diarrhea, deteriorate in mentality, becoming lean with pale skin like someone with a chronic fever, and will vomit blood. This is the ordinary Symptom of being poisoned with the “unconditioned” *ya-sang*. If the victim is being poisoned with the “conditioned” *ya-sang*, he will die after eating the conditioned food or drink within 24 hours. The effect or the poison shows a symptom of blood in the eyes and of urination also with blood.

To test whether a person is being poisoned with *ya-sang*, let

-
1. *Datura bojeri* (*Solanaceae*) stralmonium - McFarland.
 2. *Cannabis Sativa* (*Urticaceae*) - McFarland

the poisoned person eat a ripe water melon. If he is relieved from the Symptom temporarily only, it is to be inferred that he has been poisoned with *ya-sang*. If in doubt let the sick person eat *taeng-ran* (แตงราน - a variety of large sized cucumber) or he should drink a mixture of *nam sao khao* (น้ำชาวดำ - washing water from rice before boiling) with a root of *mayom* (มะยม - star gooseberry tree) *mafuang* (มะเพ่อง - Carambola tree) rubbed with water.

The above medicine is not a curative agent against the *ya-sang* but to relieve the Patient temporarily only. If still in doubt have the leaves and roots of *chumhet khao khwai* (ชุมเห็ดขาดราษฎร)¹⁾ or ordinary *chumhet* boiled as a decoction and administer it to the patient. If he vomits or has a watery discharge from the bowels instantly after drinking it, it is a sign that he has actually been poisoned. A remedy to counteract the poison is to be administered to the patient immediately.

There are many remedies counteracting the poison. Three of them as revealed with reluctance by the owner of the secret are as follows:

Remedy 1.

- (1) Root of *proang-fa* (โพรังฟ้า)²⁾
- (2) *Ya nang daeng* (yanangdaeng)

Rub these with "washing water from rice before boiling" and then mix it with alcoholic spirit, or have these two materials boiled as a decoction.

Remedy 2.

- (1) *Nguang chum* (งวงชุม - probably a species of herb?)
- (2) *Hua eüang* (หัวอีอง - the bulb of a kind of orchid)
- (3) *Krachao Sida* (กระเชาดสิดา- a species of orchid with broad leaves hanging from its stalk. It is commonly to be found

1. *Cassia spp.* McFarland's Thai-English Dictionary gives names of many species of *chumhet* but not of above species.

2. *Muraya Siamensis* (Rutaceae) - McFarland.
in various places both in a wild or domestic state.)
These are to be boiled together for the patient to drink.

Remedy 3.

(1) Root of *notanong* (โนดทะนง probably *latanong*

ලෙදත්නං - a kind of tree)

(2) *Red Hang-lai* (හංග්ලයේ)¹⁾

(3) Root of *sihuat* (රාග්සීහාට - probably a kind of tree)

These are to be rubbed with “washing water from rice before boiling” with gratings of gold, silver and lead added. This will have a purgative effect instantly after drinking the mixture.

Methods of examination to find whether a person is poisoned by the *ya-sang* are as follows:

Squeeze the finger nails of a person and see whether the blood runs to the bases of his nails. If, when releasing the pressure, the blood runs back slowly, it is a sign that the person has been poisoned by the *ya-sang*.

If the person dies his mouth will become swollen, the tongue, and also the body, will become black in colour with spots on the breast. And the belly will bulge out within 30 minutes after death.

The writer further stated that he had the above information from a certain Buddhist head abbot who exacted a promise from him that he on no account utilized the knowledge of *ya-sang* on living beings either man or animal. For a breach of promise the divulger of the secret would bear a burden of sin. The secret he gave was knowledge for knowledge's sake only. Psychologically this is the idea among the folk that they are not accomplices to any evil deeds done, therefore there is no sin on their heads for whatever secret knowledge is divulged by them.

In one of the papers read at the Conference of Psychiatrists of Thailand in Chiangmai in 1950²⁾ there is a topic on the *ya-sang*.

1. *Amarantus cruentas* (Amaranthaceae) - McFarland

2. เรื่องบรรยายในการประชุมจิตแพทย์แห่งประเทศไทย พ.ศ. 2493 ณ จังหวัด

เชียงใหม่ - โรงพยาบาลเชียงใหม่ พ.ศ. 2494

The belief of the folk as to the nature of *ya-sang* with its symptoms affecting a poisoned person, as related in the paper, save in a few minor details, is fundamentally the same to what has already been described. It classifies the *ya-sang* into three categories, namely:

(1) *Ya-sang* relating to food. Particularly, it is called in accordance to the nature of the food or fruit which has been added as an ingredient in the *ya-sang*, such as *ya-sang-nüa* (meat conditioned poison), *ya-sang nüa khem* (salted meat conditioned poison), *ya-sang kluay* (banana conditioned poison) and so on.

(2) *Ya-sang wan* (conditioned poison relating to days of the week). A person will die after eating this class of poison within, say 5, 7 or 15 specific days.

(3) *Ya-sang ayu* (conditioned poison relating to age). A person partaking this class of poison will suffer a lingering chronic illness, every now and then, throughout the span of his life.

The author says in his paper that he has tried to find out what kind of herbs and plants are used as the principle ingredients of the *ya-sang*, but failed to do so. Several people informed the author that when they wanted a *ya-sang* made they got the desired herbs or plants from jungle folk, or from people who lived far away from the general populace, such as the Karen tribes or the Negritos.

Here are the ingredients and the process of manufacturing the *ya-sang* so far as the author has been able to find out.

- (1) Certain kinds of herbs or plants. (Informers would not give their secrets).
- (2) Moss from a bote (Buddhist temple) or boundary stones of the bote.¹⁾
- (3) Bark from various kinds of trees which spirits or genii inhabit such as *takien* tree,²⁾ *kabok* tree.³⁾ Oblation has to be made to the genii of the tree before the bark can be stripped from the tree.

1. It is worth noting that moss from a *bote* or boundary stones of a *bote* is also used to counteract a love philter.

2. *Hopea odorata* (Diptero carpaceae - McFarland.)

3. *Irvingia malayana* (Simarubaceae - McFarland.)

(4) Have the above ingredients, 1 to 3 boiled until all the water has evaporated to dryness and the substance becomes a powder.

There is a certain rite relating to the boiling of the ingredients. They are to be boiled in the precinct of a cemetery and have human skulls as supporters of the Utensil over the fire-place. During boiling the operator has to recite certain mantras or incantations throughout the process.

If the right antidote is administered in time to a person who has been poisoned by the *ya-sang*, he may be cured. The remedy is called *ya-ton* (ยาถอน = nullifying medicine) which the owner keeps secret. If pressed, he will divulge the secret only by saying that it includes, unspecifically of course, certain kinds of medicinal herbs and plants as the main ingredients. There is also a special incantation to invoke the potency and to assert their effect of such herbs and plants ratifying their potency against the *ya-sang*.

The belief in the *ya-sang* is prevalent in the southern area (Upper Malay Peninsula) of Thailand up to the present day, dominating the mind of the folk, and in particular, among the prelite-rate people inhabiting the fringe of forests and jungles. The *ya-sang* is very wide-spread in the Tapi River Valley in the province of Surat, and also in the provinces of Nakorn Sri Thamarat and Patalung.

The author further states in his paper that he himself had been an eye-witness to one case and also knew someone who was a witness to another of persons who were supposed to have been afflicted with *ya-sang*.

Case 1.

A young villager strong and healthy, 22 years of age, was in love with a girl of another village. Before his death the young man had eaten boiled pumpkin at the girl's village. A few days later he ate some meat Curry with rice in his own village, and had a convulsion with stiff jaws. He died instantly. The young man, before dying had confided to his friends that he was in love with

a girl in another village and had eaten boiled pumpkin, there. The dead man's relatives suspected that the young man was poisoned by *ya-sang* which had been sprinkled either on the pumpkin or on coconut shreds (mixed with a little salt and sugar to be eaten with pumpkin as a sweet-meat). The man who told this Story was known by the author for a number of years and the man's story was a *bona fide* one.

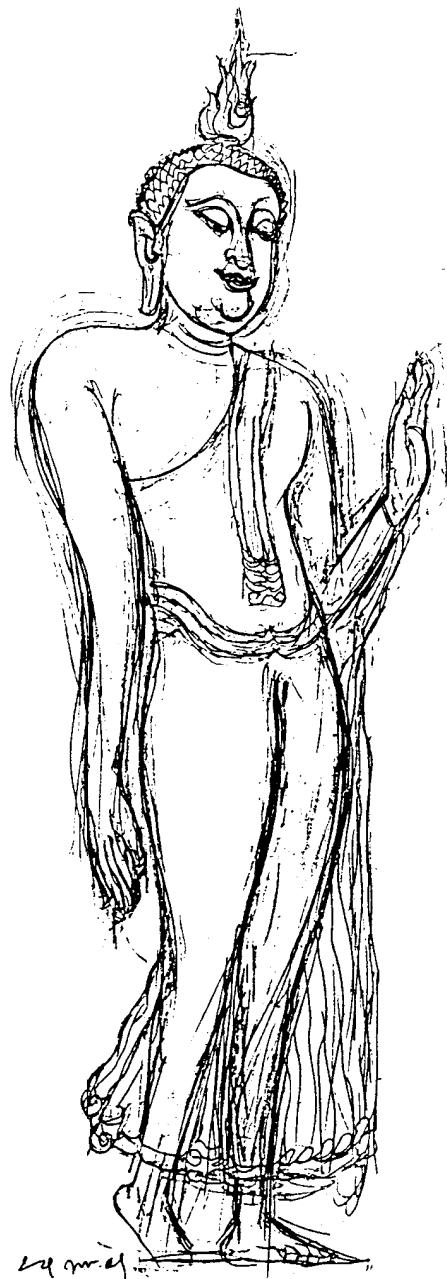
Case 2.

A man, an acquaintance of the author, living in the village *Kroot* (คำบลกງูด) on the upper reaches of Tapi River, Surat Province, came to consult the author for a certain ailment. He had a swollen abdomen and could not be cured by folk medicine. The author failed in his diagnosis of the disease. The sick man went to Bangkok as a patient of a certain hospital, but later on came back as an incurable and entered a hospital at Nakorn Sri - thamarat. Again as an incurable he went back to his home and died there. The villagers believed that he had been poisoned with *ya-sang*, and there was some gossip to the effect that the man had been poisoned by a certain person of that village. The dead man was the headman there and had died through malice of one of the villagers. The author suspected that the man might have died of cirrhosis through the hardening of the liver. He might perhaps have taken something which was injurious to that organ. Probably he might have drunk a large amount of arrack or ardent spirit which is generally found in most outlying villages in Thailand or he had actually been poisoned by *ya-sang*. No one really knew.

The author summed up his opinion on *ya-sang* by saying that it existed, but in the form of ordinary poison only. The strength of such poison is variable for the reason that it is made from certain poisonous herbs or trees which cannot be standardized by scientific measurements. The effect of the poison is, therefore, variable too. The victim of the poison may die instantly or have a lingering death. In many cases the effect of the poison is on the liver, an organ having a function to thwart and destroy poison.

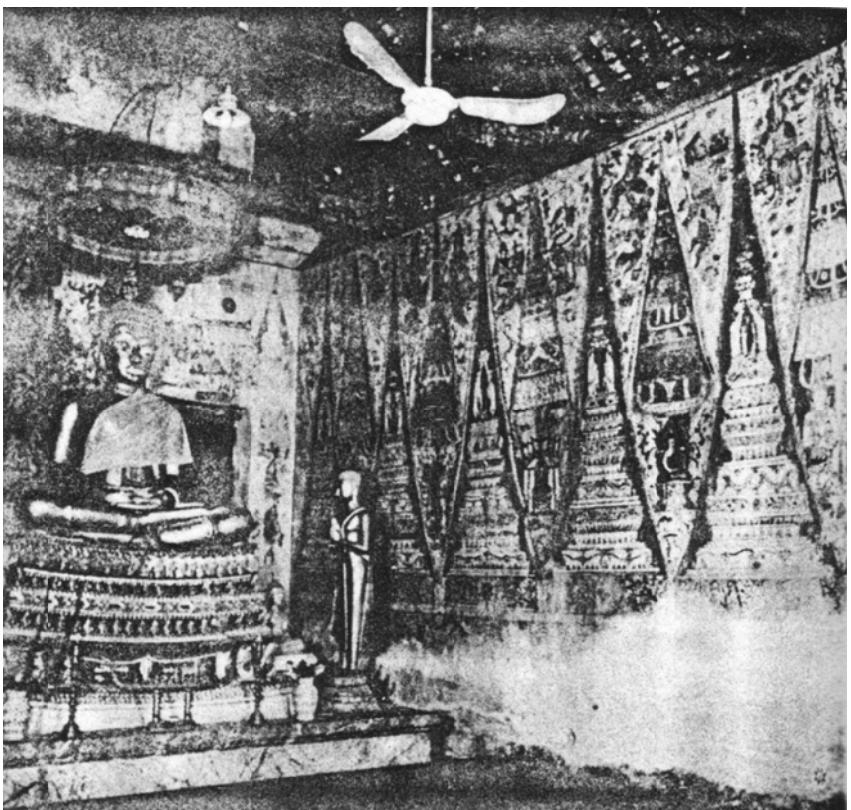
some people may have a strong constitution and the amount of poison may be relatively small, or perhaps the poison is not up to the standard of strength, the poison is, therefore, harmless to the partaker. In such cases the poisoner may plead the excuse that the poison had lost its potency, or the intended victim had been very careful of his food or drink and had never taken such food or drink as conditioned by the poison. Perhaps when the poison, as taken, becomes active in function a man dies merely by coincidence at the time when he has eaten certain food or drink. It is the word sang meaning to direct or command which has taken a strong hold on the country people who dread certain consequences, which, in reality, come from only an ordinary poison, nothing more or less.

My subject on the *ya-sang* is still incomplete and what is written here is meant as data for further studies only.



Chapter 4

The Buddhistic

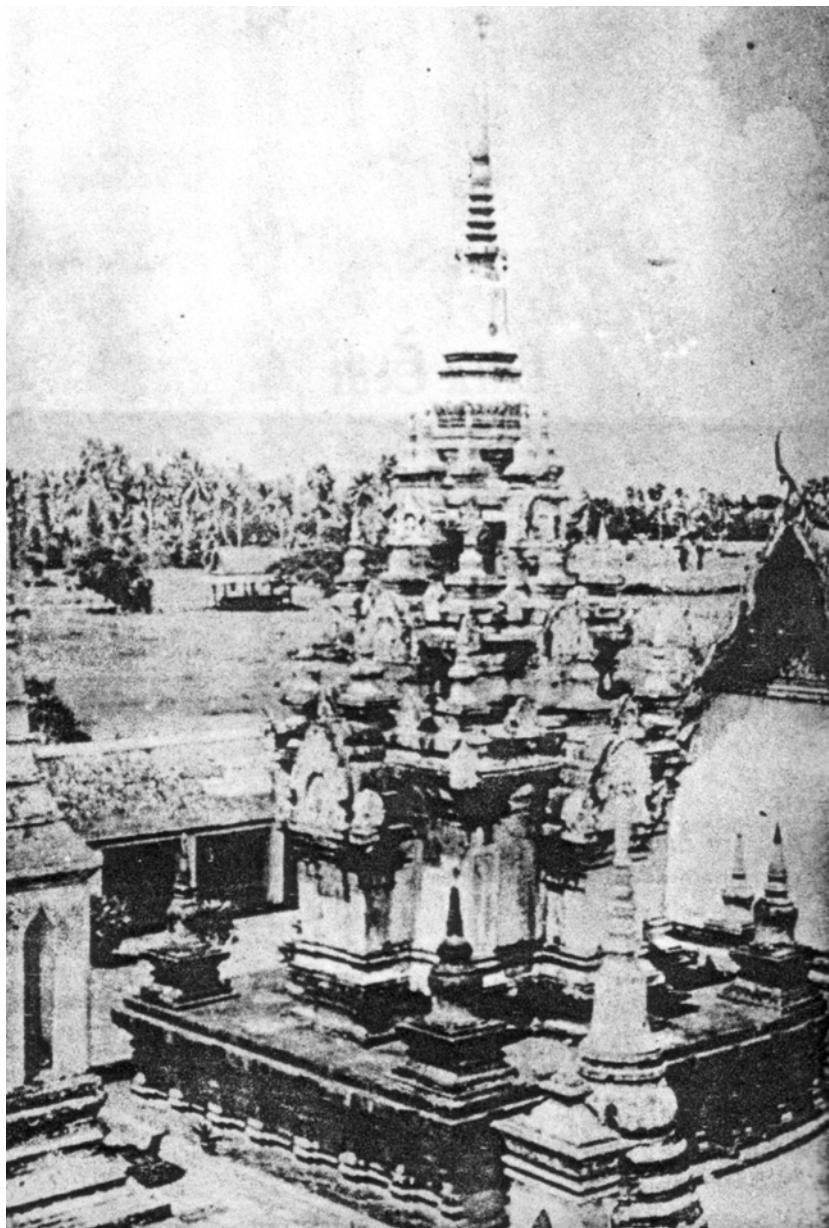


Phra Cedi

No one visiting a Siamese monastery, popularly known as a wat, would fail to notice a certain structure, pyramidal in form with a slender tapering spire at the top. The structure is known in Siamese as a *cedi* or a *Phra Cedi*. In one wat there may be just one *cedi* of a fairly large size, or there may be several of them of varying sizes and decorative schemes. When we talk of a *Phra Cedi* the first word *Phra* is just an honorific, meaning “exalted”, from the Sanskrit *vara*. The honorific is usually prefixed to an object of veneration pertaining to religion or royalty. The second part *cedi*, is the Siamese equivalent of the Pali *cetiya* and the Sanskrit *caitya*. This kind of a monument referred at first to the tumulus raised over the ashes of the dead. - In Siam nowadays it just means a sacred monument or a reliquary. To understand the development of the *cedi* one must go back to ancient times.

In one of the books of the Buddhist Scripture, the *Dham-mapada*, there is the story of a disciple of the Lord Buddha who was gored to death by an ox. He was cremated and the Buddha commanded that a pile of earthwork be raised over his ashes, thereby constituting a tumulus, or *cedi*. Such a custom of raising earthen mounds over the ashes of a saint was not unknown to Brahmans and Jains of olden times.

Scholars now distinguish such monuments as the *cedi* in



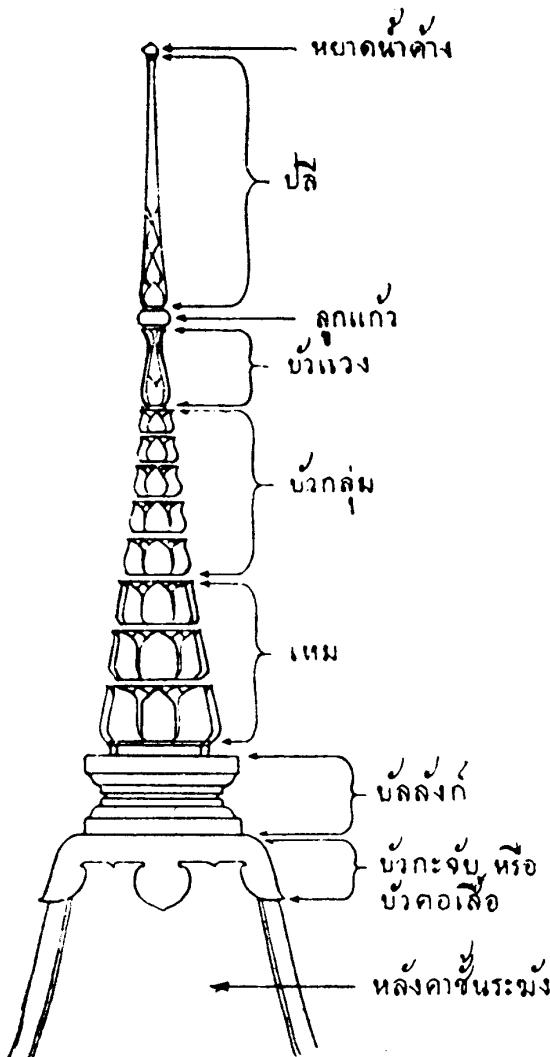
The Mahadhatu of Jaiya



Wat Chang Lòm (the cedi surrounded by elephants), Sri Sajjanalya



Cedi, relic monuments of the Buddha at Wat Po (Bodhi) in Bangkok



The spire of the Prasad. From top to the bottom the parts of the srei are as follows : the dew drop; the pli or plantain bud; the round ball; the bua waeng or fillet; the bua klum or lotus cluster; the hém; the banlang or platform; the neck; the bell.

four categories, namely:

1. *Phra Dhatucededi* (*Dhatucetiya* in Pali), containing what is supposed to have been the Buddha's own ashes;
2. *Pra Boripokacedi* (*Paribhogacetiya* in Pali), containing articles supposed to have been personally used by the Buddha, such as his begging bowl and robes. Under this category are also included the four sacred sites in connection with the history of the life of the Buddha : namely, his birth - place at Kapilavastu, the place where he became enlightened (Bodhagaya), the place where he preached his first sermon (Sarnath) and the place where he died (Kusinara);
3. *Phra Dhammacedi* (Pali *Dhammacetiya*), the depository of his teaching or law;
4. *Phra Udesikacedi* (Pali *Udesikacetiya*), which takes the form of a reminder of religion, such as the image of the Buddha.

The first category, known also as a *Stupa* in Sanskrit, or *Thupa* in Pali, is also called *sathup* in Siamese. It is sometimes referred to in Siamese as *Phra Sathupcedi*. In Ceylon it is *dhatu - gabba*, which has been anglicized into dagoba. Curiously enough, there is the well - known word *pagoda*, meaning temple, shrine or *cedi*, which sounds somewhat similar.

In several of the bigger *wats* there is only one cedi of large proportions. This would be the *Phra Dhatucededi*, of the first category. Usually the *wat* possessing such an important monument would be known as *Wat Phra Mahadhatu*, meaning then wat of the great reliquary of the Lord Buddha. It has been traditional for a royal city to have a *Wat Phra Mahadhatu*. Here in Bangkok there is a *Wat Mahadhatu* behind the previous National Library. Another one, a *Wat Phra Sri Mahadhatu*, built some fifteen years ago, is in the northern suburb of Bangkok, near the Donmuang aerodrome. At Lopburi there is also a *Wat Mahadhatu* to the west

of the railway Station. The towns of Ayudhya, Pisnulok and Sukhodaya also have one each. This indicates that these towns have been at one time or another a capital city.

These *cedi*-monuments are fundamentally similar in structure though details in their decorations may differ. A *cedi* may be divided for analytical purposes into four parts, namely : the plinth, the dome-shaped structure called the bell, the platform and the spire. There are of course many styles of *cedi* in Siam and neighbouring countries, but those in Bangkok are mostly confined to the style known as the Ceylonese; and they are the ones described above.

If we compare this type of *cedi* with the well-known stupa of Sanci we see at once that the Siamese type of *cedi* is obviously developed from it in that both have a simple round tumulus surrounded by a balustrade. This round tumulus has become the “bell” or dome - shaped structure of our *cedi*, which, by further architectural development may often take a rectangular form, with or without reduced angles or corners and other decorations. The balustrade becomes the plinth of our local type with many superimposed tiers ordained by traditions of architecture. The lowest tier is sometimes widened to form a terrace for circumambulations. Above the dome - shaped structure at the “neck of the bell” (ດອරະພັງ) is a small quadrangular platform called in Siamese *Banlang* (Pali *pallanka*) with a number of colonnades above it. This platform is characteristic of the Ceylonese style. The platform might have been a place where a symbol of the relic within was deposited. Above the platform we come to the slender tapering spire. The lower part of this latter section consists of circles diminishing in diameter, superimposed one upon the other, called in Siamese *plong chanai* (ປິລົງຈ່ານ). The word *chanai* is the name of a musical instrument of the hautboi kind with many circles round its body. Hence the above name. It is perhaps the same as the Malay *suranei*, a kind of a hautboi which is again to be found in Persia. These circles, or *plong chanai*, have no doubt been developed from the idea of tiered parasols diminishing

in diameter as they rise to the top of the spire. Sometimes the circles take the shape of lotus flowers known in Siamese as the *bua klum* (ប្រាកតុម) meaning lotus clusters. Above the circles is the *pli*, or plantain bud, so called on account of its shape. This again may be divided into the upper and lower *pli* with a round ball in between. At the culminating Point of the upper *pli* is another round ball, called in Siamese *yad nam khang* (យាតន័ែកាំង), or dewdrop. I am particular in describing the various parts of the *cedi*, for they are fundamentally similar to the spired roof of the King's palace, which is called in Siamese *prasad*, from the Sanskrit *prasad*, a storeyed building.

The composition of a *Phra Cedi* may be compared with that of the *sikhara* of the Hindu temple. That part of the *cedi* called the bell would then correspond to the *garbha*, or chamber in the Hindu *sikhara*. In a large sized *cedi* there is of course a chamber inside the bell. The *banlang*, or platform, of a *cedi* is the *devagriha*, i.e., God's house, in the *sikhara* and the spire of a *cedi* is the actual *sikhara*, referring to the mountain peak on which gods in Hinduism are supposed to live. The dewdrop of a Cedi is equivalent to the *kalasa* or *Kumbha* in the Hindu *sikhara*, meaning a water-pot. I introduce the Hindu *sikhara* into my description of a *cedi* because some of the *cedi* and some of the *prasad* of the royal palaces have conventional tops like the Hindu *sikhara* instead of the more common tapering slender spires. The Hindu *sikhara* is called in Siamese a *prang* (ប្រាយក់) and in shape is like the cob of the Indian corn, a characteristic example of which is the tower-tops found in Angkor Thom. The *prang* in Siam has undergone a series of developments, the latest of which may be seen in the big *cedi* of Wat Arun, colloquially called Wat Chaeng, opposite Wat Poon the other side of the river. Such monuments are generally called *prang* instead of *cedi*, although their purpose is similar to that of a *cedi*. It is, in fact, a *cedi* in the shape of a *prang*.

The gigantic *cedi* at Phra Pathom was formerly a dome-like structure with a *prang* on top. A replica of the original *cedi* was

may still be seen in the precincts of the great monument. This original *cedi* was later, in the reign of King Mongkut, completely covered by the present big *cedi*.

To sum up there are three types of *cedi*, namely : the one with a tapering slender spire, which is the most frequently met with; the one with a *prang* on top; and the one which is a *prang* entirely.

If one looks at the spires of the *prasad*, or royal palace, one will notice that there are also two kinds of them. One is the slender tapering spire shooting up from the middle of the roof, such as may be seen in the case of Dusit Mahaprasad in the Grand Palace; and the other is a *prang* placed on top of the roof in a similar way, only one example of which exists. It is at the Royal Pantheon in the precincts of the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha. One will note at a glance that the slender tapering spire of a *prasad* is, in structure and composition, similar to the first kind of a *cedi*. The only difference lies in the superimposed circles above the platform of a *cedi*, the lower part of which becomes, in the case of the *prasad*, a number of flat pieces with pointed tops arranged round the axis. Its upper part rises in three diminishing tiers of "lotus clusters". Such an upper part is in some instances found on the spire of a *cedi* too. The flat pieces with pointed tops are called *hem* in Siamese, from the Sanskrit *hema*, meaning gold. Hence the King's palace of the *prasäd* type is called *prasad yod hem* in differentiation from the *prasad yod prang*, the *prasad* with a *prang* on top.

The Siamese word *hem*, from the Sanskrit *hema* meaning gold, is of course derived from the Sanskrit *hima* (snow). Now the Himalaya has a peak, the Kailas, where Siva is supposed to dwell. The Himalaya is referred to in Siamese as Hemabanhphot (from *hemaparbata*, the golden mountain, so called from the gold-like glitter of its snow). Our flat pieces, which go by the names of *hem*, derive their names from this simile. Siamese royalty in the later period of Ayudhya adopted the outward forms of the Khmer theory of divine kingship, in which the monarch is more or less identified with godhead in the person of Siva, the Hindu paramount god, and was therefore expected to dwell on what is

made to correspond to the *sikhara* of Kailas where Siva supposedly dwells. Unable perhaps to build a *sikhara* in wood superimposed on the roof of a *prasad*, a structure in the shape of a *cedi* had to be put up instead. In order to have something resembling a *sikhara*, a conventional symbol of the golden mountain, or *hem*, is added to the slender tapering spire. The case of the *prang* being superimposed on top of a roof to represent a *sikhara* like the one at the Royal Pantheon in the precincts of the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha should be taken to be exceptional for it is the only one in existence in the whole country. It was probably not meant to be a human dwelling at all.

There is yet another type of edifice in some of the monasteries which has a spired roof like a *prasad* or *cedi*. This is called a *mondop*, from the Sanskrit *mandapa*, referring to a temporary shed or building attached to the *sikhara*. Here in Siam, however, the *mondop*, such as the one on the raised platform to the north of the Chapel Royal, serves to house the Holy Scriptures. A *mondop* and a *prasad* are similar in superstructure with the exception of the latter's having a ground plan somewhat like a Greek Cross with four more or less projecting porches on each side, while the *mondop* has a square floor without the many superimposed roofs.

I have deviated too long from my main subject - the *cedi*. I shall now pick up the thread of my story. Besides the first type of *cedi* there are of course other types to be found in *wats*, among which the most numerous is the fourth type where a Buddha - image or images are deposited as already mentioned. It used to be popular belief that to build a *wat*, to have a Buddha - image cast or to erect a *cedi* or any other religious monument was meritorious. Moreover persons who erected a *cedi*, in addition to gaining merit thereby, desired it to serve as a place where they could have the ashes of their departed dear ones properly deposited in an atmosphere of sanctity in the same way as Christians used to deposit the remains of their departed relatives near the Cross. Hence these *cedi* both large and small are to be found everywhere in monasteries or infrequently in uninhabited places perched on high by a moun-

tain side.

Later the building of these *cedi* degenerated, and cheap inartistic ones were constructed with nothing sacred deposited within but the ashes of the common dead. In fact enterprising Chinese artisans cast some of these *cedi* ready - made in cement in detachable parts. Thus some *wats* on the outskirts of big cities are studded with these cheap *cedi*. In the north and the northeast provinces people sometimes build brick cells in the shape of a *cedi* and deposit therein the ashes of their dead. They do not call these monuments *cedi* but *ku*, that is, cells.

In building a *cedi* in the old days, in addition to depositing in it images of the Buddha, valuables such as jewels and gold were also included as offerings to the Buddha. Such a custom has in later times one undesirable effect, for the *cedi* is partly destroyed by treasure hunters.

Thet-Maha-Chat

1. The Story

In the opening part of the introduction to the book “Buddhist Birth Stories” Prof. Rhys Davids gives the following comment:

“It is well - known that among the Buddhist Scriptures there is one book in which a large number of old stories, fables and fairy tales he enshrined in an edifying commentary; and have been thus pre - served for the study and amusement of later times. How this came about is not at present quite certain. The belief of orthodox Buddhists on the subject is this: The Buddha, as occasion arose, was accustomed throughout his long career to explain and comment on the events happening around him by telling of similar events that have occurred in his own previous births. The experience, not of one lifetime only, but of many lives, was always present to his mind: and it was this experience he so often used to point a moral or adorn a tale.”

These birth - stories are called in Thai “Chadok” (*Pali - jataka*), and there are 550 in number. They have been a storehouse of folklore and literary productions ,in this country until recent times, and influenced not in the least the life of the people. Of all these birth - stories, the last ten, before the Lord Buddha attained his Buddhahood after a long chain of re - births, are deemed the more important. They are called collectively “Thotsachat” (*Pali - dasa Jati*) or “The Ten Births”, a name peculiar only to Thai Buddhism. The last one called “Wetsandon Chadok” (*Vessantara Jataka*) is the most important. It is called Maha Chat.

(*Pali - Maha Jati*) or the “Great Birth”. According to Buddhist belief, before he could obtain his Buddhahood, the Lord Buddha had to perfect himself with the Ten Virtues. These could not be done in a single lifetime but through the ten stages of virtuous life as depicted in the last ten births. A person striving to become a Buddha by perfecting the Ten Virtues is called a Bodhisat - a would - be Buddha or one who seeks enlightenment. Such a Bodhisat cult forms fundamentally the ideal of the Northern Buddhism, the Mahayan Sect. The Wetsandon Chadok, Buddha’s last birth but one on earth, portrays the life of Prince Wetsandon fulfilling his mission as a Bodhisat. Thus he had perfected himself to a culmination which fitted him to become a Buddha. Hence the life of Prince Wetsandon is the highest ideal of the faith and one which the people like to hear recited for Prince Wetsan - don’s supreme sacrifice touches their heart. The story in brief is as follows:

Wetsandon, the crown prince of a certain kingdom gave away his white elephant as alms to a party of Brahmins from a famine - stricken country. The elephant was a noble animal, for the country which possessed it would know no scarcity of rain. When it was known that Prince Wetsadon had given his magic elephant away, the populace were horrified and appealed to the old King. The old King was very angry but the only thing he could do was to banish his beloved son from the country at once. Prince Wetsandon, accompanied by his consort, Princess Matsi (Madri) and his two children left the country. Before he left the city he gave away all his valuable property to the number of seven hundred of each kind, to the people. Such a gift is called the “Great Donation” which form one of the great sacrifices of a Bodhisat in order to perfect himself before he can attain Buddha - hood. Prince Wetsandon also distributed freely gold and silver to the people before he and his family left the city gates in his horse - drawn chariot. He had not gone very far when a group of Brahmins begged for his chariot and horse. He gladly gave them away, and made the rest of the journey on foot. He carried one of the children, a boy, whilst his wife carried the other, a girl.

He and his wife suffered great hardships even refusing the help of a neighbouring king. At last he made abode with his family in a certain forest and led the life of a hermit.

An aged Brahmin mendicant named Chuchok, by an accident of fortune, had a young but bad - tempered, scolding wife. She was obedient at first to the old man and went out every day to the village well to draw water for domestic use. The women of the village did not like her for doing so and for being such a meek and obedient wife, for their husbands wanted them to do the same, citing this girl as an example of a good wife. However, the women did not like to follow this example and this gave rise to many family squabbles. Then the women came in a body and picked a quarrel with the girl as she was, to their belief, the source of their troubles. Injured by foul words and ridicule from her own species, the girl became shrew and sent her aged husband out to beg of Prince Wetsandon his two children and to bring them back as slaves. The old man, who could refuse his young and beautiful wife nothing, went on a long journey in search of Prince Wetsandon. After many adventures through big and small forests, he arrived at the hermitage of Prince Wetsandon whose wife was at that time away gathering fruits in the forest and was prevented by divine intervention from coming back in time. The old Brahmin beggar had already left the hermitage with her two children whom her husband had given away. There was a tragic scene of sorrow and pathos to the extreme, but subsequently subdued by the exhortations of Prince Wetsandon to his wife that great merit would accrue as a result of such a supreme sacrifice.

Now Indra the King of Gods, knowing that Prince Wetsandon had nothing left but his wife, became alarmed lest he would give her away also, to some unworthy one. He therefore went to the hermitage disguised as an aged Brahmin and asked Prince Wetsandon for his wife. Prince Wetsandon readily gave her away whereupon the King of Gods revealed himself in his true form and gave back to Prince Wetsandon his wife asking the Prince to take charge of her as a trust. This was to prevent the Prince

from giving her away again. After a bestowal of blessings on prince Wetsandon, the King of Gods departed for Heaven.

Meanwhile Chuchok, the old Brahmin mendicant, with the two royal children whom he ill - treated, lost his way home on the journey back. The road he took led him to the capital of Prince Wetsandon's father. The old King saw and recognized his two grandchildren and he gave a large amount of money to the old Brahmin as the price of ransom for his two grandchildren. The old man readily accepted the money, but died later on through his gluttony. The old King whose anger had now cooled and whose paternal feelings towards his son were now revived, together with his queen and a large retinue went to Prince Wetsandon's hermitage and asked the Prince to renounce his hermit's life and return to the palace. This was successful. Prince Wetsandon and his wife came back amid the great rejoicing of the people and a sumptuous festival. Here ends the story.

Many details and incidents of the story which appear to be somewhat exaggerated are omitted if no explanatory comments are given: a thing which cannot be done in such a condensed form. The story of Prince Wetsandon is divided into 13 parts or divisions called in Thai "kan" (*Pali - kanda*). It is a very well - known story in Thailand and influences immensely the life of the mass of the people. The story serves as an inspiration to Thai poets and artists of the old school. For the story contains noble sentiments, humour, pathos and beautiful descriptive scenes which give play to their power of imagination and artistic expression. The original story is in Pali, but there are, from its literal translation, many versions in paraphrase not to mention the versions in other language dialects. The various versions are written generally in a kind of prose - poem in a non - metrical rhyming pattern, which allows a free play on words in a rhetorical manner. The oldest version which dates back some 400 years is used as a subject of literary study in Chulalongkorn University. Many of the "kans" or parts were written by many famous Thai poets. The book as a whole is called "Maha Chat" or "The Great Birth", a well - known household name in the Thai language.

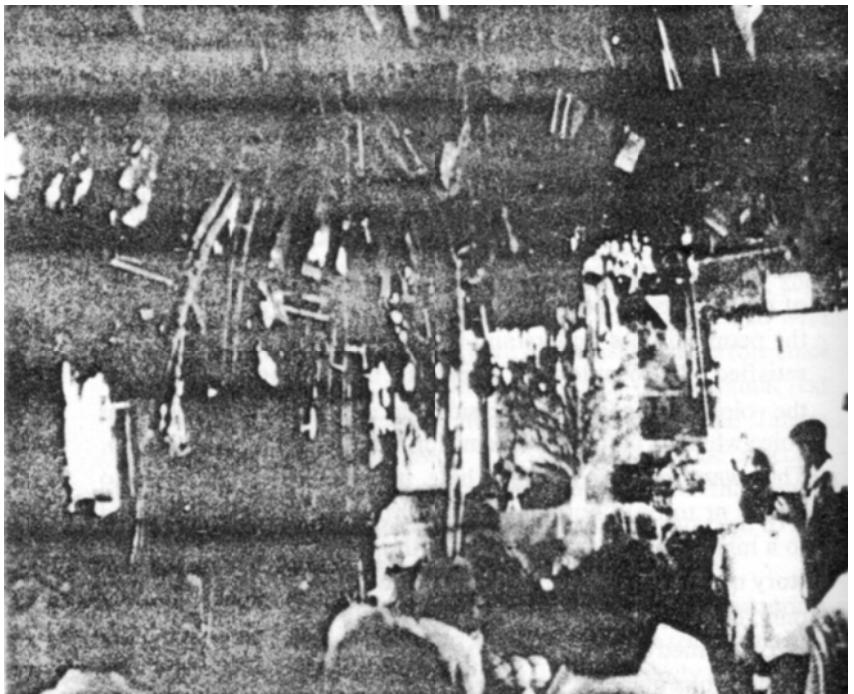
2. The Customs

Every year after the traditional three month term of religious Lent and retreat of Buddhist monks expires, i.e. usually in the latter parts of October, many wats or monasteries have their own “Thet Maha Chat” festival. “Thet” means to preach, to give a sermon, but in this instance, to recite or to give a recitative sermon of the Maha - chat or the Great Birth story. The recitation may be performed during the Sat (*Pali - Sarda*) or mid - year Autumnal Festival in early October, or on other special occasions such as the raising of funds for the monastery. The reason why it is usually performed after the Lent is obvious. For during the period October to December, food especially fish and prawns, are in abundance, and the people, in particular the countryfolk, have a comparative leisure time. In former days the recitation of the Maha Chat might be performed at a private residence in special cases or in the preaching hall of the village. Nowadays the Performance, as far as I know, is confined to the preaching hall within the precincts of a wat. The recitation begins early in the morning and continues sometimes to late midnight. It is the traditional belief of the people that whosoever hears the Maha Chat or the Great Life in its complete story, will gain great merit . I think in the old days opportunities of hearing such recitations were rare for want of the texts and monks who were versed in such a recitation. But here in Bangkok the performance may be carried over many continuous days. The original text of the Great Birth contains a number of gathas or Pali stanzas diffused throughout the story. These stanzas may be collected in the form of one special text. They are called “Gatha Phan” or the “Thousand Stanzas”. Special attention is attached to this Gatha Phan, as you will learn later on.

Each of the thirteen kans or parts bears a name appropriate to the episodes of the story, and at the end of each recitation there is a performance of music with a particular melody of its own. each of whom is trained for each particular kan in its recitation which has its own musical theme. Accustomed to such a melody, many of the people know, when they hear

recitation or the music played at the end of each kan, the progress of the performance. In a village where music cannot be obtained there is no obligation and if there is music and the musicians cannot play the right melody the rule is not strictly adhered to. As long as there is music and noise to mark an interval between each kan, that is all that is required by the people. Each kan must have a sponsor - owner either individually or collectively in number. It is the duty of the owner of a kan to provide a gift for the presiding monk with money and things fit for merit offering. These are called "Kreung Kan" or material things of the kan. They include monk's robes and essential requisites for monks, eatables and sweetmeats and a large quantity of fruits of the season. Any person, apart from the owner, may join in the meritmaking by contributing money or anything else to the common offering for whichever kan he prefers.

Now the recitation of the version of its whole thirteen parts takes too long to come to a conclusion. It begins early in the morning and does not come to an end before midnight. It is therefore, on special occasions, curtailed. Only the Gatha Phan or the Pali Thousand Stanzas are recited as a whole. Such a recitation alone is not popular with the people. Although the hearing of such sacred words recited may give rise to mystical feelings, the people do not understand them and their emotions are not satisfied. The people want something more. They want to hear the voice of their favourite presiding monk, to hear his melodious voice which is familiar to them, for many are able to recite too. They want to live in love and hate, in happiness and sorrow, to be sad or to be in humour, and to raise their imaginative mind to a higher - plane and ideal, which the various characters of the story manifest. Hence the reciting of the Pali Thousand Stanzas only, does not appeal to the masses. They want the recitation to be performed in full, both the versions and the stanzas. To recite the versions alone, if I am right, is not tolerated by the people. For the contents in the version are more of a secular nature, and in fact in some parts of the story, the reciter has to display his wit and additions of his are thrown into the recitation which



The Great Sermon

sometimes border on drollery and vulgarity. The orthodox people frown. As I am writing the story from its psychological point of view, it is irrelevant therefore to discuss the professed faith in its purity. The religion of the intellectual and of the mass, though identically one and the same, is not exactly the same. It is the emotion that counts as a driving force to the living religion. For what a people may be said to believe as shown by its behaviour, is the thing I have in mind. No religion of the people is pure without its bits and traces of older belief and temperament, more or less, absorbed, and no religion can be fully understood from the point of view of outsiders. I can now go on with my story with ease.

It has been a tradition here from the King downwards to have his eldest and beloved son, enter the Faith as a “nane” (*Pali-samanera*) or novice during his boyhood, and once to become temporarily a monk for at least three months of the year when he reaches his manhood at the full age of twenty years. The popular belief is that when a son becomes a novice, the gates of hell are shut for the mother of that son, and for his father when he becomes a monk. This belief is important in a sense. For it contributes a living force to the Faith, not to say to that of the wat or monastery which has been a comparative centre of learning and spiritual training up to the present day. The novice, apart from learning and observance in certain cases, is to be initiated in the recitation of the Great Birth. There is a certain kan or parts of its story which has a popular and favourite melody and one which the father of the novice wishes his son to learn and recite. When he has mastered the kan with its melody, he is invited to give a recitation of that kan at his parents’ house. It is a great day for there is a gathering of the family, also of friends and neighbours to hear the recitation of the Great Birth by the novice. As a rule the novice will recite only the kan or part he is able. This is done as a special instance and has nothing to do with the ordinary recitation I am describing. Such a performance, it is believed, is done in imitation of one episode of the Lord Buddha’s life, when after having attained his Buddhahood, the Buddha

came back to his country and preached a sermon to the gathering of his family and kinsmen recounted his last birth as Prince Wetsandon. The imitation is deemed to be a highly meritorious act, and it has been done with great psychological display by the family of the novice. They are proud of the novice's ability and the friends and neighbours join in the rejoicing. This custom is seldom done nowadays. Many Kings and Princes of the present dynasty have, in the past, entered the Faith as a novice and have performed such a recitation of the Great Birth for the monarchs, their august forefathers.

3. The Preparation

Before the Thet Maha Chat or the recitation of the Great Birth takes place, the monks of the wat where the performance is to be held, and certain leading members of the village or other communities, discuss the date and production of the performance. When everything has been planned as to who will be the owner of which particular kan or which part of the recitation, circular invitations are made out in advance, in order that the invited persons may have ample time to prepare and arrange the presentation gifts. Sometimes more than one family or other persons combine as a single owner of their particular kan. Each owner vies with the other for the Performance. They want to be the best in this matter of merit - making. For such an occasion comes but once a year. The village which does not have the Thet Maha Chat performed, suffers "loss of face", and nobody, if he can, will refuse the invitation to participate in the common merit - making of their own wat in their own village.

Now suppose you accept the invitation to be one of the owners of the thirteen kans, you have to prepare and arrange both food and other essentials as offerings for the occasion. There will be bustle and merriment in the house on the eve of the recitation which is going to take place, the cooking of food and the preparing of sweetmeats both for merit - making and for feeding the people. For on such an occasion, neighbours will come to

help you. It is a custom that neighbours should help one another on such occasions which require neighbourly help. You need not ask them to come, for they will come voluntarily, and etiquette requires that you return this help to them when opportunity arises. This custom has gradually disappeared in Bangkok and other progressive places where money is everything and the spirit of neighbourly help is somewhat lacking.

Usually there is a big basket made of bamboo in the shape of a huge blooming lotus flower with its many coloured - paper petals pasted on, together with other decorations. This basket is called "Krachat Yai" or 'big basket' and is used as a carrier for things offered as merit - making. It is sometimes so big that it takes a number of persons to carry in a procession from the house to the wat. If there are a great number of things as offerings, the basket is used for food, sweetmeats and fruits, as the case may be, while the other things such as monks' robes and other requisites are put in special valuable vessels or carriers. On the actual day when the recitation is to take place and when the time arrives, all the offerings are carried in a procession with music and other performances as the case may be. You know the approximate time when the recitation of the kan of which you are the owner, is to take place. Suppose it is the first or second kan, then you have to reach the wat in time, early in the morning. If it is a later kan, say the tenth or eleventh, the time will be in the evening and you can gauge the approximate time. There will be crowds of people along the route to witness the procession. If you are a wealthy man and your offerings are mean, there will be gossip in the village and you will "lose face", which psychologically, you do not desire. If there are many wealthy owners of different kans or parts of the recitation, it will be a great day. For there will be competition among them - selves as to whose offerings and procession are the best and most costly because everyone wants to "gain face" as much as possible. I speak here of the custom of the village life of the people which, essentially, is all alike. You will not be able to see such things as I describe in present - day Bangkok or in other progressive towns.

Everything has changed due to the progress of time. The traditional Thet Maha Chat is still a living force but the aspect of the merry side is now on the wane. Many of the younger generation whose attitude of mind tends to subordinate the traditional to the novel, view the performance of the Thet Maha Chat unappreciatively. Certainly, they are right in a sense. To hear such recitations take too long a time and the droning sounds are too monotonous for them to appreciate. There is nothing provided by way of contrast. This is more than they can tolerate. In order to save this old tradition from being lost altogether, a novel way is introduced in Bangkok today when a theatrical performance of each episode of the story is given just before the recitation takes place of each kan. This is to attract the attention of the people. It is an innovation in place of the merrier side of the custom which is not now to be seen in Bangkok. Strange to say, the Thibetan has a play depicting the life of Prince Wetsandon as an annual performance.

We will leave the procession as narrated in suspension for the time being, and describe what happens at the wat when the Thet Maha Chat is to take place.

4. The Wat and the Performance

The entrance into the wat on the day of the Maha - Chat recitation is made as a son of gate decorated with branches of trees. This is called the "Pratu Pa" or the "Forest Gate". Along the path after passing the forest gate, a sort of ceremonial fence called "Rachawat" or King's fence (Yazamat in Burmese) is erected at intervals and decorated with flags and banana trees. Usually banana trees with bunches of ripe fruit are preferred. On reaching the preaching hall there is another forest gate. Sometimes the path in question is made in a sort of maze or labyrinth in order to confuse those who have to pass along the passage. This maze is called "Khao Wongkot", the name of the mountain where Prince Wetsandon had his hermitage. In the preaching hall every post is decorated with a banana tree or sometimes with a sugar

cane tree. There hang in some preaching halls thirteen paintings depicting the life of Prince Wetsandon as narrated in the thirteen kans or parts. These may be profitably compared to those of the pictures of the Way of the Cross as seen in the Roman Catholic Church. In some places, the preaching hall is hung all over with home - made toys made of interlaced leaves and split bamboo or of wood, in the shape of birds, fish, etc. They are sometimes painted. These toys are distributed to the children after the recitation ends. There are also small flags in various colours to the number of one thousand, which is equal to the Gatha Phan or the Thousand Stanzas.

Now we can go on with the description of the procession which we left off in the last chapter. Arriving at the wat the procession passes the Forest Gate into the path leading to the preaching hall. If the path is made into a maze there will certainly be fun when you get into a blind passage and become confused. You may even have to pay a fee to the guide if you are in a hurry to reach the preaching hall. When the procession arrives at the preaching ball, and if the preceding kan or part is still in progress, it means that you are before time. You will have to wait outside until the preceding kan comes to an end. Then you can carry all your offerings to their proper place in the preaching ball, a place in front of the preaching canopy. There is bustle and ado during such times when the offerings of the preceding kan, which has ended, are taken out and offerings of the next kan are carried in. Some of the people who have heard the recitation will come out and the new audience will go in. There is music marking the end of a kan and there is more music marking the beginning of another kan. As already described, there are small coloured flags equal to the Gatha Phan. The number of these thousand gathas is distributed unevenly among the thirteen kans. Suppose your kan has, say, 80 gathas or stanzas, then you have 80 flags sticking in rows on both sides of the place where the offerings are placed. Besides the small flags, there are also small beeswax candles equal in number to that of the small flags. There are flowers for offering too. In some cases when there is a special kan in which the whole

Gatha Phan of the Thousand Stanzas are recited alone as a whole, the owner of such a kan has flowers, usually lotus flowers and small candles to the number of a thousand, as an offering. In former days lotus flowers grew wild in certain parts of the country. There is a place some thirty miles up the Menam Chao Phya River where lotus were in abundance during the season. This was the place where the Kings obtained their lotus for offering purposes. That place is now known as Pathum Thani (*Pali-Paduma Dhani*) or commonly called "Muang Pathum", the Lotus Town.

Now when the preaching or recitation is to begin, candles and incense sticks as provided, will be lit, and an act of worship is made to the Buddhist Three Gems, i.e. the Buddha, his Law and his Body of the Clergy or Sangha. The presiding monk will pronounce an act of faith and give the usual five observances, which acceptance is binding to the receiver for at least that whole day and night. After such rite has been performed, the preaching or recitation may then begin.

As has already been said, the first kan or part starts early in the morning. It has been the custom that the presiding monk must be the abbot of the wat where the recitation takes place. Apart from the usual offering there must also be offered, a boiled pig's head complete with its four legs and tail, and a "Bai Sri Pak Cham", a sort of ritual - boiled rice in a big earthen bowl. Nobody can give me a reasonable explanation of this offering, except that it is merely a tradition and a custom. Here I venture a conjecture. It is a custom among well - to - do people to have a "Bai Sri" and a boiled pig's head, as an offering to the guardian spirit or nats, in Burmese, of the place, when an important undertaking is to be carried out and a successful issue is desired. This has nothing to do with Buddhism but is a survival of the belief of primitive days. The guardian spirit of the place where an important undertaking is to take place must be propitiated before - hand. The boiled pig's head with the four legs and the tail is nothing but a supposedly whole pig. It is easy to hoodwink the unseen, if you think so. Now you will understand why the abbot

is the first person to perform the recitation for the abbot himself is the tangible guardian of the place.

The recitation of the first kan takes place early in the morning, therefore the congregation are few in number, with the exception of the owner of the kan and his party, and a few old people who wish for merit. There will gradually be more people in the congregation in the succeeding kans until the fifth kan describing the scene of Chuchok, the aged Brahmin mendicant and his shrew, the young and beautiful wife. There is much drollery and humour which naturally attracts the people. If the reciting monk is well - known for his wit and humour, the place is packed to the utmost, for people from far and near, come to hear the recitation. The young men will ask for encores and more money contributions will willingly be made by the congregation. We call such monetary offering "Tit Thian Kan Thet" or the "sticking (of money) for the reciting kan to the candle": the custom of sticking money to a big beeswax candle provided for the purpose. In former days such recitations with additions of drollery and humour in some cases overstepped the limits of modesty and were distasteful to cultured minds. Through the progress of time such things are now seldom to be found, for moral ideas have changed, but the need for humour is still there with the folk. While here in Bangkok the recitation in some wats has the tendency to be more prosaic and has become monotonous thus depriving much of its psychological value of display and ceremony which the mind needs as well.

After the recitation ends with the thirteenth karr, there is a supplementary kan giving an exposition of the "Four Noble Truths" as preached by the Lord Buddha after he had recounted his last "Great Birth" to the audience. The preaching of the "Four Noble Truths" is usually done on the next day after the recitation and may be preached by one, two or four monks in the manner of a dialogue, if required. Here ends a concise description of the Thet Maha - Chat.

There is a monograph "A Retrospective View and Account

of the Origin of the Thet Maha Chat" by G.E. Gerini, Bangkok 1892 A.D. which gives the story in its academic aspect. In the North and North Eastern Regions of Thailand and also in the Laos Kingdom, the Thet Mahä Chät forms an important and popular Festival. The ceremony is of the same pattern but with its own peculiarity due to various forces, geographically, historically and culturally. I am told that the Shans have the Thet Maha Chat also, but so far as I know, there is no article written in English relating to this ceremony. There are traces probably of Mahayanism influence in certain details of the Thet Maha Chat Festival and Ceremony but for want of available dats, I am compelled with regret to leave out, though an important one, as to the original development of the Thet Maha - Chat.

By courtesy of the Burma Research Society, Rangoon.

Thai Traditional Salutation

1. The “Wai”

The Thai sign of salutation or mutual recognition is to raise both hands, joined palm to palm, lightly touching the body somewhere between the face and chest. The higher the hands are raised, the greater is the respect and courtesy conveyed. The person who is inferior in age or rank in the Thai social scale of precedence initiates such a movement of the hands and the person receiving the salutation immediately reciprocates. This formality is not strictly adhered to by individuals who are on intimate terms. The Thai salutation may be rendered while sitting, standing, walking or even lying in bed during an illness. In rendering a salutation while standing to a most respected person who is sitting, one as a decorum of good manners, will stoop or bend the head at the same time. When taking leave, the departing person will offer a salute in the same manner, followed in turn by a corresponding salute of the other person. Such a salutation is called a “wai” (ไหว้) in Thai, and is often seen in Thai Society.

The raising of the hands to “wai”, and the lowering of the hands to a normal position after the “wai” are never done with a sharp movement but rather in a more or less graceful manner such as in slow motion. The upper parts of the arms remain close to the sides of the body, without the elbows extended. The hands, joined palm to palm, are not held far out from the body in an erect position, but bent slightly inward.

The above description, though inadequately expressed in words, reflects more or less Thai traditional culture in pre - modern days, when the way of life of the people was essentially different from the present day. In the old days there was comparatively no rush and speed, and no din such as one has to experience every now and then, particularly in the hubbub of city life. Time in those days depended on the people, and not the people on time.

The Thai “wai” in its idealized form may be often seen on the stage in the Thai classical dramatic performance, the “lakorn” (ລັກອນ). Here one is able to observe the artistic movements of the hands of an actor or an actress, who, before performing the “wai”, will place his or her hands, joined palm to palm, with the finger tips draw slightly to each other, so as to form a conventional shape of a “budding lotus” (ບັງຄຸມ) as usually offered in worship to a monk or to a Buddha image. The hands in such a shape are called in Thai “phanom meu” (ພະນົມເມືອ), literally meaning to make the hands like a budding lotus. One will sometimes notice such a “wai” among the cultured Thai, in conformity more or less with idealized movement.

Thai etiquette implicitly requires that a junior in age or rank initiate a “wai” as a sign of respect to a senior accompanied at the same time with a slight bow. Also, as a mark of respect, the junior, while in conversation with a senior of great age or rank, will place his “budding lotus” hands to his chest when sitting or standing, and every now and then, as circumstances demand, when the senior is explaining something to the junior, raise his hands as a respectful acknowledgment of what the senior is saying. A person sitting on a chair before a high personage bends his head a little and holds his hands in a “budding lotus” shape placed somewhere at or below the chest. Or instead of having the hands posed in a “budding lotus” shape, the fingers may be clasped or the hands held one upon the other and rounded like a Chinese “wai” in the kowtowing fashion, or like a worshipful attitude of a Christian in adoration. If a person squats on the floor before

a great personage, such as the King or Queen, in the Thai traditional fashion with the appropriate posture called “nang phab phiab” (นั่งพับเพียบ), that is, sideways with the lower limbs folded backward and inward, he must recline slightly sideways with the hands in a “budding lotus” shape resting on the floor as a support. A person will slightly raise his or her hands in such a posture every now and then, in the same manner as previously described. When a person is receiving anything from a senior he will raise his hands as a “wai” to the give as a polite gesture of thanks before or after receiving it as circumstances demand. When one is asking someone’s pardon or favour, one usually makes such a “wai” too.

During a Buddhist sermon, or while a chapter of monks is reciting ritual texts from the Buddhist Holy Scriptures, one will notice that both the monks and the lay members assume a solemn attitude of meekness and obeisance to the sacredness of the ceremony with hands raised all the time in a “budding lotus” shape. If the ceremony occupies a comparatively long time, the raising of hands in such an attitude will be somewhat tiresome and quite an ordeal for the inexperienced. This can be overcome partly if one’s arms are held close to the sides of the body as a sort of rest or support.

Psychologically, if a person receiving a “wai” from a junior, is egoistically conscious of his superiority, he will return the “wai” with the hands raised to position not higher than the chest. If, by virtue of his great age or rank, he is not obliged to make a “wai” in return, he may merely raise his right hand side - wise and with a nod, or nod only, as a favorable recognition or approval. This is called “rap wai” (รับไหว้). In Thai this literally means “receiving a wai”. In most cases a superior person seldom condescends to perform a “wai” first when meeting or greeting an inferior person. Normally a senior will return the “wai” of a child with a nod or other appropriate gestures only, as a sign of approval or goodwill. Of course there is an exception, if the child is a prince or an honourable member of a high dignitary’s family.

Wai,

a traditional style
of salutation to a teacher





As noblesse oblige, a high personage will initiate a greeting to an inferior by extending his or her outstretched hand in a Western style hand - shake instead of a “wai”. The inferior one after a hand - shake will sometimes make a “wai” also, as if the hand-shake is incomplete without a “wai” as an expression of respect .

Buddhist monks by virtue of their holy yellow robes, will not return the obeisance of “wai” to a layman however old or great in rank, not even to the king. This is not, in Thai etiquette, presumption on the part of the monks. The appropriate way for a monk to respond in such a situation is by a gesture of acknowledgement either by speech or a facial expression of good-will. At least he should assume a serene face as befitting a monk.

Traditionally, when country folk or any other simple people meet someone whom they consider a great personage, such as the King or Queen, a high prince or princess, a prelate, or a dignitary of importance, who commands the highest respect, they will instinctively sit down on their haunches, with the hands raised in a “budding lotus” shape, as a sign of great respect. Not until the high personage has passed or departed will they assume a normal position. While passing a Buddhist temple, a devout person will make a “wai” before it as an act of reverence.

To write something on a subject such as the “wai” which is intimately known more or less by everybody who is Thai, is metaphorically like drawing a picture of a dog or a horse, which is a well - known animal, rather than drawing a picture of a mythological animal which is real only in imagination. Any shortcomings of description in delineating the former, even in certain unimportant details, may instantly be detected even by a boy, but not with a description of the latter. What has been written here, therefore, is perhaps incomplete, because there are variances, in differing degrees, among the people of different classes of society in different localities and social surroundings of the country. The best thing to do for a person interested in such a study is to observe in real life how it is done; the description which has been written here is a generalization which serves as an outline and a guide only.

The Thai manner of salutation is similar to that of most races on the mainland of South - east Asia. Fundamentally they are all the same. The difference lies in the details peculiar to a race due to many cultural factors. The Hindus and the Chinese have not only their own forms of "wai", which are allied to the Thai "wai", but also other symbols of respect which pertain to their cultures and which will be reviewed in a succeeding chapter. No doubt the "wai" in its origin is ancient and world - wide and may be found among many races in one form or another. It was originally perhaps a form of submission based upon the stronger over the weaker ones. Through the process of time it has developed into the mere form of salutation of the present day.

In pre - modern days, a Thai would not greet a foreigner with a "wai", nor would a foreigner "wai" to a Thai. This was due probably to reluctance on either side through misunderstanding or other reasons. Whenever a Westerner, or a "farang" as he is called, adopted the Thai form of greeting, as an expression of good - will and friendliness, there would often be joking remarks such as "farangs know how to wai too". On the other hand a farang would seldom greet a Thai, though his equal, with a "wai", for what reason one can only conjecture. Happily such a thing is now of the past, as people now understand each other more closely and sympathetically.

To most of the Thai, the "wai" is preferred to hand shaking for the reason that, the "shaking of one's own hands" is hygienically better than the shaking of other people's hands. A firm cordial hand - clasp sometimes gives the Thai a somewhat painful sensation, if the hand which is clasped is a sizeable, big one, compared to the slim hand of the Thai, particularly a woman. Confronted sometimes with a large number of individuals which requires an endless process of hand - shaking, it is sometimes a trying experience though not an impossibility. In such a dilemma, if the function is not of a formal nature, the Thai has recourse to another kind of "wai" by raising the hands to a "wai" in the "budding lotus" position and slowly turning in a sweeping manner to all the persons present thus making a "wai" to all of them. One will observe such a "wai" at a boxing ring, when a

pugilist makes a sweeping motion of “wai” to the audience, before a boxing match begins.

In making a “wai” in the traditional style to the King or the Queen, one has to kneel down with the body erect and the haunches resting on the heels. The hands are raised, joined palm to palm in a “budding lotus” shape, to a position a little below the chest, and then instantly raised to one’s fore - head with a bending upward of the face. This is done once only at an informal occasion, but at a formal royal ceremony, it is always done three times.

2. The “Krap”

Allied to the “wai” as a sign of respect is the “krap” (ດ່ານ) or the kneeling down and bowing to the floor in reverence. In fact the “wai” is part of the “krap”. One kneels in an erect position with the haunches resting on the heels. The hands in the shape of a “budding lotus” are held just below the chest, and then raised to the forehead in a “wai”. Successively the palm of the right hand is placed on the floor in front of the right knee, followed by the left hand which is placed about a foot in front of the left knee. The right hand is then moved up parallel to the left hand, but with an ample space between the two hands. The forehead is bowed until it touches the floor at the space between the index fingers of the two hands and then raised to the former position and repeated three times. This process of movement should not be done in a hurried manner, but with a comparatively graceful slow motion, avoiding the raising of one’s haunches when bowing in a seesaw - like fashion. Such a style of “krap” is seldom seen nowadays particularly in Bangkok, but still survives, I am told, among the folk in upcountry Central Thailand.

Another style of “krap” generally done is to part the hands from a “budding lotus” while kneeling, depositing the palms of both hands at the same time on the floor instead of depositing them one at a time as in the afore - said description. The rest of

all the movements is the same. Sometimes a small stand with a cushion is provided for the purpose, but the process of movements of the “krap” is identical, save one obvious minor difference in the bow. In the former one has to bow low to touch the floor, but in the latter the bow is comparatively less. There is not much difference in the movement process of the “krap” between a man and a woman, save that in the kneeling Position, a woman rests her haunches on her soles instead of resting them on the heels as a man does.

The “krap” as described is called in technical language, “benchanga - pradit” (เบញ្ញាគប្រជិះ), a Thai - ized Pali word meaning “a revered salutation with the five members of the body organs”, i.e. the forehead, the two palms of the hands, and the two knees touching the floor. Such a salutation is called “pancha pranam” in Sanskrit. A complete prostration as expressed by devout people in India and elsewhere does not enter into the Thai social scheme of worship.

Originally the “krap” was meant as a sign of profound worship to the “Triple Gems” of Buddhism, *i.e.* the Buddha, his Law and his Brotherhood of monks only. Hence the “krap” is expressed three times in repetition. Later on such an expression of reverence was extended, through a misconception in certain cases, to other highly respected persons or other sacred symbols as well.

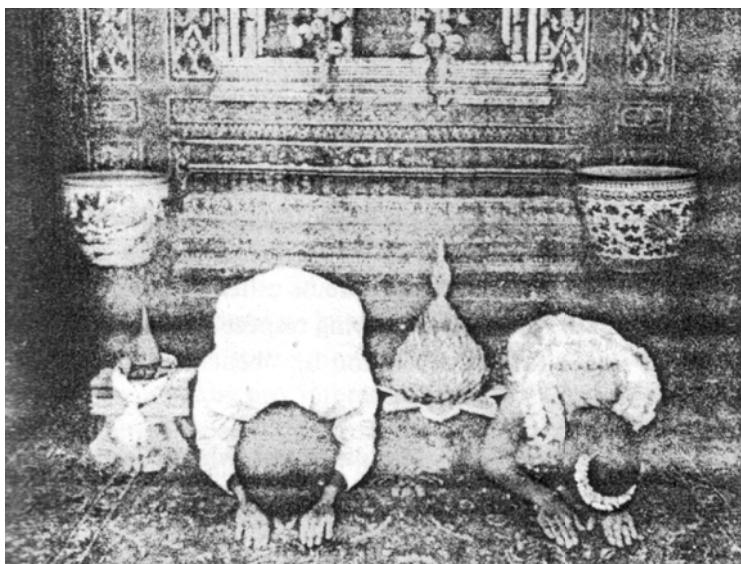
Now we come to another kind of “krap” called “Mop krap” (អមុនក្រាប) in Thai. “Mop” means to sit in a crouched position. A person in the act of paying high respect to certain persons, such as the King and the Queen, a high ranking prince or princess, one’s revered parents, teacher or mentor, kneels before the revered person, will raise hands to his or her breast in the shape of a “budding lotus”, and instantly lowers the hands, still in the described shape, on the floor and bows with the forehead resting on the “budding lotus” hands at the thumbs. The movement is done once only, not three times as one sometimes sees, which is due to a false analogy of paying a homage to the “Triple Gems” of the Buddhist religion.



A more revered manner of paying respect, first step, raising palms together.



Second step : raising palms to the forehead



Third step : bowing down on the floor.



Fourth step : sitting up, still with folded hands at the foreheads.

There is another style of “mop krap”. A person sits in a crouched position, but inclined slightly side - wise either on his right or left hand with the lower limbs drawn slightly inward. He then raises the hands, joined palm to palm, in the shape of a “budding lotus”, resting the elbows as supports on the floor, and bows reverently until the forehead touches the thumbs of the “budding lotus”.

These two allied styles of “mop krap” were originally a mannerism peculiar at the royal court and practiced by the royal pages and attendants, when in the presence of the King, the Queen or other members of the royal family on an informal occasion only. It was later adopted by outsiders when they wished to express highest regards to a prelate or other respected person. Obviously these two styles of paying respect are adaptations of the before - said Buddhist salutation of “benchanga - pradit” as performed to the “Triple Gems”.

Parenthetically, sons or daughters when meeting their parents after a long absence or saying a good - bye, place their hands in the shape of a “budding lotus” at the feet of their parents and bow in the “mop krap” fashion in an affectionate and reverential manner. If the parents are standing, the children will place their “budding lotus” hands on the parents breasts and bow. As an extension, this mode of expression may be used by a pupil or student towards his or her teacher as an affectionate mark of the highest respect equaling the parents. This application for a girl student only does not extend to a monk, even if he is the teacher.

When the corpse of one’s parent is to be removed from home to a “wat” or monastery for religious rites and disposal, the children of the deceased will make a “mop krap” as a final act of filial duty to their parent. If such an act is amiss, it is a popular and superstitious belief that the corpse will be unduly heavy for its bearers. Once the children of the deceased have filially done the “mop krap”, the bearers will feel, in their imagination of course, at ease carrying the cumbersome burden of the corpse.

What has been described of the “mop krap” salutation shows it to be a personal and an informal one. If it is done ceremoniously one has to offer a fresh flower, a wax taper, and three incense sticks. Having lit the wax taper and incense sticks and placed them with the flower on an appropriate place at the altar where a Buddha image stands prominently with articles of offering, one can make then a movement of “mop krap”. By an analogy this may be extended to the king if one knows before - hand that the king will pass by. As to royal offerings there is a special gold tray containing such articles of offerings and divided into a major or minor gold tray according to the importance of the occasion, about which we not need go into details. H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhap has written a monograph on royal offerings which may be consulted by any interested person. When attending a Thai cremation a person will place a taper, an incense stick and a flower at the coffin as the last final act of respect to the deceased, and then light a piece of wood for the funeral pyre. Nowadays the flower, instead of a fresh one, has degenerated into a flower made of wood shavings which stands also for the chip of wood for lighting the funeral pyre. The final act of paying respect to the dead and the cremating of the corpse blend completely into one whole as one may have seen frequently.

In ceremonial “mop krap” on special occasions, such as, when a person is going to enter the monkhood; when a newly married couple is paying formal respect after the wedding ceremony to the parents or other highly respected persons; when one is apologizing to someone whose reputation one has slandered or injured; the first step is to prepare a salver containing, in groups of five, sizeable big incense sticks and wax tapers, arranged in two rows with the wax tapers placed above the incense sticks and tied artistically with ribbons as both ends. A banana leaf cup with a sizeable flower or a bunch of flowers placed above the wax tapers, and covered by a conic cover also made with banana leaf. Such a set of flowers, incense sticks and wax tapers is called in Thai “dawk mai dhup dian phae” (ดอกไม้ธูปเทียนแพ - flowers on rafts of incense sticks and wax tapers). One places the salver,

after taking off the conic cover, in front of the person to whom one wishes to express ceremonial respect. One then hands the salver of offerings with both hands to the appropriate person, who ceremoniously receives and places it in front of him or her. One performs the movement of “mop krap” three times, and solemnly addresses the person concerned in formal language, giving the reason for paying such respect. The person concerned says something appropriate to the occasion. One makes another “mop krap”; and then takes leave, bringing back with one the salver.

I may add here that in Thai common parlance “krap” is called “krap wai” i.e., the “krap” and the “wai” combined. In an extension of meaning “krap” means “to ask kindness of” in polite and intimate terms of speech. A conventional term of address to the royal family is “krap thoon” (กราบทูน), literally to inform or tell with a “krap”, to an official as one’s superior who is not a member of the royal family, and to a dignitary it is “krap rian” (กราบรีyan) which has the same meaning, the different words bearing relation only to the ranks of the persons addressed.

It is not out of place here to say something on the propriety or manners of the Thai as traditionally observed. The Thai deems his head to be sacred; probably because the head is the seat of an individual “khwan” (ขวัญ), that is, one’s vital spirit which gives strength and health to the individual owner. The “khwan” is very sensitive and when subjected to any undecorous behaviour it will feel injured and leave the body, its abode, to stray some-where in a forest, and will return only to its abode after a more or less ceremonial cajolery. During the time before the “khwan” returns, its owner will suffer a weakening of his “dignified splendour” (สง่าศรี) followed by bad luck and ill - health.

With such an idea, handed down from one generation to another from a remote period of time, the sacredness of the head lies deeply in the popular mind. The bending low of one’s head to a person or thing in the form of a bow as a sign of obeisance

or as a respectful attitude has survived to the present day. A Thai will not suffer anyone to pat his head, unless on very intimate terms. If the hand that touches the head is that of woman, though his dearest one, the man will instantly lose his "dignified splendour" for a woman's hand is sensitively adverse to the "khwan". A conservative person will frown distastefully if he sees a young man allowing his sacred head to be touched by his young wife, or lying his head on the wife's lap. A man will not pass under a clothes line, where women's clothing is hung to dry. Woe to man's "dignified splendour", if his sacred head is touched by a woman's clothing. All his sacred endowments and powers appertaining to magical arts will be weakened or gone.

When sitting, standing or passing before a high personage, or elder, or any other persons of equal standing, one should assume an attitude of meekness by stooping or bending down one's head or body so that it is not on a level or above the head of the personage. If a high personage is sitting on a rug or mat in the Thai traditional style, he should be approached on the knees or in a crawling position. If the personage is sitting on a chair, one should stoop low when passing. This attitude applies equally to a personage who is walking. If one is to speak with the personage, the first thing to do is to "mop krap" and repeat it when departing. Here is then the reason for assuming the attitude of a crouched position or for reclining slightly side-wise as mentioned.

I may add here that the placing of one's hands in a "budding lotus" position or "wai" is never higher than the forehead. In the ordinary way of life, a "wai" in such a manner is done mostly by a prisoner, who is asking for quarter or relief, or a beggar asking for alms. Acting in such a manner, is called idiomatically "to raise the hands (in worship) overwhelming the head", as "pret" (ພັດ - a class of hungry ghosts) asking for a share of boon" (or merit) to be ritually transferred to him, thus relieving him of his intense hunger, for a "pret" has a mouth only as wide as a needle's eye.

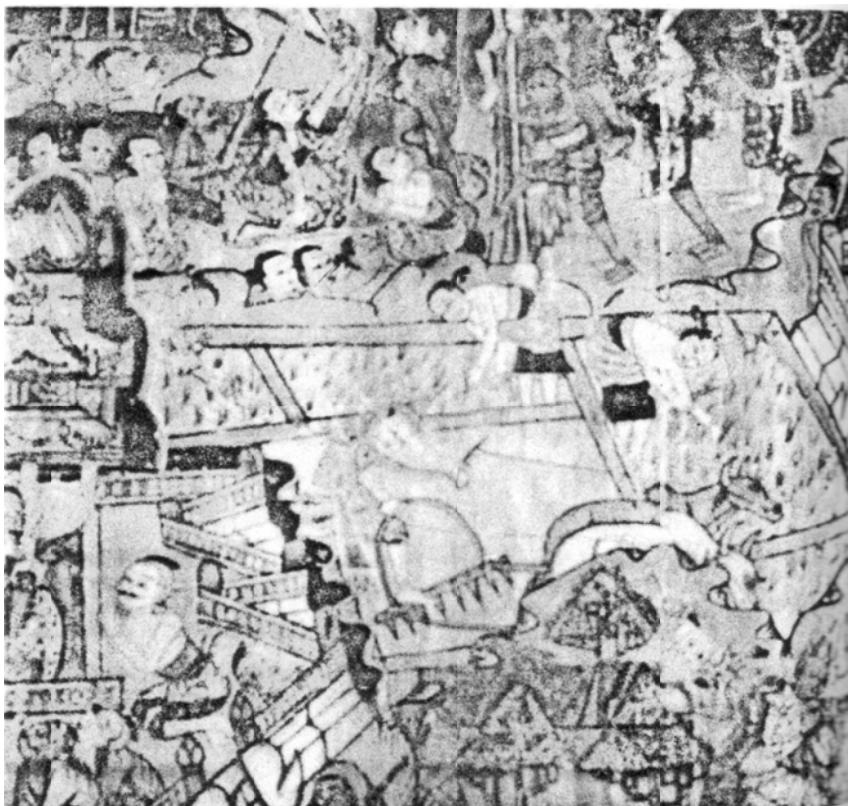


అద్భుతమైన
ప్రాణికమైన
మండిరమైన
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Chapter 5

The Rites & Ritual



Fertility Rites in Thailand

Topographically, Thailand is divided into four main areas : the Northern, the North - eastern, the Central and the Southern. The Central Area is aptly called by the Thai, in their idiom, "the store - house of rice and water". It is a comparatively vast and flat alluvial plain drained by five major rivers. Chief among them is the river Chao Phya, miscalled by foreigners the Menam which only means "a river". The lower portion of this vast plain is tidal and intersected by numerous canals. 'The main occupation of the people living in this area is wet rice culture, which depends on regular rainfall during the south - west monsoon. The rural population attach a great importance to this periodical natural phenomenon for they rely upon their rice crop as their major source of sustenance. Any failure of rainfall or rainfalls coming not at the expected time spells dearth and hardship to them. Like the rural population in other lands the Thai peasants have recourse to magic to ensure for themselves an abundance of rain during the coming rainy season.

The hottest month of the year in Thailand is April. In mid - April, just before the regular rain monsoon breaks, the Thai traditional New Year Feast called Songkran comes. Such a feast is also observed by the people in Burma, Cambodia and the Lao Kingdom. The predominant thing about the feast as witnessed by foreigners is the water throwing by the people as their chief

form of amusement. Shway Yoe (Sir George Scott) has dealt at some length with the water throwing during Songkran in Burma in his book *The Burman, his life and notions*. In Thailand the water throwing is also observed everywhere throughout the country, with the exception of the Southern Area of Thailand in the Malay Peninsula. Here the climatic conditions relating to rainfall do not relatively coincide with the other areas. Instead of a period of rainfall roughly from May to October, the Southern Area has it from August to January, and rarely is there a scarcity of rain as compared to other parts of the country.

In the Southern Area there is no Songkran as observed in the real sense of the word; there is, therefore, no water throwing festival. Factually we may assume that the water throwing during the Songkran as observed in other parts of the country might have a meaning in olden days, apart from being merely an amusement. It was perhaps a certain fertility rite to procure an abundance of rain by a magical way on the principle "like produces like" of imitative magic.

If after the Songkran Feast the weather is still hot and dry and stretches on to more than a fortnight and still there is no visible sign of the expected rain, people become anxious about their welfare, for they cannot begin to plough their land in time. Unable to do otherwise, they resort to magic. One such form of magic is the procession of a female cat tied firmly to and borne on a stretcher by carrying poles. The cat on the stretcher is carried in procession through the village accompanied by a number of boys and young men who join the company voluntarily. They sing with one voice as loud as they can the well-known words in connection with such a procession. If there are musical instruments such as a drum or a gong, they beat them as hard as they can in order to obtain as loud a noise as possible. This gives rise in most cases to rowdiness and at times borders on indecency. Most of the men in the procession are, of course, more or less drunk.

The procession stops before each house on the way where the singing and dancing amid the din of primitive music are

repeated. The wording of the song translated in English is as follows:

“Hail! Nang Meo (= female cat), give us rain, give us nam man (= consecrated water) to pour on the Nang Meo’s head. Give us cowry shells (= taken money) give us rice, and give us a wage for carrying the cat (on shoulders with a long pole).”

นางแมวเอย	ขอฟ้าขอฝน
ขอน้ำมด	รดหัวนางแมว
ขอเบี้ยขอยา	ขอค้างหานางแมวมา

Then follows another similar song or songs but with different wordings which have a hint of sex. For academic purposes, the wording in one of the songs is given herewith.

“The rain falls in four copious showers,
A thunder bolt strikes a nun (a character to be found in many Thai droll stories and folk - tales).

Strip off her clothes and *see the pudenda*,
The rain pours down heavily, pours down heavily...”

ฝนตกสีห้า	ฟ้าผายายชี
แก่ผู้ห้า	ฝนกีเทลงมา

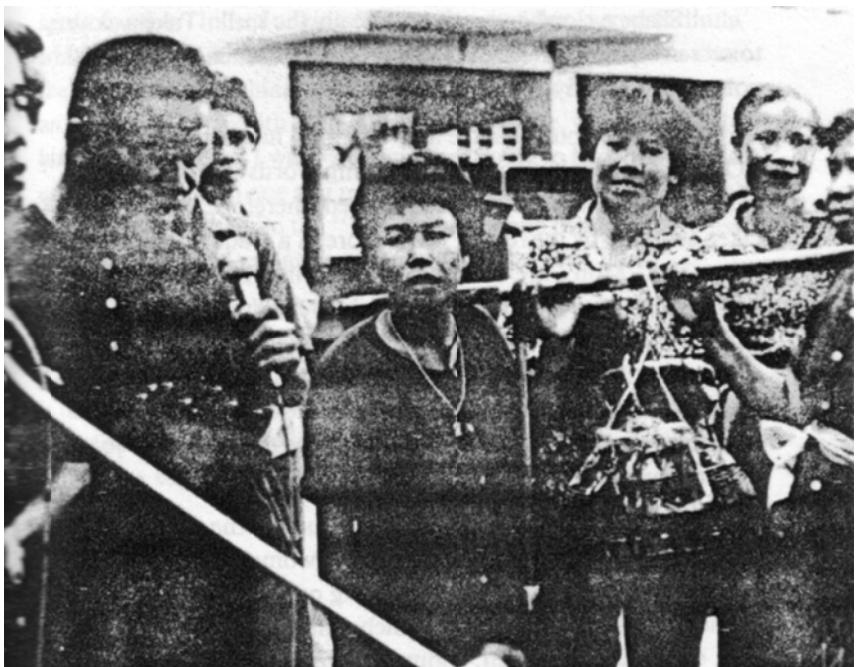
The inmates of the house where the procession stops will come out and drench the tat with water, and give a small sum of money. This process is repeated from house to house. The money collected from each house is utilized by the young men in the procession to buy food and spirits for their own entertainment after the end of the parade.

Of all domestic animals the cat is a hater of water and highly antagonistic to such treatment. Perhaps the tat is a personification of dryness. Hence it may be considered as an inducement, by the effect of sympathetic magic, to bring on a wet day if a tat is wetted thoroughly. Why is a female cat used instead of a

male one? Perhaps a female cat is also a symbol of fertility and abundance, and the use of an obscene word or words is to induce nature to play her part by pouring down the rain. To a primitive mind fertility requires two partners of different sexes to complete the process. Mother Earth is always deemed as a Goddess of Fertility. As such she needs a male Partner. That Partner is the Sky God. The use of obscene words or other obscene objects may be meant as a reminder and inducement to the Sky God to play his role by pouring down the rain, his semen perhaps, to Mother Earth, who receives it in her womb, the earth, and in an appropriate time, growth springs.

There is a device for inducing the rain to pour down which is prevalent among the peasants of Central Thailand. It is called "Pan Mek" in Thai which means "shaping a cloud". It is a figure made with mud - clay in the image of a man and a woman united in an embrace - like sitting or lying posture. In certain localities the former posture is predominant and in others it is the reverse. Walking during a hot day during a drought along a field's path or on a road near a rice field, one sometimes comes across such clay figures lying near the side of the path or road. They are of varying sizes from a small one the size of a hand span to a relatively bigger one. They are mostly made by boys and young men of the village either with the implicit consent or the encouragement of the elders. My American friend, an anthro - pologist, once showed me a photograph, which he had taken, of such a figure in life - size, carved out of mud - clay in the manner of a high relief. The photograph was taken some four years ago in a rice field not far from Bangkok. Such figures are well - known, perhaps, throughout the Central Area of Thailand. The figure is sometimes found together on the stretcher with the cat in the procession as previously described.

During the process of shaping such figures there is a magical formula in the form of "mon" (= 'mantra' in Sanskrit meaning a spell or a charm). There are in this country a large number of "mon" which are put to many uses ranging from the cure of certain ailments, such as eye - sore, the sting of the spine of a cat -



Hail Nang Meo

fish, or the planting of certain fruit trees, etc., to that of harming one's enemy by the use of black magic. "Mon's" wordings are usually in the Thai language; and most of them contain obscene words relating to sex. Sometimes Pali or Sanskrit words in the form of phrases and 'gatha' or stanzas are to be found interspersed here and there within the "mon" text. Usually the "mon" begins with the word "Om", the sacred syllable of the Hindus, and ends frequently with the words "Svaha Svaht", and in rare cases with the words "phut phat" or other Pali and Sanskrit sacred words. Evidently, such words betray an Indian origin, particularly the esoteric doctrine of Mantrayana Sect of later Buddhism to be found mostly in Eastern India, Tibet and the neighbouring countries.

Here is the "mon" text relating to "the shaping of a cloud" in English translation.

"Shape a cloud and recite mystically the spell. Take a cloth to screen human beings. Shape the *pudenda*, then the rain will pour down heavily, pour down heavily."

It is to be noted that the above "mon" has neither the word "Om" at the beginning nor the ending words "Svaha Svaht" as before - mentioned. It is to be presumed, therefore, that it is not taken seriously by the reciter, but is more in a crude or humorous vein. The "Mon" are usually composed in measured syllables and in most cases in a rhyming pattern to facilitate memorizing. In relieving certain pains and ailments the reciter of the "mon" is to intone it in a loud voice, presumably within the hearing of the patient. Perhaps if the patient hears the "mon" with words one never expected to hear, he or she will be tickled by the joke, thus relieving the pain, at least temporarily.

Allied to the figure "shaping a cloud" is the figure called "In". It, too, is a figure of a man and a woman in an embrace - like posture. Its sizes range from a big one, the size of a small fountain pen about one and half inches in length, to the smallest one, so far as I have seen, about the size of a small berry. It is made either of metal alloy, ivory or hard wood. Some of the

Thai people of both sexes carry an "In" with them. Whoever has an "In" with him, so people say, will increase his or her wealth and prosperity. As "In" figures are to be found frequently in North Thailand, Chiang Mai for instance, where there are a comparatively large number of Burmese residents and as the word "In" is to be found in Burmese meaning a magic Square or other allied objects, I am inclined, therefore, to think that "In" is of Burmese origin. When I was in Rangoon at the beginning of this year (1960), I took advantage of making an enquiry about the "In". No one in Rangoon University could give me any satisfactory information, with the exception of one, an elderly man, who told me that in Burma there were such figures as I had described, but they were confined to the country folk and were rare among modern people. Later I found in Bangkok that there is a Thai "mon" formula to be recited mystically as a controlling agent for the "In". Judging from the text of this sacred formula which contains a number of jumbled words, one suspects that the "In" has something to do with love - making rather than with an increase of wealth and prosperity as one was previously informed. Further, I was told that when going to bed, one should carry the "In" with one and recite the magical formula as a control of the "In" figure. So the "In", then, is none other than a class of magical objects relating to fertility.

Fertility rites are world - wide, to be found in one form or another either explicitly expressed or in a veiled form due to refinement and development of culture. The presentation of this paper is to supply certain information on fertility rites in Thailand for a comparative study with rites of other neighbouring countries which are scantily recorded.

The Khwan and its Ceremonies

1. Its Nature and Meaning

There is a primitive belief which has survived among the people of Thailand that in every person either old or young there is a *khwan*. The *khwan*, as vaguely understood in a confused way, is an unsubstantial thing supposed to reside in the physical body of a person. When it is there the person enjoys good health and happiness. If it leaves the body the person will be ill or experience some undesirable effects. A baby which is easily frightened, will have a *khwan* with the same tendency. When the *khwan* is frightened it will take flight into the wilderness and will not come back until it has regained its normal self. As the baby grows stronger with age the *khwan* will grow stronger too. It will be firmer and more stable in temperament like the person in whose physical body it has its abode.

Such belief is not confined to the Thais of Thailand; the Shans of Upper Burma, the Laos of the Lao Kingdom and other Thai minority groups in other lands have a similar belief. In fact, this belief may be generalized to other races in Southeast Asia as well. It is a belief rooted in the dim past and has survived in many Thai expressions embedded in the language, rites and ceremonies in connection with the Khan.

The *khwan* is not confined to human beings only. Based on certain ceremonies which are performed in connection with the *khwan* and also on certain expressions in the Thai language,

we may say that some kinds of animals, trees and inanimate objects useful to man have individual *khwans*. For example : an elephant, a horse, a buffalo or bullock, a certain house post, bullock cart, a paddy field or paddy, and even a city, each has a *khwan*.

The *khwan* may therefore be described as something in the nature of a principle of life, vital to the welfare of man and animals. Certain inanimate things *also* have *khwan* because such inanimate things have their particular spirit or genius residing in them.

Traditionally, a typical Thai house is made of wood. The part of a house deemed most important by the people is the first post raised called a *khwan post* (เสาชั้น) or premier post (เสาเอก) There are rules relating to the selection and the ceremonial raising of house - posts. In the old days people built their own houses with the help and co - operation of their neighbours. The first thing they did was to obtain house - posts with lucky characteristic marks. They obtained them direct from trees which they felled in a forest. Now, every big tree in a forest is supposed to be the residence of a tree spirit either male or female. A tree with certain usefulness such as for building a house or a bullock cart or a boat , has a female spirit called *nang - mai* (นางไม้) or wood nymph, while a tree with no such economic value, as the pipal and banyan trees for instance, has a male spirit called *rukha devada* (รุกขเทวดา) or tree angel. The above fact is only a generalization based on observation. When a tree is felled, its spirit or essence is super - stitiously believed to ,be still in it. Hence it is not desirable to use trees felled from different forest as house - posts, because female spirits residing therein, coming from different localities would naturally quarrel among themselves; with the result that there would be no peace for the occupants of the house. A bullock cart or a dugout boat has a spirit or essence in the same manner as the house - post. A paddy field or rice paddy has a Rice Mother; likewise a city has its tutelary spirit. Naturally any thing that has a spirit has also a *khwan*.

By comparing the word khwan with that of the Chinese word khwan (魂 - old Chinese Sound “kwun” or “gwun”) which means a soul or a spirit, one is inclined to believe that the Thai *khwan* and the Chinese *khwan* are one and the same word. On this presumption we may safely say that the Thai ‘*khwan*’ was a soul in its original meaning. The Chinese word *kwun* is composed of two characters meaning vapour and demon. As the English word spirit and atman or soul in Sanskrit mean etymologically breath (compare the word atmosphere) one is tempted to think the Thai words *ghwan* (គោន soft aspirated sound in gh) and *fun* (ធម៌ hard aspirated f) meaning smoke and dream respectively have derived from the same source as that of the *khwan*.¹⁾ The modern Thai word for soul is *vinyan* (វិរុញ្ញាហ) a Pali word Vinnan meaning simply consciousness in its original sense. No doubt the Thai obtained this word when they made their home in Thailand after they had adopted Buddhism of the Southern School. The Laos, the Shans, the Burmese, and the Mons of Lower Burma and the Cambodians have the same word *vinyan* for soul in their modern languages. The *khwan* of the Thais, the *Laos* and the Shans is the *Leipbya* of the Burmese, the *praliṅga* of the Cambodians and the *pīṅg khamau* of the Mons. As Buddhism denies a permanent individual soul which clashed with

1. The character 魂 may have a simpler explanation than the one you offer. Like the great majority of Chinese characters, it is split into two parts: the meaning-part and the sound part.

The meaning part is the graph 鬼 , meaning “spirit”, “demon” etc. and the sound part is the 云, pronounced “yün” in Modern Chinese, but “yun” or “ywun” in Ancient Chinese. The kh or h initial consonant is simple one of the permissible “family variants” of all words using 云 as a phonetic element.

No doubt the compilers of the graph chose the phonetic 云 firstly for its *sound*, but secondly may be for the *fortuitous suitability* of its original meaning of “cloud”. No strength of argument can be relied on, however, for the second reason for choice. For example, 魂 is always associated with p'o or p'ch (may be p?) in classical texts, but here the phonetic part is 白 pch/po meaning “white”, which clearly has no meaningful contribution to make.

It boils down to this; one spirit (鬼) is called “hun” (i.e. 云 in sound), and the other is called “p'o” (i.e. 白 in sound).

This makes the “atman” part of your argument rather far fetched, but does not spoil your tentative “family” grouping of ឋារុ, គោន and ធម៌ - Peter Bee.

the old animistic belief of the peoples in this part of Asia, they

probably adopted the word *vinyan* from Pali, the language of the Southern School Buddhism, as a compromise with the old belief, which is still apparent among the people in the popular side of their Buddhism. As the word *vinyan* meaning soul is to be found in the language of these peoples, one suspects that the word *vinyan* came through the old Mons for the reason that the old Mons were a relatively civilized race in this part of Asia, chronologically before the coming of the Thai and the Burmese. Nevertheless the *khwan*, deprived of its original meaning *soul*, still exists in its shifted meanings as may be seen from the following Thai words and expressions.

When a baby is born, its inherent *khwan* is in a feeble state like that of the baby. At this stage it is called *khwan awn* (ขวัญอ่อน) or “tender *khwan*”. By an extension of meaning *khwan awn* means in current use “tender, loving care” such as a mother has for her baby. A young man may say in a mildly slighting manner to a young woman who is easily frightened as being *khwan awn* or “tender *khwan*”.

When a child suffers a shock from some sudden fright and cries sharply and continuously, it is believed that the child’s *khwan* has taken flight. In such a case it is called in Thai as *khwan hai* (ขัญหาย), *khwan nee* (ขัญหนี) or *khwan bin* (ขัญบิน) meaning respectively the “*khwan* disappears, flees, or flies away”. In its extension of meaning we can use either of these three words to express a state of alarm or surprise.

An appreciation expressed to a person is *kham khwan* (คำขวัญ) i.e. “words for *khwan*”.

When a man experiences a great fright and may die of its effect we say *khwan nee dee faw* (ขัญหนีดีฝ่อ) meaning literally “the *khwan* flees, the bile (gall - bladder) withers”.

A sudden scare may be expressed as *khwan khwaen* (ខ្សោយខ្លាឯន) i.e. the *khwan* is dangling somewhere. This expression is now to be found only in literature.

To threaten the *khwan* (*khu khwan* - ឯ្យខ្សោយ) is to strike terror, and to destroy the *khwan* (*thamlai khwan* - ាាំលាយខ្សោយ) is to give a fright.

To refer to a person in approving or disapproving terms is to *klao khwan* (ក្រាហខ្សោយ) i.e. to speak about the person's *khwan*.

To lose courage is *sia khwan* (តើយខ្សោយ) i.e. the *khwan* is despoiled, reversing the position of the two words to *khwan sia* (ខ្សោយតើយ), it means a despoiled *khwan*.

Good morale, as in soldiers, is *khwan dee* (ខ្សោយទី) or good *khwan*.

To keep up the morale is *bamrung khwan* or (ាាំរុងខ្សោយ) the sustenance of the *khwan*. Usually a priest will sprinkle consecrated water on a person or persons as an act of “bamrung khwan” as one often witnesses in a ceremony on certain occasions.

If a baby lying quite normally on its bed is startled suddenly and gives a sharp cry and then continues to cry, its mother or someone nearby will at once pat lightly many times on the baby's breast, and at the same time pacify it with word, “Oh *khwan* ! abide within thy body” (ខ្សោយឱយ ឯ្យកំណែកំណែ). Such treatment is called *rap khwan* (រំបខ្សោយ) meaning literally to receive the *khwan*. In its shifted meaning *rap khwan* means to cajole or to

sooth a child from peevishness, or to make up to the girl you love if her feelings are running high against you.

The ceremony of *tham khwan* (ทำขวัญ) is indispensable in order to strengthen or confirm the *khwan* after a fright. In its present meaning in everyday use it means a compensation for an injury done. To harm a person, a person's animal or possession is *ipso facto* to injure the *khwan* which requires a *tham khwan* as a restoration to its normal state.

A gift presented after a ceremony of *tham khwan* to the participant is called *khong khwan* (ของขวัญ) or *khwan*'s possession but in current use the words mean a gift or a present in general.

Khwan is sometimes used as a qualifying word with certain nouns to mean precious or an object of affection. For example: *mia khwan*, *luk khwan*, *suan khwan* (เมียวขวัญ ลูกขวัญ สวนขวัญ) means respectively a precious wife, a precious child, a precious garden.

³ *Khwan chai* (ขวัญใจ) literally the *khwan* of the heart, *chom khwan* (จอมขวัญ) the highest point of the *khwan*, *khwan ta* (ขวัญตา) the *khwan* of the eyes, are words used to address one's beloved or favourite. The last two words are to be found mostly in poetry. *Khwan fa* (ขวัญฟ้า) literally the heavenly *khwan* means the beloved.

Eyes, ears, mouth, noses and hands have their particular *khwan*; they are *khwan ta*, *khwan hoo*, *khwan pak*, *khwan cha-mook* and *khwan mü* (ขวัญตา ขวัญหู ขวัญปาก ขวัญมือ). These words if preceded by the verb "to be" mean a feast for whichever particular part of the body is mentioned. For example *pen khwan ta* (เป็นขวัญตา) is a feast for the eyes.

Traditionally a person has 32 *khwans*. This tradition is known among the Thai of Thailand particularly in the North and North - East also, among the Laos and perhaps to the Shans, but so far it is not found among the Thai in the Central area including Bangkok. In the many texts of invocations and addresses to the *khwan* in the dialect of the North - Eastern Thai there is an enumeration of the various *khwans* in a person. There are, apart from the *khwan* of the eyes and so on as mentioned above, the heart, the intestines, the kidneys, etc. Try as I would I could not get the *khwan* to make up their right number of thirty - two. The belief in plurality of souls is to be found in many peoples, but so far this has not reached such a number. Probably the thirty - two *khwans* is a later development due to the influence of Buddhism where there are enumerated thirty - two integral parts of a human body.

2. The Khwan and Allied Words

Allied with the *khwan* there are three words in the Thai language which produce a complexity as to the nature of the *khwan*. They are the words *ming* (มิง), *chetabhut* (เจตภุติ) and *chai* (ຂ້າ).

Ming, like the *khwan* is an immaterial thing, also residing in a person. It gives him good fortune and prosperity if it does not desert him. In speaking, the word *ming* is frequently coupled with the word *khwan* as *ming khwan*. It means probably a mysterious power supposed to determine one's luck or fortune.

By comparing the word *ming* with the Chinese word also ming (命) meaning life, fate, destiny of men, I believe that they are one and the same word. The Thai have lost the original meaning of their word *ming* through the adoption of Pali word *chivit* (ชีวิต, Pali Jivita) meaning life. The various Thai tribes outside Thailand i.e. the Ahorn in Assam, the Tho and other Thais in Tongking, the Dioi and the Nung in Southern China, still retain the *ming*, meaning life, in their language.

Like the *khwan* the word *ming* has shifted its meaning from life to that of luck or fortune. It has again been superseded in its latter meaning by the words *sri* and *siri* of Sanskrit and Pali origin, both of which mean luck, prosperity, wealth, beauty, fame. So popular are the words *sri* and *siri* with the Thais that the two words are to be found in the above senses in everyday use, and also to be found as a prefix to many Thai title - names, and as a suffix to many Thai female personal names. No wonder, then that the word *ming* has become vague in meaning. It is now, confined to limited uses. With the exception of the couplet *ming - khwan* already mentioned, the word *ming* strange to say, is usually followed by a word of the same initial sound such as *ming muang* (มิ่งเมือง) *ming mia* (มิ่งเมีย). The word *muang* means a city, and the word *mia* means a wife. With the word *ming* as a prefix, *ming muang* and *ming mia* may mean the best or precious city and the best or precious wife. Comparing this with the meaning of *khwan*, one is not wiser than before.

We now come to the word *chetabhut*. This is a Pali word meaning in its original sense a substance which is the author of thought or consciousness. It is therefore not much different in meaning to the word mind. But in popular parlance, particularly among the older generation, there is not much difference between the *chetabhut* and the *khwan* in certain characteristics. The *khwan* will forsake someone only when the person is in great fear or is influenced by evil spirits, while the *chetabhut* will leave a person only when he or she is in an apprehensive fear or during sleep in a dream. A man walking alone in a lonely place hears footsteps as if someone is walking behind. He turns back in an apprehensive fear but sees no one. To country folk the sound heard by the man is no other than his *chetabhut*.

There is a folk story about the *chetabhut* well - known among the different Thai peoples which agrees in substance and differs only in details. Here is one version of the story. Two men on a journey took a rest at a certain place. One of them fell asleep. His companion saw an insect issuing from one of the sleeper's nostrils. He followed it and found that the insect, by accident,

had floundered into a water - hole. It tried to swim to get out of the water. The man put bit of grass on the water, letting one end of it touch the water and the other end touch the ground. The insect took advantage of that bit of grass and succeeded in getting out of water. It crawled back, followed by the man, and eventually reentered a nostril of the sleeping man who then woke up. He told his companion that he had had a bad dream: he fell into some water, but succeeded in getting out without drowning by means of a piece of wood which jutted into the water. His companion then knew that the insect was his friend's *chetabhut*.

Among the stories of the *chetabhut* as heard from the older generation, the form of the *chetabhut* varies. It may be in the form of an ant, a caterpillar, a spider or a scintillating thing somewhat like a firefly. Another version of the story relates that the *chetabhut* got out from the sleeping man not through a nostril but through the tip of one of his toes. Instead of falling into water, the *chetabhut* climbed up with difficulty to the top of a hill; which in reality was only a heap of cow dung.

Like the *khwan* with its thirty-two multiple souls, the *chethabhut* has four. When a person is very ill in a critical stage with no hope of recovery, old folk say that three of the sick man's four *chetabhut* have left him. Probably the folk refer to the traditional four elements, earth, water, wind and fire, but miscalled them *chetabhut*. Possibly the *chetabhut* is no other than the *khwan* itself, but of alien origin, which the Thai have gathered into the fold of their old beliefs along with the *khwan*.

Although the *khwan* is nowhere stated explicitly to have a physical form, the expression *khwan bin* or the *khwan* flies away when it has a fright, points to the fact that the *khwan* must have wings. The Lao's *khwan* is in the form of a cricket, the Malay, and possibly also that of the Indonesian, *semangat* soul is in the form of a bird, and the Burmese *leip - bya* soul is in the form of a butterfly. There is also the belief of the people in Europe that the soul of a dead man becomes a butterfly or a moth, so there are some possible grounds for thinking that the *khwan* must have a form of some kind.



Performing a Khwan ceremony with a Great Bai Si

Shway Yoe (Sir George Scott) tells us in his book *The Burman, his Life and Notions* that the *leip - bya* or the Burmese butterfly soul “is the cause of dreams. It is not absolutely necessary that the butterfly should remain constantly in the body; death will not necessarily ensue from the separation. When a man is asleep, therefore, it leaves the body and roams far and wide. But in these wanderings it can only go to those places where the person to whom it belongs has previously been. A straying from known paths would cause extreme danger to the sleeping body, for it might happen that the butterfly would lose its way and never return, and then both would die: the body because the animating principle was gone, and the *leip - bya* because it had no earthly tenement to live in.”

Sir George Scott, further in the same book, says that there is another kind of soul of the Burmese, the *thwe seit*, which he translates as “soul of the blood”. Lack of information on the primitive belief of the soul among the people of various races in the Indo - Chinese Peninsula is a handicap to comparative study. Anyhow the Burmese butterfly soul and the Thai *chetabhut* seem to be one and the same kind in certain aspects.

The Chinese say that a man’s soul goes out at night during sleep through an aperture on the crown of the head. (Compare the brahmarandhara or Brahm’s opening of the Hindus, where the soul of a holy man leaves the body during death from an aperture in the same locality of the head.) A man’s dream is the experience of the soul while roaming. As the soul gets in and out every night, the hair on the crown of the head is disturbed by continual treading of the soul so they are, therefore, unable to grow and thrive, unlike the hair on either side of the head, which grows luxuriantly undisturbed by the treading of the soul. Hence baldness is usually confined to the central part of the head.

The Thai *khwan* goes out from that part of the head also, though it is not expressly stated. An average Thai will not tolerate without resentment anyone touching his head. Woe to the person who pats a Thai head if that person is a woman. Worse still if the hand that touches it is a left hand, for that hand is unclean,

particularly that of a woman. No man if he can will pass under a clothes line nor let a woman's lower garment touch his head. When passing or standing near a superior or an elder, one should lower one's head in order not to be above or on an equal level with the head of that personage. If that personage sits on a chair or on a raised platform one must lower one's head when passing near the person. if he squats on a carpet or floor one must kneel or crawl. These social habits have become so conventionalized that they now form part of the Thai etiquette of good manners and decorum. Why is the average Thai so fastidious about his head? The reason perhaps may be found in the old belief that the *khwan* has something to do with the head. If you want two boys to have a light, just draw on the ground two circles, assuming that one of the circles is one of the boys' head and the other circle is the head of the other boy (เขียนหัว - to draw heads). Now, dare the boys to rub out the other's circle with their feet. Should one of them accept the dare and do it, it is a great insult and in most cases there will be a fight between the two. That is how sacred the head is among the Thai, and this I believe to be due to the belief of the *khwan*.

The Thai word *chai* which means heart or mind, is also curious. Through magical art the *chai* can be removed from a person like a possession and hidden somewhere. No harm will be done to the owner but it will give the person invincibility for no weapon can harm him. He will die only when his *duang chai* (the heart in a round form) is discovered in its hidden place and crushed. The magical removal of a heart is called in Thai *thod duang chai* (ถอนดวงใจ) which quite literally means to remove a heart. By extension, a lover may say to his beloved that he has entrusted his heart to her. The belief of removal of a heart by magical means is to be found only in a certain class of Thai literature. It is probably of Indian origin. When frightened one's *chai* or heart "is lost and overturned" (ใจหายไปคว่ำ) whereas the "khwan flees and bile withers" (ขวัญหนีดีฝ่อ). Why, I do not know.

As often as not, the cause of jaundice is a severe mental emotion like anger or fright. One is apt to think “the *khwan* flees and bile withers” has the same Cause as the jaundice.

The word *chai* forms a couplet with the *khwan* in *khwan chai* and the word *khwan* forms a couplet with *ming* in *ming khwan*. One cannot reverse this order of these two couplets nor can one interchange their components. I venture to translate the couplet *khwan chai* as the *khwan* or vital spirit of the *chai* or heart while *ming khwan* is the *ming* or life of the *khwan*. Hence a person has in himself a *chai* (heart or mind), while the *chai* has its *khwan* (soul or vital spirit) and the *khwan* has its *ming* (life).

3. “Tham Khwan” Ceremony

If a child comes home crying and in a feverish condition after experiencing a fall or a scare, people believe that the *khwan* has left the child. Someone, usually the child’s mother, will in an instant take a brass bowl¹⁾ with its ladle and a piece of cloth and go out directly to the spot where the child is supposed to have lost the *khwan*. Calling back the child’s *khwan* which is imagined to be nearby at the spot, the child’s mother takes the ladle out and dips up the imagined *khwan*, which she puts in the brass bowl, and covers it with the piece of cloth. Returning home to the sick child she turns the brass bowl round and round many times over the child, in the hope that the *khwan* will scent, possibly from odor, the child; thus enabling it to go back to its former abode in the child. Pieces of unspun cotton thread (a thing to be found in every Thai home where there is home spinning and weaving) are then tied in a fast knot round either wrist of the child. Then follows a wish or blessing with a present as a gift to the child.

1. The brass bowl as referred to above is a domestic utensil for storing cooked rice and is to be found in nearly every Thai home in the central part of Thailand. It is called kean (ຄັນ) in Thai. One frequently sees it in the early hours of the morning when people present food to monks.

With such procedure and treatment it is believed that the sick child in due time will regain its normal self.

In this simple ceremony just described, the first act done is called *riak khwan* (เรียกขวัญ) meaning the calling of the *khwan*. The next is called *tak khwan* (ตักขวัญ) or the dipping up of the Khan, and the tying of unspun cotton threads round the child's wrists is called *phook khwan* (ผูกขวัญ) or the tying of the *khwan*. The whole procedure is called *tham khwan*, literally the making of the *khwan* or, in its shifted meaning in current use as already mentioned, compensation for an injury done. What has been described of the *khwan* here is mainly done in Bangkok and in the Central area of Thailand. In other areas of Thailand the words and details of the ceremony vary but overlap to a degree where two sub - cultures meet. For instance, in Northern Thailand the *tham khwan* ceremony is called *choen khwan* (เชิญขวัญ) i.e. the invitation of the *khwan*, while in the North - eastern part of Thai - land where its culture meets that of the Laos and also in southerly direction that of the Cambodians it is called *su khwan* (สุขวัญ), i.e. the welcoming of the *khwan*. The tying of unspun threads round the wrists is called *mat mü* (มัดมือ) in Northern Thailand meaning the binding of the hand. In the North - East it is called *pook khaw mü* (ผูกข้อมือ) or the tying of the wrists. The ceremony of *tham khwan* or to be short the *khwan* ceremony as given hitherto is in its simple form. There is also a certain kind of *khwan* ceremony in a complex form, perhaps due to later development, with degrees of elaboration pertaining to different classes and ranks of the people concerned.

Also, when a child every now and then has an ailment with "three days good four days ill" (สามวันดีสี่วันไข้ = *sam wan di si wan khai*) as in the current Thai expression, a condition which may, in the long run, deteriorate into serious ill - health with a ten -

dency not to survive, such a child is called in Thai “hard to raise” (เลี้ยงยาก). When a child is in such a condition, a person known to “raise children easily” (เลี้ยงลูกง่าย) is invited to come and tie the *khwan* for the child. The person will tie both wrists of the child with unspun cotton threads. Before tying, the person takes one end of the thread brushing it to and from over the child’s wrist many times, and at the same time expresses a wish for the welfare of the child in a formal chant worded thus: “Oh *khwan!* abide with the flesh and body (= peace) and be cool and happy” (ชัวญ จงอยู่กับเนื้อกับตัว จงอยู่เย็นpeaceสุข). One will notice, living in a comparative warm climate, the Thai expression for a peaceful life of coolness. The brushing of the tip of a thread on a child’s wrist is probably of Indian origin (compare the investiture of the sacred cord of the Hindu twice - born). There is a saying in a rhyming couplet of the people in the Northern area that “to tie the left hand is to let the *khwan* come, to tie the right one, is to let the *khwan* stay” (ผูกมือซ้ายให้ชัวญมา ผูกมือขวาให้ชัวญอยู่).

As the visible sign of life in man is the regular beating of the pulse, perhaps the tying of the *khwan*, round the wrists is to keep it within bounds.

Some fifty years ago small silver coins with two denominations of an eighth and a quarter of a baht, were used in this country. The person who tied the *khwan* made from these coins a plain, inflexible and small bracelet, something like an anklet which could be adjusted in size. Such a bracelet is called in Thai a “spiritfetter” bracelet (กำไลเชือดผี). The person who performed the tying of the *khwan* put a pair of such bracelets on either wrist of the Child as a *khwan* gift. Sometimes, in its simple form, one of these small coins, which had a hole in the middle, was strung to the unspun cotton thread. It is to be noted that such small silver coins were to be purchased from a widow. The parents of the child by custom had to pay the person performing the tying of the *khwan* an amount of money equal to the price for the coins he had paid to the widow.

Possibly due to a later development, instead of a silver bracelet, gold or alloy of gold was used, and sometimes also with a miniature lock made of the same metal as the bracelet. At this stage of development it became unnecessary to purchase the metal from a widow, nor had the parents of the child to pay equal the price of the bracelet to the person performing the tying of the *khwan*. In fact the parents of the child simply gave something of value in gratitude to the person tying the *khwan*. Usually the performers of the tying of the *khwan* were two persons, a man and his wife, who alternately tied either the right or left wrists of the child.

What is recorded here is confined to Bangkok and derived from personal experience. In outlying districts, particularly in the central part of Thailand among the peasant folk, the tying of the *khwan* was no doubt the same but probably simpler.

According to my information, the miniature locks strung to the unspun cotton threads were sometimes made of wood carved into the shape of a lock, the wood having been taken from a beam supporting the floor of monk's privy; or in substitution for a lock, the bone of a frog's leg was used, which looked like a Chinese old style lock in shape as used by people before the coming of European locks and keys, or sometimes a vulture's bone in the shape of a *takrut* (ตะกรุด) or a cylindrical shaped amulet was worn.

Also, in case of a child who is frequently ill, if he is a boy, the parents take him to a monk to have the tying of the *khwan*. If the child is a girl, the monks will give pieces of consecrated unspun cotton threads to the parents to tie the child's *khwan* by themselves at home, for monks cannot consciously touch a female without sinning. The bringing of a child to a monk for tying of the *khwan* is called in Thai idiom *thot pha pa* (ทอดผ้าป่า) literally it means to lay a cloth in a forest or an uninhabited place. The *thot pha pa* is a name of a certain convention where a monk's robe is laid for merit - making on a branch of a tree where a monk may come by and "draw" it. In ancient days a Buddhist monk lived the life of a mendicant.

By discipline, a monk could possess only one yellow robe - a set of three pieces. More than the pieces he wore he could not possess. When the garments became tattered and worn out, he had to replace them from discarded cloth which he found. This he washed, dyed and cut into the desired shapes. Perhaps later on some meritorious minded person, seeing the plight of a monk in a tattered robe, placed a cloth on the branch of a tree where a passing monk might see and take it for his use. By discipline a monk cannot receive a robe offered from anyone unless it be during the month after the Buddhist Lenten period, when a monk by the religious vote of the brotherhood many accept a robe from anyone in a ceremonial presentation. Such a presentation robe is known as a *kathin* robe (ພາກສູງ). In the present day there has arisen a method of presenting the *thot pha pa* by hanging the robe on a branch of a tree together with other articles as befitting gifts to a monk. Usually the robe to be presented is hung on a cut branch of a tree placed in an ornamental basket or otherwise, together with other articles hanging on the branch of the tree. Prominent among these articles is a towel made into the shape of a gibbon which purports to be a denizen of the forest. Sometimes there are many decorated baskets in a *thot pha pa* ceremony where many people cooperate. These are carried in a grand procession to the intended wat or monastery where the monks help themselves to the gifts.

The taking of a frequently sick child to a monk for the tying of the *khwan* as a *thot pha pa* is a ruse to hoodwink the *phi* (ຜີ) or spirit. A Child was often ill, the people believed, because of the *phi* who wanted to take away the child.¹⁾ If the child now

1. According to popular belief, a person is born through the making of the *phi*. The *phi* shapes some clay, perhaps, into the figure of a child to its own liking. It then puts the figure into the womb of a woman and a conception ensues. Within three days after the child is born, the *phi* will come to see the child, and if it finds the baby still to its liking it will take away the baby, which means the baby will die. Hence the well-known Thai expression as "three days (the baby)

belonged to a monk, as if it had been left as a *thot pha pa*, it was believed that the *phi* would not dare to afflict the child any more, for the *phi* fears a monk on account of his holiness.

If a parent, usually the mother, has to be away from home temporarily and entrusts someone with the care of her baby, she will tie an unspun cotton thread to each of the baby's wrists. She must say something in a cajoling manner to the baby that she will come back as soon as possible, may it be good and happy during her absence. If the mother leaves her baby without performing such necessary leave-taking, the baby, during her absence, will show signs of vexation and cry continually. Such is a belief of the people which has existed even up to the present time. When a baby during its mother's absence cries every now and then as if it suffers a pain or illness, people nearby will make a remark during her absence that she is a modern-minded mother who has not observed such a necessary performance.

In the North and North-East of Thailand there is a *tham khwan* ceremony for distinguished visitors who have been temporarily in their midst. Also, in Central Thailand there is a *tham khwan* ceremony for a person who comes back after a long absence from home or returns from an expedition of war. The nature of the performance of such a *tham khwan* ceremony is not a simple one such as has already been described. Neither is the *tham khwan* ceremony related to other rites of passage. Before dealing with these ceremonies it is necessary to describe first, certain para-

is a *phi*'s child; four days a human's child" (สามวันลูกผีสี่วันลูกคน) meaning that within three days after birth the baby may die to become a *phi*'s servant. If in the fourth day the baby still lives, it is then a human's child. There is a trick to mislead the *phi* by selling the baby immediately it is born to some one, by make-believe to mislead the *phi* that the baby is not the woman's child. In order to hoodwink the *phi* further, the baby is named with words of undesirable meaning such as buffalo, dog, frog, bad, small, and so on. When the *phi* hears of a baby with such names, it will not take away the baby believing the baby has such characteristics as the names describe. Such names sometimes stick and survive with the baby until it has become a man without any change. If the baby grows into a child but has continual ill-health, the parents believe that it is the *phi again* who is the cause of the trouble, hence the giving away of the child to a monk in *pha pa* fashion.

phernalia in connection with the *tham khwan* ceremony in the next chapter.

4. Articles in Connection with the Tham Khwan Ceremony

The chief article in connection with the *tham khwan* ceremony is the *bai si* (ບາຍສີ - long ai in bai). It is a word of Cambodian origin, meaning literally auspicious rice or in other words the *khwan* rice. In Northern Thailand it is called also *bai si* (ໃບສີ) but with a short Sound in bai, which means auspicious leaf, or also *khan si* (ຂ້ານສີ) or auspicious tray, while in the North - East it is called *ba si* (ບາສີ) no doubt a corrupted form of *bai si*.

There are two kinds of *bai si*; the *bai si pak cham* (ບາຍສີປັກພາມ) meaning literally the dish - border *bai si*, and the *bai si yai* (ບາຍສີໃຫຍໍ) or the major *bai si*. Sometimes it is called *bai si chan* (ບາຍສີຈັນ - tiered *bai si*) or *bai si tang* (ບາຍສີຕັ້ງ - standing *bai si*).

The Bai Si Pak Cham. This kind of *bai si* is composed of three items; (a) the *kruai* (ກຣາຍ) or the cone - shape vessel, (b) the *nom meo* (ນມແມວ) or cat's breasts, and (c) the *mangda* (ພັງດາ - king - crab or horseshoe - crab - *Tachypleus gigas*).

(a) *The kruai.* This cone - shape vessel is made of banana leaf, cut and folded in such shape and filled with cooked rice. In fact the *kruai* is similar to the ice - cream cone in shape. It is placed with its circular base in the center of a large sized dish. The apex

of the *kruai* is surmounted by a hard - boiled duck's egg, shelled and pinned by a small wood sliver. (In the North, either a hen's or a duck's egg may be used, and in the North - East only a hen's egg is used. Probably this is due to the abundance of hen's eggs in relation to duck's eggs.) This egg is called *khai khwan* (ໄຂ່ຂວ້າງ) or *khwan's* egg. Usually the *khwan's* egg is again surmounted by a row or a cluster of flowers placed one upon another with a wood pin stuck in the top of the egg.

(b) *Nom meo or cat's breasts*. Each "cat's breast" is made of a Strip of banana leaf which has been cut to size and then folded back so as to make a flat, triangular, arrowhead shape at the fold with a residual "tail" below. Three of these "breasts" are then placed one upon another in an overlapping sequence so as to form one unit with an overall triangular shape with a common major apex but with the minor apices (the cat's breasts) jutting out a little below the topmost point like spurs or spikes (a bit like the layers of an artichoke). Three of these triangular, multi - apical units are placed equidistantly round the dish with the apices sticking up and jutting out slightly beyond the rim of the dish. The residual tail - ends of the "breast" are roughly interwoven into one whole forming the "floor" of the dish and are fastened together with a small wooden pin to prevent them from coming loose and unfolding. Thus the three units of three, though separated radially, are pinned together in the center by their tails. As a further anchor to keep everything in place, the *kruai* - cone full of cooked rice is placed point - upwards in the center of the dish on top of the tails. The cone of the *kruai* should be higher than the apices of the units around it. For the above reasons the "dish - border bai-si" is sometimes called *bai-si-nom-meo* or the cat's breasts *bai si*.

(c) *Mangda*. A banana leaf cut into the shape of a serrated leaf, something like the outline of a *mangda* (horseshoe - crab). Such is the name of this article. The middle of the serrated leaf is cut through into two slits like a gable in shape. Three pieces of this *mangda*, but sometimes four, are placed in the same way as the nom meo or cat's breasts, but at intervals between

the *nom meo*. The *mangda* has also a long tail which is twisted with the other two of its set and placed in the same manner as the *nom meo*. The *mangda* is sometimes called *tao* (เต่า), or tortoise, probably from its shape.

Three pieces of ripe banana cut lengthwise are inserted in the folds of the *nom meo* or cat's breasts. The banana as used traditionally is from a variety known as *kluai nam Thai* (กล้วยน้ำ). Three pieces of cucumber, also cut lengthwise, are placed each on the *mangda*. These pieces of banana and cucumber may be placed simply in the *bai si* dish in a consecutive manner at either place. Three pieces of sweetmeat are sometimes used in place of the three pieces of banana and cucumber. Sweetmeat as used commonly is of the kind known as *khanom tom khao* (ขนมต้มขาว) meaning literally "boiled white sweetmeat". It is made of glutinous rice flour kneaded and rolled into a shape and size of the children's stone marble with a small piece of palm sugar cake inserted within. This is boiled and sprinkled with shreds of ripe - coconut flesh. It seems similar to the Hindu sweetmeat called modaka which I have been told of, which is used by the Hindus as an offering to their spirits and deities. The Thai use it too as such an offering. Other kinds of sweetmeat may be used in place of the above one.

There are also three sets of another kind or offerings which compose a set: one beeswax taper, an incense stick and a flower. These are stuck and placed in and around the *bai si* dish alternately between the cat's breast and the horseshoe crabs. Extra flowers, usually jasmine may be used as decoration. Pieces of unspun cotton threads of a hand - span in length are placed across the cat's breasts. These threads are *used* for the tying of the *khwan*. The "dishborder *bai Si*" is an offering either to the *khwan* or to a deity, if an offering is made to a deity there is no necessity to supply such threads.

Critical Comment. The “dish border *bai si*” is evidently a plate of food and sweetmeats as an offering to the *khwan*. It is perhaps, in part, of Indian origin. Orthodox Hindus are vegetarians and in certain localities take their food from banana leaf or from a platter made of such material. The Thai on the other hand take their food from a dish. They may take their food from a banana leaf platter only on certain occasions when there is no dish at hand, as on a picnic excursion for example. In Thai traditional customs when an offering of food and sweetmeat is used to propitiate spirits or deities, it is always offered on a platter made either of banana leaf or from the sheaths of banana stem in certain prescribed shapes as dictated by tradition. The offering of food and sweetmeats to the *khwan* is in one respect different from that offered to the gods and deities. In the former the owner of the *khwan* is visibly there, while the later are always invisible. It looks undecorous to have food and sweetmeats placed in a banana leaf platter instead of a dish for entertaining a person who is the owner of the *khwan*. The placing of a banana platter in a large dish or tray is probably a compromise between tradition and Thai recognized good manners. Even today when one offers anything to one’s superiors or elders, either a glass of water or an invitation card, for example, it should be placed on a salver or a tray when handing it. The handing of anything to a superior or an elder in the offhand manner tolerated nowadays is undoubtedly due to the impact of other cultures.

The *kruai* is evidently no other than the cone - shaped woven bamboo covering for food called in Thai *fa chi* (ຝ້າຊີ) to be found in many Thai homes. The *fa chi* is always covered with a red cloth, and on certain special occasion with brocades. Thai food traditionally is placed in dishes and these again are arranged in a tray. A *fa chi* for covering food before partaking of them is, therefore, a necessity.

The *khwan* egg on the apex of the *kruai* may be a symbol of vitality or a second spiritual rebirth if partaken ceremonially by the owner of the *khwan* (compare : Easter egg).

The *nom meo* or cat's breasts and *mangda* or horseshoe crabs are undoubtedly the serrated decorations round the borders of the banana leaf platter. The best kind of Thai banana leaf platter is made with a surmounted serrated border called in Thai *krathong chirm* (กระ Thompson) meaning a surmounted - border *kra - thong*. If such a platter is a small one, when placed in a large deep dish, only the surmounted border of the *krathong* will be visible to the eyes from a distance as something with pointed tips protruding above the rim of the dish. No doubt in a later period the banana leaf platter might have been discarded for the reason that the dish itself is an appropriate receptacle for food and rice, why then should a banana leaf platter be utilized unnecessarily. A trace of a banana leaf platter with serrated borders survived only in its border - decoration.

Sliced banana and cucumbers are dainties among the Hindu in India in certain localities, as in Calcutta for example. Perhaps the banana and cucumbers are also dainties of the khwan and have their source perhaps from India.

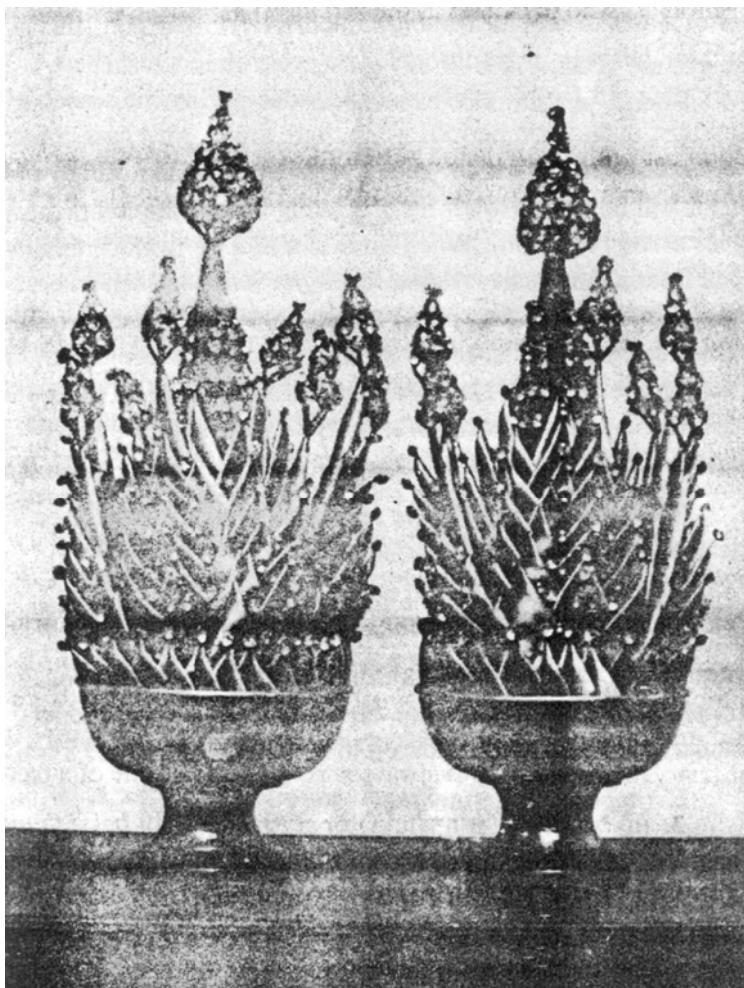
One will notice that the number of things as used in the *bai si* is always in three. This is a favorite number with the Thai.

Bai Si Yai or Major Bai Si. This is a kind of structure usually pyramidal in shape and is composed of five tapering tiers. There are also seven or even nine tiers, but they are rarely constructed owing to the fact the whole structure would be too high and would not stand firmly unless it had a relatively large base. The five tiers have as their platforms thin boards, round and flat like a disc, with a rod or shaft running through a perforated hole in the center of each disc. The discs vary in sizes, the lower one is relatively the largest and the size becomes gradually smaller with the higher ones in a tapering manner. The borders of each of the discs are ornamented by the *nom meo* or cat's breasts. They are arranged in two consecutive circles; the top one with its tips pointed in a skyward directions and the lower one with the tips pointed in the opposite direction. These two *nom meo* with their pointed

tips in opposite directions are fastened round the borders of the disc by a clasp - like fastener made of material from the sheath of a banana stalk. On each disc, save the highest and smalest one, are small banana leaf platters filled with food, sweetmeats and choicest fruits. On the highest disc is placed a small bowl or dish decorated with flowers. In the old days a *bai si pak cham* or a dish - border *bai si* was the thing in use. It is still to be seen, but infrequently, up to the present time. Three laths of bamboo splits of an appropriate length are placed endways at equal distances from base to top of the sides of the structure and fastened each with three knots in equal proportions. These three laths of bamboo are supporters of the structure. Three young banana leaves (ใบตอง อ่อน) are wrapped round the structure, and this again is wrapped with a piece of brocade or other valuable textile materials. This cloth is called *pha haw khwan* (ผ้าหอขวัญ) or “*khwan’s* cloth wrapper”.

The making of *bai si*, especially the folding of banana leaves into cone - shape *nom meo* or cat’s breasts, was in the old days handed and taught traditionally to the younger members of the family. When a novice had a sufficient command over the folding of the *bai si* he or she was initiated into the mystic art. The initiation was simple. The teacher will hold the hands of the novice while folding banana leaves into the shape of *nom meo*. Such an initiation is called in Thai *krob* (ครอบ) which means to cover (or to impart knowledge to the pupil). The “*krob* ceremony” or initiation is not confined only to the making of *bai si*, but is used in most of the traditional arts; for instance, the fine arts, sculpture, painting, music (both vocal and instrumental) and dramatic art, have their “*krob* ceremonies”, some peculiar to each case as well. The School of Music and Dramatic Art of the Silpakorn University has its annual *krob* ceremony.

The best made major *bai si*, is decorated around the shaft with flowers or with figures carved from sweet potatoes and unripe papaya fruits into scenes taken from certain episodes of the best



Bai Si

known Thai literature. Such figure carving is called *keh bai si* (แกะนายศรี = carving of *bai si*). The “carving of *bai si*” forms a part of a certain class of Thai oral literature called *le kha bai si* (แหลกแกะนายศรี) in which a reciter describes in an intoned voice as an extra part of an invocation to the *khwan* depicting certain imaginary scenes to be found as decoratives of the *bai si*. Such decoration of the *bai si* is rarely found nowadays for it costs a lot of skill and time, not to speak of the relatively high pecuniary cost. This workmanship is also to be seen frequently as decoration of the best made funeral pyres.

Critical comment. Owing to the real meaning of the *bai si* and also that of the *khwan* being vaguely understood by most people, the *bai si* in modern times has undergone innovations in certain aspects. Instead of the cone - shaped things surrounding the discs of the major *bai si* being made with banana leaves, in some cases they are now made with croton leaves - a garden shrub with ornamental foliages variously coloured and shaped (*codiicum variegatum euphorbiaceac*). In one instance, the major *bai si* is constructed entirely of wood and painted, so as to have it look like a real traditional one. The cone - shaped *nom meo* or cat breasts are painted green like the colour of banana leaves; the rod that runs through the center of the discs is made into the shape of the mythological naga snake (ນາຄ) and painted white. So also the *khwan* egg at the apex of *bai si* is made of wood and painted white too. This *bai si* is made by a professional *khwan* doctor (ໂພອຂວ້າງ) who officiates at the ceremony. Perhaps the *khwan* doctor wants to save the trouble of laborious work in constructing a major *bai si* in its traditional style every time when there is a brisk demand for his professional service during the season of Buddhist Ordination period, when there are in most cases *tham khwan* ceremonies for the many candidates. Also the *khwan* doctor will be able to lower his officiating fee against competitors in his own profession. When there is a *tham khwan* ceremony for a Buddha image newly cast, the major *bai si* on such an occasion is filled in the disc - platters with flowers instead of food,

sweetmeats and fruits. As food and sweetmeats are meant as oblation to the spirit, I believe that the replacement of the *bai si*

pak cham or dish - border *bai si* on the topmost disc by a silver bowl or dish with flowers is the probable reason.

The Royal bai si. There are three types of *bai si* used in the royal *tham khwan* ceremony.

1. *bai si tong long thong khao* (บายศรีตองลองทองขา)

meaning literally banana leaf *bai si* with nickel covers. This is a major *bai si* as previously described, with the exception of the rod and discs which are made of nickel instead of wood as in ordinary major *bai si*. It is always in seven tiers and one of a pair.

2. (a) *baisi keo* (บายศรีแก้ว) or crystal *bai si* (b) *baisi thong*

(บายศรีทอง) or gold *bai si*, (c) *baisi ngern* (บายศรีเงิน) or silver *bai si*. These three kinds of *bai si* are composed of trays supported on pedestals in various graduated sizes placed upon one another in such a way so as to form five or seven tiers in a pyramid shape like the ordinary major *bai si*. They are named crystal, gold or silver *bai si* according to the materials used as trays. Food and sweet - meats are placed on every tray. They form a set by themselves known as a minor set of *bai si*, (in contrast to a major set of *bai si* in 3.), and are used in the royal *tham khwan* ceremony On a minor scale. The crystal *bai si* stands in the middle of a row, the gold *bai si* on the right side of the crystal *bai si* and the silver *bai si* on the left side. The pair of banana leaf *bai si* in 1 stand apart by themselves. This reflects that the *bai si* in 2 is a later addition to the banana leaf *bai si* in 1.

3. This is exactly the same as the *bai si* in 1 and 2, but bigger in size for an occasion of *tham khwan* ceremony in grand style.

Complementary articles of the royal major bai si. These include :

1. *Waen wien thian* (แวนเวียนเทียน). It is a taper holder made of brass in a lenticular shape with three beeswax tapers fixed on it. Five of such taper holders form a set and are stuck in a metal bowl filled with rice as supporters. These taper holders are used only when there is a *wien thian* ceremony or the waving of taperlights carried round and round a candidate in a circle. The ceremony is no other than the aspersion of light in ritual purification of the candidate.
2. *Thian jai* (เทียนชัย) or victory candle. Such a candle is lit from special fire caught from the sun by a magnifying glass and is stuck in a candlestick. (Compare the Indian “arani”, a wood friction method of producing sacred fire.)
3. Unguents of scented oil or paste, or sometimes both, for anointing the tapers on the holders.
4. A salver of betel-vine leaves.
5. Pieces of unspun cotton threads placed in the same salver as in 4. (If these pieces of threads are provided already in the dish border *bai si* such threads are not necessary.)
6. A young coconut on a salver. The coconut is pared of its outer husk and sometimes its top is cut off and opened. There is also a small silver spoon on the salver.

There are sometimes extra things, supplementary to the above articles as described. There may be a pair of boiled pig's heads, or there may be a number of trays filled with food.

The articles as listed are for the royal *tham khwan* ceremony on a grand scale, which includes the rite of *wien thian* or the waving of lights. Certain articles listed may be omitted, or there may be additions as dictated by necessity. The *tham khwan* ceremony is not confined to human beings only, but may be extended also to certain kinds of domestic animals and other inanimate

things as well. In the royal *tham khwan* ceremony the listed articles are in most cases in triplets, so also is the crystal, gold and silver *bai si*.

There is a certain type of *bai si* made of two circles of the pointed - tip *mon meo* arranged in two consecutive circles one with its tips pointed in a sky - ward direction and the low one with the tips pointed in the opposite direction. This doubled circlet is stuck on a stalk or bole of banana tree of a certain length as its base. There is nothing in the *bai si* except flowers, incense sticks and, perhaps, a taper. I was told that food or other eatables were provided as an offering to a spirit or a deity in a separate tray. It has nothing to do with the *khwan*. After the offering, the *bai si* was left at the place as something discarded. It has no particular name except merely as *bai si*. This sort of simple *bai si* is found in the provinces of Pitsanulok and Sukhothai, and probably is also to be found in the other neighbouring provinces.

5. Tham Khwan Ceremony

The *tham khwan* ceremony consists mainly of three parts, namely:

- (1) *Wien thian* or the waving of lights.
 - (2) The feast of the *khwan*.
 - (3) *Pook khwan* or the tying of the *khwan* with unspun cotton threads.

The ceremony as performed by the people, particularly in Bangkok, is for the following persons, animals and things:

- (a) a month old baby when its first hair, (called “fire hair” - ພມໄຟ in Thai), is shaved ceremoniously,
 - (b) a person coming of age when his or her top - knot is cut in a tonsure ceremony (ພຶບໂກນຈຸກ),
 - (c) a person when he is going to be ordained as a Buddhist monk on the eve of the ordaining ceremony,
 - (d) a bride and bridegroom in a wedding ceremony,

- (e) a person returning home after a long absence or after
a recovery from a long illness, and
- (f) certain domestic animals and inanimate things.

Of these the one still practiced in force is (c) when a person is going to be ordained. The others are rarely done nowadays, except on the outskirts of Bangkok or in the rural part of Central Thailand.

The Performance of the *tham khwan* ceremony may be performed in an abbreviated form or in an elaborate one. The former consists of the tying of the unspun cotton threads (phook *khwan*) and the feast of the *khwan* with a dish - border *bai si* only, and there is no ceremony of the waving of lights. The latter consists of the *wien thian*, the feast of the *khwan* with the dish - border *bai si* and the major *bai si*, and the *phook khwan* ceremony.

The *them khwan* ceremony in its elaborate form is as follows:

The two kinds of *bai si*, i.e. the dish - border *bai si* and the major *bai si*, are placed in the middle of a room prepared for the purpose. It is spread with mats or carpeted for the occasion, two small low tables stand on either side of the two *bai si*. There are on one of the tables three ceremonial taper holders, each with three tapers attached to it in a row, stuck in a metal bowl (usually silver or gold-plated) filled with rice. The rice in this particular case has no meaning. It is used merely as a support to the taper - holders only. Rice has always been a thing ready at hand in every home; hence the convenience of its utilization for such a purpose, and it has then developed into a tradition. The number of taper holders may be more than three as occasion demands if the room is a big one and there are more people participating in the rite. The number is always odd for it is deemed lucky. On the same table is a metal tray with a pedestal called *phan* (พาน) in Thai.

In it is placed a young coconut pared of its outer husk and with its top cut open. There is also in the tray a spoon. On the other table are a "small victory candle" (*thian chai*) on a candlestick



A Brahmin ceremony

and a small jar or two of unguents of scented paste and oil. There may be on the table a gold decorated conch shell placed also on a tray. (This is a redundant unless there is a lustration of water.)

When the astrological auspicious moment arrives, the candidate in befitting apparel on such an occasion is led by the hand (or carried if a child) by a parent or an elder of the family into the middle of the room and sits alone near the two *bai si* surrounded by a ring of relatives and friends in the sitting position. A Thai classical orchestra, if there is any, plays a familiar tune when the auspicious moment arrives and stops playing when the candidate is seated.

Now a pundit, either a native brahman or a professional layman sitting nearby; starts to initiate the rite. He moves into the middle of the room and sits in an appropriate posture¹⁾ before the candidate and the *bai si*. He directly raises his hands and clasps them palm to palm in a worshipful attitude, and commences to recite, in some places with intonations, in a loud voice the invocation of the *khwan*. The invocation consists of three parts, and the end of each part is marked by the beating of a big gong, three strokes accompanied by three cheers of *ho hiu* (ໂຮ້ຽ).²⁾

1. The appropriate posture here is the sideways sitting posture with the lower limbs turned inward and touched behind the haunches (ນັ້ງຫັບເພື່ອນ). By traditional etiquette squatting directly on the haunches (ນັ້ນຍອງ ຖ) sitting with stretched legs (ນັ້ນເຫັນຄາ), or squatting crouched on floor or on chair with legs apart (ນັ້ນຄ່າງຄາ), or with knees raised up like a monkey (ນັ້ນຊັ້ນຈາ) are deemed socially vulgar and indecorous. Sitting with crossed legs (ນັ້ນຂັດສມາດີ) is permitted with foreigners or with Thai between equals and juniors on intimate terms.

2. This is the traditional cheer of the people. A precentor begins with the word “ho” (ໂທ) in a long - drawn high tone followed by a Chorus refrain “hiu” (ຫຼິວ) also in a high tone. It was replaced by King Vajiravudh on certain occasions in later times with the word “chai-yo” (ໄກໄໂລ).

The commencement of the invocation is the adoration of the Buddhist Sacred Triple Gem, then follows the adoration of the King, the parents and the teachers. This is confined to the ordination ceremony only. As to the tonsure ceremony the high gods of Hinduism are also invoked. In other ceremonies indigenous tutelary gods receive the same homage. These reflect the traditional belief of the people. The rest of the invocation depicts the way of life of the Thai in the old days, or at least during the time of the author who composed it. It describes, for example, what tenderness and love has been bestowed on the candidate by the parents in his tender years, how he has been reared and trained. The last part contains the invocation to the *khwan* not to stray in forbidden paths but to stay always with the candidate. A feast of delicious food and dainties is arranged for the *khwan* to partake in pleasant surroundings. Here the invocation depicts the various foods and dainties, and the scene of the best furnished room of a typical Thai house in the past. The description does not necessarily coincide with the real things in the room.

There are many texts and versions of such invocations which have been handed down orally by professional officiants of the *tham khwan* ceremony. These versions of invocation form a part of Thai expressive oral literature. Selected ones have been collected and edited into book form and printed by the former Royal Institute now the Fine Arts Department. The various versions are a valuable study of folklore, for they contain beliefs, traditions and customs of the people of former days which have been inherited unconsciously by modern progressive people in the ways they think, feel and believe.

Immediately after the invocation comes to an end, the officiant starts stripping the brocade and the three young banana leaves from the major *bai si*. These he rolls together into a bundle with the brocade as a wrapper. He hands it to the candidate who will hold and press it tightly to his or her breast. If the candidate is a baby the bundle is placed nearby.

The ceremonial room sometimes is surrounded by the consecrated unspun cotton threads (คายสายลิขุจน์) to mark a mystic

boundary of the place and to be a protection against evil spirits. Sometimes there is also placed in a tray nearby a set of the candidate's clothing. This is confined to a candidate who is a child only. The set of clothing is probably a used one of the child - candidate. This is perhaps to attract the *khwan* from straying; for the *khwan* is theoretically, very sensitive in recognizing the odor of the owner of the clothing.

Now we come to the ceremony of the ritual waving of lights. The officiant lights the tapers on the three taper holders with fire from the "victory candle". He holds the three taper holders carefully with both hands by arranging the holders in such a way that he can hold them together by the rims, and circumambulates three times in a clock - wise direction round the *bai si* tables. He then holds the taper - holders one at a time at the rims with both hands and lifts it in a circle three times to the level of his forehead as an act of adoration, and wafts the smoke with the back of his right hand towards the candidate. He hands the taper holder to the person next to him on the left, who begins again and so on with the second and third in succession. All the persons who receive the taper holder repeat the same process.

When the three tapers complete their round the officiant takes a betel vine leaf as provided from a tray and places it as a score on the table. It is called in Thai "tally betel vine leaves" (ໃບພລູຄະແນນ). After a completion of the three rounds (sometimes five or seven) the officiant replaces the taper holders in the bowl as before with the lights still on. He smears the three betel vine leaves with the scented unguents as provided. He now simultaneously takes the three taper holders from the bowl bringing the flame close together he extinguishes them each with one of the smeared betel vine leaves and wafts the smoke towards the candidate. He next rekindles the tapers for the second and the third time repeating the same process. During the *wian thian* ceremony from start to finish the orchestra plays its tunes through - out with appropriate melodies,¹⁾ and there are three cheers of

1. Enquiries have frequently been made as to whether the correct way

ho hiu at intervals.

After the waving of lights comes to an end, the officiant anoints the candidate. He does it with his right - hand index finger which wears *aphirot* ring (แหวนพิรอด)¹⁾ or a *nophakao* ring (แหวน นาฟเก้า)²⁾. He touches lightly the unguents as left on the betel leaves with the tip of his afore - said finger and anoints the candidate.

of lifting the waving lights is in an inward or outward direction. Evidently the ritual waving of lights is to conjure in the air a sort of magic circle. Whether one does it in either way, one always has a complete imaginary circle. To do it in an inward direction in a clock-wise circle is deemed auspicious on all propitious occasions. Compare “arati” the waving of lights of the Hindus before an image or a person as a protection against evil eyes.

The extinguishing of the lights with betel-vine leaves smeared with scented unguents is undoubtedly a purification rite by driving odorous smoke towards the candidate. Why is a betel-vine leaf used as an agent in such a process ? Perhaps in the old days a betel tray (with betel nuts, betel leaves, lime paste, etc.) formed part of the *bai si* articles, but things were missed out in latter times; only the betel-vine leaves which are used as scores for they are there conveniently at hand. Chewing of betel nut (which of course includes other ingredients too) was prevalent with past generations. Every Thai home used to have at least one betel tray. The tray contained many small receptacles for storing betel nuts, leaves and other ingredients. They are made either of precious metals or of a baser kind or even in wood, according to the status and rank of the owner. The king has two formal betel trays made of pure gold, one for use in a state function and another for his majesty's private use. These royal betel trays are still symbolically in use in traditional grand state functions. Proper Thai etiquette required the host to serve a guest first with a betel tray as a symbol of respect and regard. After a meal, betel was chewed in the same manner as one smokes a cigarette. If a girl handed you a mouthful of betel for no particular reason, it means that she had a kind feeling toward you.

1. *Phirot* is a ring made from a cloth inscribed with mystic figures and characters called *pha yan* (ผ้ายันต์) intertwined in a shape of certain kinds of magic knots. It is used as a talisman.

2. *Nophakao* is a ring set with nine variegated coloured gems. They are diamond, ruby, emerald, topaz (บุษราคัม), garnet (โกเมน), sapphire (นิล), moonstone (มุกค马拉), zircon (เพทาย) and cat's-eye (ไฟกราย). It is used also as a talisman. The Hindus deem the index finger and also the middle finger as unlucky. They never utilize either of the two fingers in anointing, but use the ring finger only, King Vajiravudh and some high Thai princes utilize the thumb. Sometimes by necessity, in the case of cutting a top - knot in the tonsure ceremony, one cannot manipulate the scissors with other fingers than the thumb and index finger. Hence the manipulator has to wear either a *phirot* or a *nophakao* ring to counteract any evil that may occur to the candidate.”

If the candidate is a male, a mystic figure in a clock - wise direction thus is inscribed on the area between the eye - brows; if the candidate is a female a mystic figure in the opposite direction thus is inscribed. Such figures are called *unalom* (อุณาโลม)¹⁾. In certain cases both hands of the candidate are also anointed on the palms of the hands.

After the anointing, comes the feast of the *khwan*. The officiant takes the spoon on the table which he moves three times up and down in the air near the *bai si*. This is a make - believe that he has taken some food and dainties from the *bai si* with the spoon, and mixed them in the coconut. He then dips into the coconut and draws a spoonful of its water, presuming the food and dainties are also there in the spoon which he feeds to the candidate in simulation. Sometimes a small helping of dainties is put in reality. Such a simulation is usually performed in the case of a child candidate. If the candidate is a baby the spoon with coconut water is turned round and round over the baby's mouth only. I have never seen an adult candidate receive such treatment, nor has the person taken any of the *khwan* food either real or imaginary. Perhaps the partaking of *khwan* food was a real thing in the old days. In case the candidate is a young baby it is fed three times with plain tepid water provided for the purpose. Then follows the partaking of the *khwan* egg and cooked rice in the dish - border *bai si*, imaginary of course. It is a belief that the *khwan* being thus feasted will satisfactorily stay with its owner.

Tying the *khwan* is the next ceremony. Three strands of consecrated unspun cotton threads are entwined into one and knotted at intervals with three fast - knots. The thread is passed three times under either arm of the candidate, and then tied in a fast - knot on either wrist. Sometimes the thread is passed also round each leg first, then on the arms and the head of the candidate.

1. *Unalom* in its original meaning is a tuft of twisted hair which grows on the forehead at a place between the eyebrows. It is one of the thirty - two characteristic marks of the Lord Buddha which may often be seen as a relief circular dot which adorned the forehead of a Buddha image. The *unalom* is undoubtedly a symbol of Agni, the Vedic god of fire.

During the tying process the officiant mumbles certain incantations. Perhaps he exhorts the khwan with the usual well-known words: "Oh! *khwan*, abide with the body", or he may use a Pali stanza of his own selection to enhance the sacredness. Usually, the arms are lightly brushed lengthwise three times with the thread or the wrists are brushed three times with the tip of the thread which is then burned and pinched off before tying. The brushing process is no doubt the taking away from the candidate all impurities and undesirable things which cling on the tip of the thread. Hence the burning and pinching off. Sometimes the candidate's ankles receive the same treatment too, and sometimes the tying of the *khwan* is done before the anointing and the feast of the *khwan* in the reverse order to what was previously described. Such differences as described are due to different schools as followed by the officiants. (Compare the process of investiture with the sacred thread of the twice-born Hindus as a second spiritual rebirth).

After the tying of the khwan by the officiant, relatives and friends may tie the wrists of the candidate with additional threads as provided in the dish - border *bai si*. Then gifts are presented to the candidate by the binders. In case of the *tham khwan* ceremony of a bride and a bridegroom as performed in rural areas of Central Thailand in particular, gifts of money are the presents made by relatives and friends. Here one may understand how the words *tham khwan* and *khong khwan* (gifts) developed from their original meanings of a "making of *khwan*" and a "*khwan* gift" to that of the present day meanings of a compensation for an injury done and a gift in general in the Thai language. The orchestra as provided for the occasion plays its melodies at intervals throughout the ceremonies of the anointing, the feast and the tying of the *khwan*.

The *tham khwan* ceremony is now concluded. The bundle of three young banana leaves and brocade, or in other words the "*khwan* wrapper cloth" is brought home and placed in the bed of the candidate or in other suitable places for three days and then disposed of (minus the brocade of course). The candidate,

usually a child, has to embrace tightly the “*khwan* wrapper cloth” during sleep, evidently as a communion with the *khwan*. The banana leaves with flowers and other perishable decorations on the *bai si* are disposed of by floating them in a running stream. The remains of eatables in the *bai si*, if they are now unfit for human consumption, are disposed of by depositing them on banana leaves at an out-of-way place as oblations to the common *phi* or spirits.

What about the boiled pig’s head with its four legs and tail as previously mentioned ? It is perhaps meant also as the *khwan*’s delicious food, and eaten afterward by the people after the ceremony. A pig’s head with its four legs and a tail is a favourite offering to tutelary *phis*. It is supposed to be the whole pig, but in fact the best part of the pig is not there. When one makes a vow to a *phi* promising a pig as a thanks - offering if the request is granted, one will, after the request is fulfilled, offer such a pig. It is, of course, very easy to hoodwink a *phi*.

6. The Royal Tham Khwan Cerernony

The royal *bai si* with its accessories has already been described in chapter 4. Now we come to the royal *tham khwan* ceremony.

Three priests of brahmin extraction preside over the three *bai si*. The chief priest or purohita stands in the middle near the crystal *bai si*. His two assistants stand on either side, one near the gold *bai si* on the right , and the other one near the silver *bai si* on the left of the candidate. Behind these three stand another set of two brahmins each holding a conch shell. Yet again, behind them, there is another set of brahmins in equal number each holding a *bandoh - tabor* (Pali *pataha*), a small hourglass - shaped drum beaten by a lead ball on a string attached to a peg projecting from its middle. If a ceremony of waving the lights is to be performed in a throne hall, red cloths are laid over the carpets along the route of the waving lights. This is to prevent molten wax from the lighted tapers dropping and spoiling the carpet. The invited officials who will participate in the ceremony stand at

the borders of the red cloths in a circle. The three brahmin priests in the front row initiate the rite by anointing the tapers with unguents. A “victory candle” is now lighted from a sacred fire. The brahmin priest in the middle initiates the lighting of tapers from the fire of the “victory candle” followed in the same process by the other two brahmin priests on the left and right of the middle man. When the first light of the tapers is lit, the brahmin priests in the two hind rows of two each blow conch shells, the royal classical orchestra somewhere starts playing. When lighted tapers on taper - holders have all been handed to the next man standing on the left, who waves the lights in a prescribed manner as stated in the last chapter, the blowing of conch shells is stopped but begins again when the tapers in succession complete a round. A person may mark each round of the waving lights from the blowing of conch shells. The playing of the “bandoh - tabors” and the orchestra continue from start to finish of the rite without a stop.

The waving of lights is of two kinds. The major one is in five rounds, and the minor one is in three rounds. The latter has no “*khwan* wrapper”, while the former has three young banana leaves and a brocade wrapped round the *bai si*. Brocades as used in the three *bai si* are of three different colours. The crystal *bai si* has a white brocade, the gold *bai si* a yellow brocade and the silver *bai si* a green brocade as wrappers. After the waving of lights completes its three rounds, the brahmin priest uncovers the wrappers of the three *bai si* and gives them to the candidate to be held in the hands. If there are more candidates than one, the wrappers are distributed evenly to them. The waving of lights is usually in three rounds; five rounds is rarely performed. As already mentioned (chapter 4) there are five taper - holders fixed each to the triplet of metal bowls. When the waving of lights completes its prescribed three or five rounds, the brahmin priest in the middle takes successively, whichever comes to hand first, the first of the five taper - holders, which he sticks in the metal bowl in front of him; but before doing so, he detaches all the lighted tapers from the second to the fifth taper - holders and adds all these to the lighted ones of the first taper-holder. The second and third

brahmin priests repeat a similar process with the succeeding tapers. Then the three brahmin priests perform the rite of extinguishing the flames from the tapers with a layer of betel leaves smeared with unguents, and waft the odorous smoke toward the candidate. After this the three brahmin priests perform the rite of tying the *khwan* with consecrated threads. One of them brings a "victory candle" and a number of the threads to the candidate. He takes one thread and brushes it lightly in an outward direction on the candidate's wrist once only, and then burns it at the "victory candle". He takes another thread which he this time brushes once only in an inward direction, and then ties it to the candidate's wrist. (This is logically better than the pinching of the tip of a thread after burning it and binding the same thread on the wrist as previously described.) He repeats the same process on the other wrist. Another brahmin priest takes a spoon and dips it in the air near the three *bai si* in the same manner as described on the feast of the *khwan* in the previous chapter. The third brahmin priest anoints the candidate. Here ends the brahminical rite.

Next is the royal rite of anointing by the king. His Majesty pours lustral water from a decorated conch shell into the hands held in a worshipful attitude by the candidate. If the candidate is of royal blood lustral water is poured by the King from a rare conch shell with a spiral in a clock-wise direction belonging to the first King of the Chakri Dynasty. Such a royal *tham khwan* ceremony is called *somphot* (សម្រោច) in Thai. It is originally a Pali word meaning a feast or the partaking of food together, but its current use in the Thai language is for "celebration" and is confined to the King's celebrations only. If a *somphot* is of a grand style which has a young high prince or princess as a candidate in the *tham khwan* ceremony in a royal tonsure ceremony, for instance, the King may graciously condescend to permit certain high-ranking princes and selected dignitaries to anoint the candidate on the palms of his hands, and a high-ranking dignitary on the instep (ផល់ង់ថោះ) while the King himself anoints the candidate on his forehead. The blowing of conch shells by

the brahmin priests in the hind row commences when the waving of lights completes the prescribed rounds and continues to the end of the *tham khwan* ceremony. When the blowing of conch shells stops, the playing of "bandohtabor" and the orchestra stop too. Here ends the royal *tham khwan* ceremony.

One will notice that the dish-border *bai si* and the major tiered *bai si* of the people do not come into the royal ceremony. The two kinds of *bai si* as above are there in the ceremonial hall too, but they are kept apart, only the crystal, the gold and the silver *bai si* are used. This means that the dish-border *bai si* is perhaps the oldest and of the three kinds, next comes the tiered major *bai si* in its development, and the crystal, gold and silver ones are later innovations and confined only to the royal ceremony. The major tiered *bai si* is nothing more than many dishes or plates with pedestals placed one upon another in a graduated pyramid, in order to save space when there are many dishes of food and other eatables to be displayed for the *khwan* feast. This may be inferred from either the crystal, gold or silver *bai si* which consisted of many graduated plates placed one upon the other on pedestals and filled with food and sweetmeats. No *num meo* or cat's breasts or other decorations made of banana leaves are included in the latter kind of *bai si*¹⁾.

I may add here as an addition to the end of this chapter a *tham khwan* ceremony or celebration for a Buddha image which is newly cast and to be sent abroad as a present to a certain Buddhist institution. I was one of the invited guests at such a ceremony and here are the facts I have taken note of.

The Buddha image is placed on a table in the middle of the room surrounded by articles such as trays of flowers, tapers and incense sticks as befitting offerings. In front of the Buddha image stands a major *bai si* in five tiers, but instead of eatables

1. I have witnessed the royal *tham khwan* ceremony once or twice only. I have , in fact, had the opportunity to participate once in the royal rite of waving the lights, but have never witnessed the ceremony in its entirety, nor have I been able to read any text relating to it. What I have written on the royal *tham khwan* ceremony as described above, was through the kindness of a high ranking prince, my revered mentor, who took pains to note for me what he had remembered.

placed in each tier of the *bai si* they are filled with flowers. There are also small tables in front of the major *bai si* on one of which stands a niello silver bowl filled with rice in which five lenticular holders with three tapers each are fixed. Nearby stands a dish - border *bai si* on another small table flanked on either side by two tapers on pedestals. There are the necessary accessories appertaining to the *tham khwan* ceremony, such as the unguents, tally betel leaves and a young coconut pared of its outer husk but with the top not cut open. There are three brahmin priests acting as officiants. The middle one who acts as a head is in a ceremonial cloak clad in such a way which leaves his right shoulder bared. The other two a little way behind him hold one a "bandoh - tabor" and the other a conch shell.

The head brahmin priest commences the ceremony by lighting the tapers in the five lenticular holders and proceeds in the same manner as for the waving of lights as previously described. One of the brahmin assistants blows the conch shell and the other plays the "bandoh - tabor" and the orchestra plays throughout the ceremony. The blowing of the conch shell is done at the commencement of the rite only, and does not continue through like the "bandoh - tabor" and the orchestra. Probably the conch shell brahmin blower is either negligent or too lazy to continue blowing. The head brahmin before extinguishing the tapers at the completed rounds, takes the two lighted tapers from the dish - border *bai si* and adds them to the waving light tapers. He then wafts the smoke toward the Buddha image. There are also three cheers of *ho hiu* at intervals through the ceremony. The head brahmin then falls on his knees worshipping the Buddha image in the prescribed attitude three times. Next he anoints the base of the Buddha image with three dots in a horizontal row with his right hand index finger. The finger as I can remember does not wear a *phirot* or a *nophakao* ring. He next anoints the palms of the host's hand in a similar manner. There is no feast of the *khwan* logically on such an occasion. Most of the actions done in the ceremony are similar to the royal *tham khwan* ceremony.

7. Tham Khwan Ceremony in Northern Thailand

The *tham khwan* ceremony as performed in other areas does not essentially differ much to what is performed in Central Thailand as described in the preceding chapters. In the North and North-East they have the *phook khwan* or the tying of the *khwan* and the feast of the *khwan* in their ceremony of *tham khwan* but, as known, there is no Wien tian or the waving of lights in their tradition. They have a *tham khwan* ceremony performed on distinguished persons who are strangers in their midst as a gesture of goodwill and regard of respect to their honoured guests. They have also *bai si* as the major part of the ceremony.

Tham Khwan Ceremony in the North (Chiang Mai)

The *bai si* of Chiangmai consists of seven cones made of banana leaves, somewhat like the cat's breasts *bai si* but with six pointed tips to each of the cones. One of the cones is of a bigger size relative to the other six. The big size cone may be compared to the *kruai* and the smaller ones to that of the cat's breasts *bai si* of Central Thailand. The big cone is placed in the same manner as the *kruai* in the middle of a metal tray with pedestal with the other six cones surrounding it. These cones are decorated with flowers. There are also in the tray two balls of cooked glutinous rice, two boiled eggs, of either a hen or a duck, two pieces of ripe banana (or more if desired, but they should always be in even numbers), a cup of water, mouthfuls of *miang* (fermented tea mixed with salt and other ingredients used for chewing purpose), two mouthfuls of betel-nut and leaf (or more in even numbers), two cheroots or cigarettes, one small ball of unspun cotton thread which has already been consecrated. All these are placed in the *bai si* tray. There may be a boiled chicken, or sometimes also a boiled pig's head, as a complementary offering placed in a separate tray. The *bai si* tray is set on top of another tray. More trays with pedestals may be added to form a storeyed-*bai si* to the number as desired.

When a ceremony is to be performed, the *bai si* with its accessories is brought into a room and placed before the candidate.

An old man experienced in the lore is engaged for the purpose. He initiates the ceremony by taking the ball of unspun cotton thread as provided in the *bai si* and with the tip end of the thread he brushes, in a formal manner, both hands of the candidate who, by now, sits in a worshipping attitude. The officiant then burns the tip end of the thread and pinches it off. He then binds, in two rounds, the candidate's wrists, first the left and then the right wrist. Everytime when the binding of either wrist is completed, he pinches off a thread from the ball and simultaneously says a formal wish thus: "May it (the evil) fall along and off the tip of the little finger, may it ooze along and drop from the tip of hands" (ขอให้ตอกไปตามก้อย ขอให้ย้อยไปตามปลายมือ). While binding the wrists the officiant says "to tie the left hand is to have the *khwan* come, to tie the right hand is to let the *khwan* stay" (ผูกมือซ้ายให้ขวัญมา ผูกมือขวาให้ขวัญอยู่). One will notice that the binding of unspun cotton thread to the wrist is severed from the ball only after the ceremonial binding, while in Bangkok the thread is cut in appropriate length ready for use.

After the binding of hands (มัดมือ) as called in the North, comes the ceremonial feast of the *khwan*. Little bits of eatables of the *bai si* are partaken by the candidate in a simulated manner. The *bai si* with its accessories, except the boiled chicken or the pig's head, is kept after the ceremony in the candidate's bed room at most no more than two days and then disposed of. The North call the *tham khwan* ceremony the "ceremony of binding hands" only. The waving and aspersion of lights is not in the ceremony, neither is the drinking of coconut water, as far as is known.

The "ceremony of binding hands" is performed on a guest who is a stranger. If the stranger is a distinguished personage, there may be a parade or procession and ceremonial dance by a bevy of girls in honour of the guest.

I have never had an opportunity to witness the *tham khwan* ceremony as performed in the North, and neither have I read any

book written on the subject. The above description of the ceremony is, therefore, based from information as supplied by an informant and verified in certain items from other people who are natives of that locality. It is more or less difficult to get information on a traditional subject from a person who is not a specialist or an interested person. Thus my informant, though an aged lady of the North, sometimes in answer to questions put to her, could not give me satisfactory answers for the simple reason that she could not remember, especially the sayings of the officiant. Hence my description of the "*khwan ceremony*" in the North is relatively a short one and must be read in the light of the above observations.

The Tham Khwan Ceremony After a Funeral at Prae Province

When coming back after a cremation, all persons participating in the Service have to attend the *tham khwan* ceremony at the house of the mourners. A ball of unspun cotton thread, one mouthful of betel nut and leaf, a cigarette, two balls of cooked glutinous rice, a boiled hen's egg, a piece of *khao tom kluay* (ข้าวต้มกลวย) - a ripe banana enclosed by glutinous rice which is again wrapped in banana leaves and boiled, a piece of ripe banana, a taper, an incense stick and a flower which form a set, a set of clothing as worn and belonging to the dead man just cremated are provided by the mourners and placed in a lacquer bowl. The officiant brings with him a small net with a handle. This he places across the bowl. Each candidate, one at a time, puts his or her right hand at the rim of the bowl. The officiant takes the ball of unspun cotton thread which he ties to the wrists of the candidate in the manner as has previously been described. He repeats the same process to all the remaining candidates. He then over-turns the bowl for a while, and reverses it to its former position. During the tying of the wrists he recites certain words calling back the *khwan*. The wording of the recitation I have with me is a short one of about eight lines full of jumbled words both of Pali and Thai. After the ceremony the officiant or rather a niedicine man departs taking with him his net, while the bowl and the rest of things are disposed of in a suitable manner.¹⁾

1 . The information was gathered by my wife who participated in the ceremony in 1947.

This ceremony may safely be generalized to other parts of the Northern Area, and perhaps to other peoples as well beyond that area in the northerly direction. The Lahu or Musso, a Tibetan-Burman tribe, in the Eastern Shan States have a similar ceremony. After returning from a funeral, their medicine man will perform the ceremony of tying the wrists with unspun cotton threads of persons who have participated in the funeral service . The medicine man will say during the tying of the wrist some formal words thus: "Oh *khwan* ! do return. Do not stay with the dead in the dead land. In that land there is no food, no clothing and no place to live. There are only ills and unhappiness. Do stay in the land of the living where there are joy and happiness. Oh *khwan* ! do return." ¹⁾ (Compare the distribution of red silk threads to participants in a Southern Chinese funeral in Bangkok.)

8. Tham Khwan Ceremony in the North-East

In the North-East of Thailand the *tham khwan* ceremony is performed:

When a person returns home after a long absence on trade or expedition of war; when he suffers a fright through seeing a *phi* or ghost, is scared by an elephant or experiences a thunderclap; when he recovers from a long illness during which he has made a vow to a spirit promising a thanks-offering if he recovers; when he recovers from a fall from a tree, from having nearly drowned when a boat capsized, from being kicked by a horse, horned by a buffalo, or crushed by a boa snake ²⁾; when a person is elevated in rank; when he is critically ill; when he marries; when he has a house warming; when he is ordained; when it is prophesied by an astrologer that his days are numbered; when a distinguished person, his superior or master visits his home, when he becomes a father.³⁾

1. See J.H. Telford, Animism in Keng Tung State, J.B.R.S. Vol. XXXVII. part II, p. 204.

2. From an old North-East book entitled "Thamada Sorn Lok" (ธรรมดาสอนโลก) or a teaching on a worldly lore as kindly supplied by Nai Thong Chaiyachat (นายทองชัยชาติ)

3. From "Prapheni Boran Thai Isan" (ประเพณีโบราณไทยอีสาน) or Ancient Customs of the North-Eastern Thai by a Monk Phra Maha Preecha Parinyano (พระมหาปรีชา ปรีญญาโน) Bangkok, 1954.

Before we come to the ceremony of *tham khwan* a description of their *bai si* which is called *bai si* is necessary, for it differs from the *bai si* in certain details. The *tham khwan* ceremony is called *pit - thee su khwan* (ພຶສູຂວານ) or the ceremony of the welcoming of the *khwan*. What is written in this chapter may be generalized also to the Laos, though perhaps there may be some variants due to local and regional aspects.¹⁾

The North-Eastern *bai si* is of two kinds i.e. the *ba si* (ບາສີ) and the *mak beng* (ມາກບົງ) the five articles. The latter is also called *kruang ha pha khwan* (ເຄື່ອງຫ້າພາຂວັນ) = the five articles of *khwan*'s tray). The *ba si* and the *mak beng* may be compared to the major tiered *bai si* and the dish border *bai si* of Central Thailand.

The *bai si*. This consists of a large size metal tray with pedestal. In the middle of it are placed in five circlets of the cat's breast *bai si*, similar to that of the major *bai si* of Central Thailand, surmounted one upon another. Sometimes there is a wooden structure supporting these surmounted circlets of *bai si*, which are decorated with flowers. The following articles, fruits and sweetmeats, are placed in the tray around the *bai si* circlets: four pairs of beeswax tapers, a pair of knives, or a penknife or a razor-like knife with handles made of gold, silver, ivory or other valuable materials, four pieces of *khao tom kluay* (ຂ້າຕົມກລ້າຍ - a domestic sweetmeat made of ripe bananas covered with glutinous rice and wrapped with banana leaves and boiled), four ripe bananas or other kinds of sweetmeats which have to be in pairs, pieces of unspun cotton thread cut to a length of a hand span in size. In the tray there is also jewellery made of silver, gold and precious stones. (Compare the crystal, the gold and the silver *bai-si* of the royal *bai si*.) Sometimes the *ba si* is topped by a *mak beng*.

Mak beng. Five cones made of banana leaves in the same manner as the cat's breast *bai si* of Central Thailand and decorated at the tops with flowers, are placed in the middle of a large size

1. See the *Baci* by Thao Nyousy .Abhai in the "Kingdom of Laos". p. 129 131, France-Asie, Soigon, 1965.

tray. In the tray there are also other cones made of banana leaves, five in number; each contains a pair of tapers, incense sticks and flowers. A set of used clothing belonging to the candidate of the *khwan* ceremony is placed in another large size tray. The tray

of *mak beng* is then placed on it. Around the pedestal of the *mak beng* tray are a bottle of spirituous liquor, a boiled hen's egg in a shell, one or two pairs of *khaotom kluay* sweetmeat, one ball of boiled glutinous rice, a cluster of ripe bananas, two young coconuts, one cup of uncooked glutinous rice, one small leaf cup of popped rice, one cup of scented water made of *khamin water* (*curcuma domestica*, Zingiberaceae) and *sompoi water* (*Acacia concinna*, Leguminosae) mixed together and scented by placing in it some frangipani flowers, a leaf cup of betel nuts and leaves for chewing and a number of local made cigarettes, a small skein of unspun cotton thread placed in a small tray; and there are also in it five pieces or more of such threads cut in the length of a hand span. Sometimes this *mak beng* instead of being made with banana leaves is made of three or five trays with pedestals surmounted one upon another. Food and sweetmeats are placed in these trays, but the top one is exclusively filled with boiled glutinous rice with a boiled hen's egg as the top.¹⁾

Here I may add as a parenthesis that before the introduction of soap, *sompoi* pod (*Acacia concinna*) and kaffir lime (*Citrus hystrix*) were used as a detergent particularly for washing the hair. A yellow powder of *khamin* (*curcuma domestica*) was rubbed on one's face and body after washing to preserve the skin and enhance a golden complexion which was admired in the olden days but not now.

When the time arrives for the performance of *su khwan*, as it is called in the North-East, the *bai si* is brought into the middle of a room or a temporary shelter provided for the purpose. Both

1. I have had no opportunity to see myself the *ba si tham khwan* ceremony. For what has been written here I have relied on information kindly supplied by friends who have been in the North-East for a number of years or who are the natives of that area. My thanks are due to them, particularly to my friend Phya Rajasena, who had been a governor in many provinces of that area and to Nai Thong Chaiyachart, a North-Easterner by birth.

the master of ceremonies or officiant and the candidate or candidates sit in an appropriate attitude facing a point of the compass as determined by astrological knowledge, usually by the officiant, surrounded by relatives and friends who are participating in the ceremony. When the auspicious moment arrives the officiant initiates the ceremony by announcing the duty he is going to perform. He then lights three tapers and three incense sticks, the light and smoke of which he waves above the head of the candidate, and strikes the tapers and incense sticks in the *baisi* or *khwan's* tray after the waving. He now sits in a worshipping attitude with his hands raised, carefully and reverently holding an old style book a little above the breast, in the same manner as a monk reads his Sermon from a palm-leaf book. The book he holds carefully is a text on the invocation of the *khwan*. There are many versions of this text which form part of the people's oral literature. The officiant reads, or recites by heart if he can, the text. From the Start to the end of the invocation of the *khwan*, the candidate must hold the edge of the *bai si* tray with his right hand. He cannot release his hold until the reading of the text comes to an end.

When the officiant has finished his invocation of the *khwan*, he, or the parents of the candidate, puts a boiled hen's egg (un-shelled) and a ball of cooked glutinous rice about the same size as the egg into the right-hand palm of the candidate. The candidate now, instead of holding the edge of the *bai si* tray, has to lean on it with the back of his right hand and have his left hand hold his right arm just below the elbow. The parents and other relatives with their right hands hold the candidate's right arm. If there is a large number of the candidate's relatives, every one has to repeat the same process alternately and cannot be left out before the ceremony of tying the wrist can begin.

The initiation of tying the wrist is done by an elder monk. If the candidate is a woman the monk will delegate a layman to act for him. Then the officiant and the parents of the candidate and others in seniority of age or rank will tie the candidate's wrist. The tier picks up with his right hand two pieces of unspun cotton thread as provided in the *ba si* tray. He makes a fast knot in the

middle of both of the two threads, and then holding them at the knot he brushes with the ends of the threads up and down a number of times the right hand wrist of the candidate who still holds in his palm of the right hand a hen's egg and a ball of cooked glutinous rice. While brushing the wrist with the ends of the unspun cotton threads the tier mutters a wish as to the welfare of the candidate. The tier then smoothes the threads, as a matter of course, and parts the threads in the middle two by two and then ties the right wrist by passing the threads around the wrist in a clock-wise direction. In tying, the two threads must be fastened in one knot. The tier mutters a wish by saying, "Oh *khwan* ! come and stay in the body".

After the tying of the wrist the boiled hen's egg of the candidate is shelled. If the white of the egg is pure white and in a perfect state it is sign that the candidate will be lucky in all his undertakings. If the egg turns out otherwise, it is a sign that the candidate's lot will be an unlucky one. Some advice and exhortations will be given by the elders as a forewarning to the candidate. Then follows a repast and celebration among the participants. After the ceremony, the materials of the *bai si* such as tapers and incense sticks are presented to a monk, the unspun cotton threads which remain are kept for future use or presented to the monk. Spirituous liquor, food bananas arid sweetmeats which are still in good condition are kept for consumption. It is a belief that sweetmeats belonging to the *bai si* if partaken by a child, who suffers from a certain chronic disease characterized by thin arms and legs but enlarged abdomen (ໄຮດາໜ້າມເຮຍ), the child will be cured.



Tham Khwan ceremony for one month old babies.

The Ceremony of Tham Khwan of A Month Old Child

It has been a custom among the Siamese in the past, and to a certain extent it is still, for a month-old baby to go through a domestic ceremony of *tham khwan* which literally means the making of the *khwan*. *Khwan* originally means the soul, but through a development, the *khwan* has now a vague meaning as something mysteriously abiding in the body which gives health and prosperity to its owner.* The *khwan* has a fickle nature; if frightened it will leave its residence in the body. The person whose *khwan* is not with him will be ill, and if the *khwan* does not come back, the person will die. Hence in every stage of a person's life, a ceremony of *tham khwan* is usually performed. Here we will concern ourselves only with the ceremony of *tham khwan* of a child.

Among the common people the baby will receive its customary first shaving a month after its birth. This shaving is peculiar to the Siamese of Central Siam. An offering in the form of food with candles, joss sticks and flowers is made to the guardian spirit of the place on a tray made of banana stems. The guardian spirit has his residence in a small shrine perched on a single post which may be frequently seen in the compounds of Siamese houses. During the first shaving the head is not completely shaved for the crown of the head is left in order to protect its tender part. No doubt this tender spot on the head is to the primitive mind the spot through which the *khwan* or soul goes out. In India this tender spot in the crown of the head is called *brahmarandhara* which is an aperture through which the soul is supposed to escape. During childhood this hair is allowed to grow while the hair on other parts of the head is cleanly shaven thus allowing the hair

* It has been rather aptly called an *esprit vital* by Mme. E. Porée-Maspéro in her article on a similar belief in Cambodia BEFEO XLV, 1. pp. 145-184 Ed.

to grow long and form a topknot. This top-knot is ceremoniously cut when its owner reaches the supposed age of puberty, between 11 and 13 years.

The hair, after having been shaved off , is placed in a cup made of leaf, which is again placed either on a lotus or a caladium leaf. Sometimes flowers are also placed in the leaf cup, and in some cases the lotus or caladium leaf with the leaf cup is placed respectfully on a metal tray. The shaven hair is floated away along a running stream. While releasing it, a wish is expressed in such terms as the following: "May you be as cool and happy as the water" or, literally, "like the Mother Ganga". One can compare the ceremony to that of the Indian domestic rite to be found in the Indian treatise of *Grihya Sutra*.

The baby is washed after its shaving, if possible with lustral water, as a purification and a ceremony of *binding the khwan* is performed by the relatives of the family. A piece of sacred thread such as one often sees monks holding while making certain recitations, is bound to each wrist and ankle of the baby by all the relatives present. Each one will pronounce a blessing upon the child.

Thus ends the ceremony as it is generally performed by the common people; but it is otherwise with the well-to-do or the upper class. Here professional astrologers and native brahmins are sought to conduct the ceremony of *tham khwan* on a grand and elaborate scale. Such a rite is combined with a Buddhist ceremony in which monks are invited to recite certain auspicious passages from the sacred texts. Thus animism, Brahmanism and Buddhism find their way into the life of the people, influencing one another to a certain degree.

In some cases the placenta or after-birth of a baby, which is kept in a receptacle, is placed in an appropriate place within the ceremonial ground. There are also silver and gold coconuts. These precious looking coconuts are simply ordinary ones with silver or gold leaf pasted on them. There are certain rules to be observed when burying the placenta. After the placenta has been

buried, the coconuts are also planted on the spot. In certain cases the child is given its name during this ceremony. The rule to be observed in connection with the burying of the placenta is to be found, if I remember rightly, among the Malays and other races of Oceania. In short, the ceremony of *tham khwan* in relation to the baby after it is one month old is obviously a traditional ceremony of receiving the child into the family and is observed in different forms among the various races. A baby of less than a month is not yet considered as a member of the family for it may easily die during the time of its birth or after. When it is one month old, it becomes a *he* or a *she* when a ceremony of confirmation can be assuredly performed.

After the afore-said ceremony the child is placed in a cradle for the first time. Before that it lies in a loose mattress placed in a wide, flat, shallow, bamboo basket within a small tent or wigwam. Before placing the child in the cradle, a tom-cat and certain articles are placed in the cradle. The articles consist of a stone roller for pulverizing native medicine, a kind of gourd smeared with white toilet powder, small bags containing paddy, sesame seeds and peas, and sometimes also cotton seeds. These articles including the tom-cat also form parts of the paraphernalia of house-warmings and weddings. They are included also in the royal ceremony of the assumption of the royal chamber after the King's coronation. As the cat hates water and does not like to wash itself, it is imperative to wash it before the ceremony. It is then sprinkled with scented water and sometimes adorned with a small gold neck chain and anklets. Sometimes on this occasion, besides the cat and other things already mentioned, if the child is a male, a book and a pencil are also placed in the cradle; or if the child is a female, a needle and sewing thread are placed instead.

When everything, including the cat is placed in the cradle, it is pulled three times, then the cat and other objects are taken out and the child is placed in it and the cradle is also pulled forwards and backwards three times. The person pulling gives a customary blessing to the child. Sometimes the name of the child, written



Yan Vessuwan, the Chief of Yakshas



Yan Mae Sii, the Purchasing Mother

on a small piece of paper, is placed also in the cradle.

The Siamese baby cradle is not a rocking one but is pulled to and fro by a long cord like a swing. Above the cradle there hangs an oblong piece of white cloth like a flapper. On one side of this flapper there is drawn in black outline a figure of a giant standing with knees widely separated. He holds a formidable club in a vertical position with both hands. There are two well-known mystic diagrams on either side of the upper part of the flapper, and around it as a frame ; there are mystic sentences written in Cambodian script, the sacred alphabetical characters among the Siamese in the old days. On the other side of the flapper is a picture of a female supernatural being with the mythical head of a lion. In her right hand she holds a palmleaf fan and in her left hand a bow. There are also mystic diagrams and mystic sentences round the figure (vide illustrations). A royal baby cradle with such a cloth flapper may be seen in the National Museum in Bangkok. It is seldom seen nowadays among the common people and I do not know whether the tradition is still carried on with reference to royal babies.

The giant in the drawing mentioned above is named Vessuvan in Siamese. He is the same person as the Hindu deity Vaisravana, the God of Wealth, Regent of the East, and chief of yaksa or giants and other evil spirits. His mount in one Version is a man.

Why is his picture used in connection with a new born baby? Here we must make a conjecture as there is no explanation on the subject. He is no doubt a guardian or protector of the baby for the human being is his mount which requires his protection of course. He may perhaps bestow riches on his "mount" too for he is named also as Nararaj or King of men in allusion to the power of riches. The Chinese call this deity To-Wên and the Japanese Bishamon.

The female supernatural being is called in Siamese *Mae sii* a purely Thai word which means Purchasing Mother. When a baby is born, after the necessary things have been done, the baby

is laid on a kind of flat basket. The midwife then raises the basket and sways it round and round three times, saying the while, "Three Jays a spirit child, four days a human child. Whose child is this? Take it". Some woman sitting near will answer, "It is my child". The midwife passes the basket and the child to that person. The receiver will give a nominal sum of money to the midwife and lay the baby down.

There is no special name in Siamese for the woman receiving the baby from the midwife, but I think she is the *Mae sü* or Purchasing Mother of that baby. She is therefore in a sense a god-mother. No doubt in the old days a baby born often died within three days after its birth while beyond this period the baby had a chance to survive. Hence "three days a spirit child, four days a human child". It was a popular belief that a man was born through the agency of the *phi*, which meant originally a god or a Spirit. When a baby was born the *phi* would come to take the baby within three days after its birth if the baby is a fair one. Perhaps by this reason the *phi* was deceived into believing that someone had already purchased it and the purchaser was one of the *Mae Sü* or Purchasing Mother.

One may wonder why the names of some person, especially the common folk, sound queer, such as Mr. Buffalo, Mr. Frog, Miss Bad Smell and so on. These are survivals of the good old days when people wanted to deceive the *phi* that the child was only a nobody, a mere buffalo, a frog, or a bad smell being. Naturally, as it was thought, the *phi* would believe this easily. Of course there is usually an actual proper name given to the child, but sometimes the name used to deceive the *phi* stuck on and became his proper name. Any person who knows and understands the common folk will not dare to express his approbation of anybody by saying that he is a beautiful child or a plump and healthy one. He should make a remark that the child is ugly or sickly in order to deceive the *phi*, lest by chance, on hearing that the child is a good and fair one, the *phi* will take the child away, i.e. that the child will die. Such a remark of calling a good thing bad or evil is known as cacophemism.

Now the rôle *Mae Sii* or Purchasing Mother is not confined to a single person. There are a number of *Mae Sii* each with her peculiar position in relation to the baby. There may be a *Mue Sii* peculiar to each day or the week, the *Mae Sii* of heaven, of the sky, of the human world, and some of them reside in the baby's stomach and so on. There is a treatise on these *Mae Sii* to be found in many slabs of stone inscriptions at Wat Phra Jetubon or Wat Po. The Story of *Mae Sii* however requires an article by itself.

The Story of Thai Marriage Custom

1.

There are certain expressions of common use in the Thai language which have changed and lost their original meanings. Such expressions are worthy of being remembered, for they belong to the past though they are still with us as survivals of the old days. One such expression is "mi ruan" (มีเรือน) which means literally "to have a house". When a person is married we say he or she has a house or "mi ruan". The expression is picturesque in a way, for it reminds us of Thai social life in the past when a married person who had his or her own house and home, is no longer dependent and under a parental roof. The old expression relating to the state of marriage of Burmese and Cambodians, so far as I have ascertained, is, like the Thai, to have a house, too. We may assume therefore, as a hypothesis, that the social life of various people in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, at least, of the Thai, the Burmese and the Cambodians was in the past, one cultural whole due to a mutual mixing of races in peace and war.

Thai custom in the past, and to some extent in the present, required that a young man who intended to marry build a house of his own. Such a house was to be the place where his marriage ceremony was performed and after that was to be the future home of himself and his bride. The house he built always had to be in the home compound of his father-in-law. This means that the



A wedding ceremony

man when married had to go and live with his wife's people, instead of bringing his bride to his own parents' home which was a later development. This custom today is no longer obligatory, especially in Bangkok. Here a man may go and live with his bride in her father's home; or he may bring his bride and live under his own father's roof; or he and his bride may live independently by themselves. Of course, there are still some people who adhere to the tradition that a young man ought to live after his wedding in the bride's home for a time before he moves to his father's house or to his own separate establishment. A marriage ceremony now does not have to be performed in the new house that the bridegroom has built: the ceremony may take place anywhere either in someone's residence or in a public building according to the convenience of the parties concerned. The change is due to changes in the economic life of the people.

To get back to my story of "mi ruan", I think the custom of a bridegroom building his house in the home of his future father-in-law was evidence of an exogamous union, that is, a young man had to marry outside his own family and probably outside his own village. In some cases the young man had to serve his future father-in-law by assisting in the cultivation of his land for a certain period before he could marry the girl. In such case the young man would live with his future father-in-law who provided him with food and lodging usually in a separate house. Such practices have prevailed until recent times especially among the North-Eastern and Southern Thai; and I venture to say the custom probably still survives in some outlying districts both in Thailand and in other countries as well. Here again it was related to the economic condition of the people whose main occupation was agriculture. The things considered as real wealth were implements, animals to work them and man's labour. As for land, it was freely obtainable everywhere and only required a man to take possession and cultivate it. In such circumstances, a man considered as wealthy was one who owned implements, animals and manpower in quantity, but especially manpower. Where was he to get labourers for his land when most of the people were

peasant cultivators and there was no necessity for them to hire out ?

Now suppose a man had no sons but only daughters. He, according to the old Chinese notion, was an unlucky man; for he lacked manpower to cultivate and extend his land. In actual fact he was not at all unlucky and considered poor, but quite the reverse. He was really wealthy if he had many daughters with fair faces. Young men would come to woo his daughters and ask for their hands in marriage. He could dictate his terms to any young man saying something like this: "If you want to marry my daughter you must come and work on my land with me (say) for three years and then you can marry my daughter". Thus if a man had a number of attractive marriageable daughters he could be extremely rich. He could command the labour of the young men who were to be his future sons-in-law for a number of years in succession, each overlapping the other in time. Such an arrangement was known as marriage by service which later, when social conditions changed, developed in most cases into marriage by purchase.

The Thai word for bridegroom is "chaobao" (เจ้าบ่าว) or simply "bao". The word in its shifted meaning means today, a slave or a servant, which reflects the above custom. The word "bao" is a pure Thai word in origin which means a young man especially a bachelor. It is still used in this sense everywhere by the Thai people. Its latter meaning of slave or servant is peculiar to the people in the central part of Thailand only.

The Thai marriage custom in the earlier days, therefore, was for the young man to leave the home of his parents, that is, to marry-out of his own home and into his wife's home. Traces of such a custom may be found in old Thai law relating to marriage and also in literature. Answers to enquiries from many parts of the country elucidate the above fact. People would not allow their daughters to marry-out, that is, make their home with their husband's family for it is considered a "loss of face" to a decent family for the daughters to do so. The custom is now diminishing

in pace with the progress of time. I cannot say with certainty that the Thai people including the Siamese, (or the Thai of Central Thailand) had, in the earlier days followed the practice of matri-local residence for the sons, or whether they reckoned the descent of the family through the mother's line. I believe they did, at least, during the time when they came down to the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, for they mixed to an appreciable degree with other races especially the Mon-Khmer tribes and the Malays. Here I can only make a guess.

2.

In Order to be in a position to view the Thai custom of "mi ruan" in its true aspect I have to say something briefly of the ordinary life of a Thai prior to the time of the coming of a newer civilization. In the days when there were as yet no schools in the modern sense, the seat of learning and depository of knowledge and arts was the wat or monastery. A boy, if possible, was sent to live with a monk in a village wat or monastery in order to learn some rudimentary knowledge to reading and writing and a little arithmetic. The boy also obtained some instruction in Buddhism, which was essential to every Thai for his moral and spiritual life. We have an old saying: "When young obtain knowledge, when old gain wealth". After spending some years as a pupil in the monastery, the boy left his alma mater and followed the profession of his father as cultivator of the soil or whatever other occupation he might have had. When he reached his full twenty years, if possible, he became a monk usually for the three rainy months of the year.

It is a traditional and a moral duty for every young man to spend at least three months as a monk if he can, and every parent is anxious to have one of his or her sons, if not all, ordained as a monk. It is a popular belief that great merit will accrue from such an undertaking, and the gates of hell are shut against the person who has such merit. This is why everyone is desirous of having a son. A person who has no son of his own may stand as a sponsor for any young man who is poor but desires to become

a monk. The person may go so far as to relieve the man of his debt. For a free man only and not a debtor can be ordained as a monk.

We call a young man who has passed his customary term of monkhood a “khon suk” (խនສຸກ), literally a mature or ripe man, in contrast to a “khon dip” (ខນດີບ) or a raw man who has not yet passed through the monkhood. In the past a ripe man was considered an educated and intelligent man. He was also deemed a good man morally with his knowledge of what was right and wrong according to the precepts of Buddhism. A ripe man therefore was considered worthy to be a husband. Usually the first enquiry made with reference to a young man who asked the hand of a girl in marriage was whether the young man had completed a term as a monk. If the answer of the go-between was in the affirmative so much the better. Now if the young man lived in the same village as the girl, such an enquiry was obviously unnecessary; for everyone in the village knew one another. It was in the case of a man from another village that such an enquiry was necessary on the part of the parents. This points to the custom in the old days of a man marrying a girl outside his own village.

Why was a young man after he had left the monkhood anxious to marry? Custom had made him so; for he would be the object of remarks and gossip about his being a raw or ignorant man of no character to whom no one would care to give his daughter in marriage. A man who remains unmarried for a long time we call “khor khang” (ດນຄາງ) which means literally an unfinished or incomplete man. A hard world it undoubtedly was for such a man. Economic conditions probably made a young man seek his help-mate in the pursuit of a settled and decent life as soon as he became a ripe man. We have a popular saying characterizing a married woman as “pen phang, pen pha” (ເປັນຜ່າງ ເປັນຜາ) or as being an embankment and a well, implying, no doubt, the protection derived from her marriage.

We also usually say a married woman is “pen yao, pen ruan” (เป็นเหย้าเป็นเรือน) and “pen nua, pen tua” (เป็นนื้อเป็นตัว). The former means that she is now the house and home, and the latter that she is flesh and body. In short, a married woman is a full and complete person safe under the protection of her husband.

After a young man had found a girl of his choice and all preliminaries relating to the pre-nuptial ceremonies including the betrothal had been completed, the first thing which was obligatory was for the young man to build a house, as a rule in the home compound of the girl's father. Here something regarding the home of a Thai in the olden days is not out of place. The house of a well-to-do family was composed of a number of separate houses arranged in a traditional way and grouped together as a unit. These houses were all built in the same architectural style. Examples of such group houses may still be seen even in the suburbs of Bangkok. Monk's quarters in some old monasteries are arranged also on such lines. Generally in building a house there are certain rites and rules to be observed. If a house is built expressly for a newly-wed couple, it is usually in that house that the wedding takes place and it will be the future home of the married pair. It is a rule that the bride is to furnish bedding, furniture and other household things. Thus the two form matrimonial partners; the one supplies the house, and the other furnishes it as a home.

As soon as the house is built the auspicious day and hour are fixed. Of course there are lucky and unlucky days and months to be taken into consideration for a marriage ceremony. Generally the people know which months are lucky or unlucky for a marriage ceremony. The months in such instances are reckoned by the old style lunar calendar. Unlike the anomalous names of the Western months, the Thai lunar ones are named in a regular numerical Order. The marriage by the popular usage can be performed only in the even-numbered months with the exception of the ninth month which is also permissible. There is a reason behind it, though a superstitious one. For the proper days and

hours for the performance of the marriage ceremony, the people have to rely on an astrologer, either a monk or a lay man who is supposed to be well-versed in such lore. No one, even a well-educated man will ignore this tradition unless he runs away with the girl.

3.

On the eve of the wedding day, a chapter of monks, always an even number and not less than six, is invited to recite certain texts from the Buddhist Scriptures and sprinkle holy water made for lustral purposes. The time is usually in the afternoon. On every auspicious or important occasion, not only that of a marriage ceremony, a recitation of Buddhist texts by a chapter of monks and the making of holy water is necessary as a preliminary. In marriage such a ceremony precedes the act of entering into the new house which the would-be bride and bridegroom built and furnished. In fact it is part of the house warming ceremony or the entering of a house to take up residence therein. It now has a new interpretation and becomes the actual wedding ceremony in which invited persons participate as will be seen later.

Here a description of this preliminary ceremony is necessary. The invited monks sit in a row at a proper place provided for the occasion, and in order of seniority. At one end of the place on the right hand of the monks is an altar with a Buddha image in the centre and flowers, candles and incense sticks bedecking the altar. In front of it there are one or two monk's alms bowls and other vessels of smaller sizes. These are filled with water. There stands nearby a silver or gold tray containing outfits for the ceremony. A big ball of cord is provided which is essential in every religious ceremony. This cord is made of unspun threads folded many times and formed into a long string. It is commonly called "sai sin" (ສາຍສີ່ງຈຸນ). "Sin" is a corrupted phonetic form of "sinchana" in Pali and Sanskrit which means to sprinkle. For convenience, I will call it the sacred cord.

The sacred cord unrolled is bound three times in a counter-clockwise direction usually to the pedestal with the Buddha image, thus leaving the ends free to go in opposite directions. One end goes out through a window or an opening and encircles the perimeter of the house and then returns to the pedestal of the Buddha image. The other end goes to the monk's alms bowls and other vessels; and here again the cord is bound three times around them and then passes on to the sitting monks, after encircling the tray with its outfits. The monks hold it with two hands in an attitude of reverence while reciting the sacred texts.

If a ceremonial bath of purification is to take place in front of the monks after the recitation of the sacred texts, the sacred cord coming from the tray with its outfits will be bound three times around the heads of the candidates, if there are more than one, before it passes on to the monks. You might wonder how a bathing ceremony can be performed within the house; but if you saw an old style Thai house, you would understand. If a special place is provided for the ceremonial bath, usually with a canopied roof, then one end of the sacred cord which the monks hold during recitation will encircle that special place after the recitation is ended. The question arises as to why there is such an elaboration regarding this sacred cord. It is a popular belief that the cord acts in a mystical way like an electric wire, carrying the sacred words as recited by the monks to every place the cord goes at one and the same time. It is a practical device for at one stroke everything within the orbit of the sacred cord is consecrated and receives the mystic sacred texts which give it a protective power and blessing. Even the water in the monks' alms bowls and other vesesls within the sacred cord becomes hallowed and fit for lustration.

After the recitation from the sacred texts, the monks will roll back the part of the sacred cord which they hold into a ball, not disturbing the other half and place the half rolled ball in front of the altar. The monk who headed the chapter will now begin to pour holy water from the alms bowl over the candidates. If the candidates are bride and bridegroom, the pouring of holy water over them is a preliminary procedure and a ritual purification

before their actual wedding ceremony takes place next day. I have no doubt that in former days, friends and relatives also joined in helping the bride and bridegroom to such a sacred bath after it was initiated by the monks. This ceremony is not confined only to weddings but to other auspicious occasions as well. In fact, for the wedding pair, this ceremony is only a preliminary one, associated with house-warming and is unrelated to the actual marriage ceremony. I should also add that it has to do with Buddhism on its popular side only.

The ceremony of the bride and groom having a preliminary purification in holy water in connection with the wedding evolved much later. Instead of soaking the pair with holy water, the officiating monk confines himself to sprinkling the holy water on them and on other persons present as well. The act of purification now becomes an act of blessing, while friends and relatives present will also receive the sprinkling of holy water from the officiating monk. After this the monk will sprinkle all the places of the house, and the ceremony on that day ends.

The act of purification by bathing in holy water now becomes an act of blessing; while friends and relatives instead of joining in the sprinkling of holy water on the pair on the same day, have to do this at the next day when the actual wedding takes place. On this day invited guests will pour some holy water on the heads of the wedding pair as a act of blessing. This is usually done by persons who consider themselves as elders, while the rest confine themselves to pouring a little holy water into the hands which are held in an attitude of worship by the bride and groom. The pouring of holy water on the heads of the pair is seldom done nowadays. This is probably because the manner of dress and coiffure has changed and the pouring of water on the head would spoil the appearance. The evolution is complete when instead of being a purificatory rite, the pouring of holy water on the couple becomes the actual wedding ceremony as seen by outsiders today. The traditional wedding ceremony is in most cases still there, but it is confined to the background with the parties concerned and a few relatives and friends participating.

4.

When you are invited to the present day Thai marriage ceremony, especially in Bangkok, it is always in the afternoon. You go to the place where the ceremony is to take place about the time indicated in the invitation. You, with other guests, are shown into a waiting room provided for the purpose. When the auspicious moment arrives, one of the guests considered as chief guest is invited to initiate the ceremony in the next room. What that distinguished person is doing, usually, you as one of the guests, will not be able to witness. I will not describe it for the present but will confine myself to a description of what the ordinary guest sees. A few minutes later when that distinguished person comes out of the room, you, with other guests, are invited to participate in the ceremony in that room. The guests range themselves according to age and rank in the traditional way. You will notice that when the guests line up, ladies are not first and gentlemen last, but the reverse. This is a tradition from far-off days when men were always in the forefront of battle while the women stayed behind to look after the home. We have a saying that men are an elephant's forelegs and women the hind ones. Though man and woman are actually two, in marriage they are but one like the front and hind legs of the elephant. Each helps the other but each must be in his or her proper place according to the natural characteristics of man and woman. This tradition begins now to crumble through the influence of the Western conception of humanity. Who knows whether one day in the future there may not be a reversal of this social order?

While in line and waiting for your turn, you will notice that the bride and bridegroom squat near each other on a low bench with heads bowed and their hands extended forward and folded in an attitude of worship. The bride is always on the left of the bridegroom. Here again in matter of priority the man must be on the right of the woman. The right hand should have precedence over the left hand. However, although Westerners say right and left instead of left and right, in Thai we use the latter expression, that is, left and right and we never say right and left. This

points probably to the time when we, like the Chinese, deemed the left to be the first and the right, the second, but present practice is quite the reverse. Right must always take precedence.

On the bowed head of each of the wedding pair there is a sort of chaplet or wreath made of many unspun threads, each joined together by a piece of thin thread. Such a wreath we call “mongkhon faet” (ມົງຄລະແຕດ). “Mongkhon” means auspicious (from “mangala” in Sanskrit and Pali) and “faet” is a Thai word meaning twin. In this instance it refers to the wedding couple who are joined together auspiciously like happy twins. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to this wreath as “the auspicious twin”. If you have witnessed Thai boxing you will see that a pugilist in action also has a sort of wreath on his head. This is also called “mongkhon”. In Hinduism such a thing is called “mangala chakra” or the auspicious wheel. This auspicious twin is actually the threads which are bound three times around the heads of the bride and groom. In some cases the wedding couple have a hanging flower garland on their necks; but this is of recent introduction.

You will observe that the invited guest who precedes you is handed a decorated conch shell by the officiating man who stands nearby, usually on the right hand of the wedding pair. The invited guest pours a little of the holy water from the conch shell alternately into the folded hands of the wedding pair. Although the order is not important, it is usually the groom who receives the holy water first. The couple will make a little bow with their heads as a sign of a respectful thanks to the pourer. The water poured out runs down from their hands into a receiving vessel below, provided for the purpose. The invited guest hands back the conch shell to the master of ceremonies and leaves the room. The latter will refill the conch shell with holy water from a vessel nearby if there is not enough already in the shell.

When your turn comes you walk straight up to the wedding pair and the master of ceremonies will hand the conch shell to you while you perform the ritual in the same manner. The orthodox way is to say some short words of blessing while pouring

the water into the couple's hands, such as "May you be happy and live long". You will observe when receiving the conch shell that in it there are in some cases two or three leaves of a certain plant with red and white patches against a green background. The leaf with patches is called "bai ngün" or silver leaf, and the one with red patches is called "bai thong" or gold leaf.* The placing of such leaves in the conch shell is a later introduction and in some cases they are not used. This is probably related to imitative magic, the leaves symbolizing wealth in gold and silver.

After pouring the holy water, you return the conch shell and leave the room. A young girl, or there may be two, waits near the entrance and hands as you leave, a garland, a small bouquet, or scented handkerchief as the case may be, as a wedding momento. Sometimes you are asked to sign your name in a wedding momento book. All these also are of recent introduction through the influence of a newer culture.

The above description with minor details and variations omitted, is the present day Thai marriage ceremony as it prevails in Bangkok. It is a development in a curtailed form of the bathing ceremony of purification preliminary to all auspicious rites as already mentioned. To an outsider it appears brief and simple and so it is in this form. But the real traditional marriage ceremony is quite different. Such a ceremony is confined to the parties concerned with a few close friends and relatives participating. Hence outsiders seldom have an opportunity to witness it. Of course there are variations in the ceremonial process due to elaborations and cultural mixing which it would be profitable to analyze and compare. I have given here only a general description of the Thai ceremony by way of introduction to a more comprehensive one which I contemplate writing.

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* bai ngun (ใบเงิน) bai thong (ใบทอง) - Graptophyllum hortense (Acanthaceae), the caricature plants. McFarland, Thai - English Dictionary, P. 491.

Thai Charms and Amulets

The belief in and use of charms and amulets as magical protection against dangers and misfortunes, and also to bring love, luck and power is a world-wide-one. It is not confined to primitive races only, but also to be found among modern peoples of every nation and faith. In fact “the thought and practice of civilized peoples cannot be cut off as with a knife from the underlying customs and beliefs which have played a determining part in shaping the resulting products, however much subsequent knowledge and ethical evaluation may have modified and transformed the earlier notions”.¹⁾ For this reason, every faith and religion has in one form or another certain cults and formulas, as inherited from the dim past and handed down from generation to generation, from the old belief of magic and superstition, which are paradoxically contrary to the real teaching of the religion’s founder. This is inevitable; for the mass of humanity that forms the wool and warp of the woven fabric of faith of the great religions is composed of many levels of culture. A.B. Griswold says in his “Doctrines and Reminders of Theravada Buddhism” that “within the Theravada there are two very different sorts of Buddhist-rationalists and pious believers”.²⁾ This may be applied equally to other religions: there are always implicitly two sorts of believers within the same religion, the intellectuals and the pious people.

1. Preface to the Comparative Religion by E.O. James, 1961

2. The Arts of Thailand, p. 28, 1960 A.D.

It is with the latter that one can find abundant phenomena of Charms and amulets in belief and practice.

In the Thai language charms and amulets are called collectively *khawng-khlang* (ของหลัง) which means “sacred, potent objects”. Traditionall‘. this is divided and classified into four major classes, namely:

I *Khriüang-rang* (เครื่องrang), II *Phra Khriüang* (พระเครื่อง),

III *Khriüang pluk-sek* (เครื่องปลุกเสก) and IV *Wan-ya* (ว่านยา).¹⁾

I *Khriüang-rang*. This is a material substance transformed from its natural and normal state mostly into stone or copper. Such a thing is supposed to be imbued inherently with magical power. If held in the mouth or carried or worn on the body of a person, it will provide him or her with invulnerability and protection against dangers or misfortunes. “Guns will not explode, sharp things will not wound if fired at or struck at the wearer” (ยิงไม่ออกพันไม่เข้า) who has such a magical object with him or her.

The *khriüang-rang* is sub-divided roughly into two subclasses, namely:

(a) *Khot* (คด). A certain kind of talismanic stones found in certain animals, birds, fishes, crabs and trees (for instance teak and bamboo). Included also in this sub-class are certain stones found in termite hills, stone eggs, certain kinds of ores and *lek-lai* (เหล็กไล)²⁾ and a kind of stone called “*khot akat*” (คดอากาศ), literally the “*khot* of the sky”. Probably it is a meteoric stone or fragment. There are many kinds of “*khots*”, more than enumerated here, and no text books relating to the subject as far as I know are in printed form. Some *khots* I have seen resembled in material substance black stone or oxidised copper. Whether, perhaps they were artificial, I am unable to verify.³⁾

1. The transcription of Thai words is based mainly on the Transcription of Thai Characters into Roman, The Royal Institute, Bangkok, 1954.

2. A miraculous iron characterized by its quality to become soft if held over fire.

3. Probably the “*khot*” and the Burmese *amadé* are one and the same thing.
See Shway Yoe, The Burman, his life and notions, 3rd ed. 1909. p. 46.

(b) *Unclassified*. Included in this sub-class are certain seeds found in jack fruit, tamarind, *krathin theta* (กระถิน theta - agacia *faraesiana*), *pradu* (ประดู่ - *pterocarpus indicus*), *saba* (สะบា - *entada phaseoloides*), *sati* (สะตื้ - *caudia chrysanthra*) and *makha* (มะค่า - *Intsia bejuga*).¹⁾

With the exception of the jack-fruit tree, all the above trees and vines are “leguminosae” in species, and are found more or less as indigenous growths in Southern Thailand, the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. Any seed or pod from the aforesaid species of trees if found unusually in its natural state to be copper, it is deemed a miraculous object which commands awe and trust, and can be utilized for its supposed inherent vital force as *khriüang - rang*.

Parenthetically, there is a well-known belief among the older generation that if a man is born, as a freak of nature, with a lone copper testis, he will have in himself a certain magical property. Such a prodigy cannot be slain by any means with ordinary weapons but by impalement only. There have been once or twice, if my memory serves me right, mentioned in old chronicles of such a notable man. Ondoubtedly, the belief in the magical efficacy of copper is an echo of the Copper Age preserved superstitiously by man that any such object, a novel and a freak of nature, is a thing of awe and wonder.

Sometimes, I am told, for lack of such rare magical things as enumerated above, people will resort to artificial ones by fashioning them in copper as representations of the aforesaid natural ones. *Khriüang-rang* both sub-class (a) and (b) may be set, mounted or encased with precious metals and strung to a gold chain to be worn as a necklace. Sometimes they are enmeshed with fine wires strung to a piece of thread to be hung around the neck, or wrapped with a narrow piece of white cloth, then rolled and twisted to be worn as a charm or an amulet. If a natural one is sizable, in particular the “khot” stone, it may be broken in smaller pieces for convenience of wearing.

1 . Latin words from McFarland, Thai-English Dictionary.

Included too in sub-class (b) are adamant in cat's-eye (เพชร ตามัว) and rat's-eye (เพชรตาหนู), solid boar's tusk, canine tooth of tiger or "sang"¹⁾ (สาง), boar's or elephant's tusk broken and lodged in a tree. The latter elephant tusk has a special name in Thai *kamchat kamchay* (กำจัดกำจาย = to expel and disperse). Also included in this sub-class (b) are buffalo's and bull's horns which flash with a radiant light in darkness as if in flames. Any object of this class, (or part of it if it is a big one) may be ornamented with precious metal and worn or carried by the owner as a protection against any danger.

The names of these talismanic objects of the *Khriüang-rang* are mentioned frequently in Thai historical romances, particularly in the well-known story of "Khun Chang Khun Phaen" (ขุนช้าง ขุนแพน). Without an elementary knowledge of the objects of *Khriüang-rang*, one will not be able to have a clear idea of popular beliefs and lore of the good old days among members of certain social groups in Thailand. One studies such survivals of the present day in order to know something of the past and to understand the present. To ignore such studies for various reasons is to understand incorrectly the growth and development of the thoughts and ideas of the folk.

II *Phra-Khriüang* (พระเครื่อง). Allied to objects in class I or *Khriüang-rang* are certain classes of figurines representing attitudes and episodes of the life of the Lord Buddha. In fact, the Thai word *Phra Khriüang* is a shortened form of *Phra Khriüang-rang* (*Phra* = the lord + *khriüang-rang*).

These figurines are of three sizes, large, medium and small which can be utilized as a necklace pendant or carried conveniently by a person. One or many of these figurines may be worn or

1. Sang is an old tiger which can transform it self into a man, or vice-versa a magician who can turn himself into a tiger. It is a were-tiger in Thai folklore.

carried at the same time after the manner of folk thinking that the bigger the number, the better the safeguarded against dangers. (The more the water, the fewer fish will die; the less the water, the more fish will die" is a Thai saying.) These sacred figurines are divided into four classes according to materials used and the process of making them. They are:

(a) *Terracotta figures*. These are made of fine clay, or a mixture of clay, pollens from certain kinds of flowers and "wan-ya" (see Class IV). The ingredients of the mixture vary in different degrees in different "schools of teachers" and the formulas are a jealously kept secret.

(b) *Votive tablets of Phra Phim* (พระพิมพ์) meaning Buddha figurines cast in a mould. The materials used are of many kinds. They may be made purely of clay or chalk powder after a certain magical pronouncement and religious process of a mixture of certain metals such as iron, copper, tin, lead or certain alloys of metals. Sometimes gold and silver and mercury are added also. These again are varied according to the ideas of different "school of teachers".

Votive tablets were originally made in tens of thousands and deposited in caves or enclosed in a stupa or *Phra Chedi* (= pagoda) for the pious purpose of reminding the people of their reverential feeling for the Lord Buddha and his religion; at the end of five thousand years after his death he will be succeeded by another Buddha named *Sri Arya Metrai* (ศรีอาริย์เมตไตรย) or *Phra Sri Arm* (พระศรีอารย์) in colloquial Thai. Undoubtedly this belief was influenced more or less by Mahayan, or the Northern School of Buddhism in contrast to Hinayan, the Southern School of Buddhism, which has been adopted as the national religion of Thailand. Historically, there are traces of Mahayan Buddhism embedded in literature, folklore and ancient monuments in Thailand which formed the belief of the mass of people or popular Buddhism in Thailand and the neighbouring countries.

In the process of time more and more such votive tablets were deposited in stupas as erected, sometimes made not in fulfillment of a vow but to be used rather as talismans. Old ones have been discovered from time to time in old or ruined *phra chedi*, and many of them fetch high prices determined by the types and localities where they were discovered. Evidently there are fake ones too and a knowledge of how to distinguish the real from the faked ones becomes an art in itself.

(c) *Cast figurines*. The Casting of these Buddha figurines has a ritual process in the same manner as casting Buddha images, but there are certain details that differ, of course, with different “school of teachers”. The metal cast is either iron, *nak* (ໜັກ - an alloy of gold and copper, the red gold), or silver.

(d) *Curved figurines*. Materials used for carving are the wood of certain kinds of trees, such as the sacred fig tree, sandal-wood tree, teak tree and star gooseberry tree. The latter is called in Thai *mayom* (ມະຍົມ) . The second syllable in the word “yom” has the same identical sound as two other Thai words *niyom* (ນີຍົມ) and *Phra Yom* (ພຣະຍົມ). The former means “liked, approved, respected” (Sanskrit-niyama), and the latter means the Hindu God of the Underworld (Sanskrit-Yama) feared by all evil spirits. This is no doubt a play on words which have the same sound but different meaning, carried far back to the superstition that the same sound will produce the same effect in the realm of magic. Apart from such specific woods, the figurines of Buddha may be carved also out of stone, “khot” (see above), ivory, or tiger’s canine tooth.

III *Khriuang pluk-sek*. Before dealing with objects penaining to this class, which are numerouc, it is necessary to say something first on the word *pluk-sek*, for it enters magically not only this class of talismanic objects, but also other kindred ones as well. *Pluk-sek* in Thai means “to arouse the potency of a person

or an object by the use of a spell or incantation”; hence “a consecration, a blessedness” in a sense. A spell in the Thai language is *khatha-akhom* (คถาอาຄม) or *wet-mon* (เวทมนตร). These two sets of words are used synonymously by the people, even by the adepts of magical arts. In fact the four words *khatha*, *akhom*, *wet* and *mon* have Sanskrit and Pali words as their origin. They are *gatha*, *agama*, *veda* and *mantra*.

Gatha is a verse of a song in Sanskrit and Pali, but *khatha* in Thai, apart from its original sense, means also a spell.

Agama in one sense means the Vedas while in Thai *akhom* means a spell to be used magically when inscribing or tattooing certain cabalistic letters, arithmetical figures, circles, squares, etc. (*Yantra*) on an object or on the physical body of a person.

Vedas, the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, is *Wet* in Thai, which means spell or a set form of words supposed to have magical power.

Mantra is in Thai pronunciation *mon* and both mean spell also. The two terms *Veda* and *mantra*, though synonymous in the Thai language, have different uses. The Vedas mean spell in relation to post- Vedic Brahminism and the mantras mean mostly spells in connection with Popular Buddhism. The Thai knew the first four books of the Vedas, i.e. the Samhitas or the collection of mantras only, and called them Phra¹⁾ (พระเวท). If a recitation of certain selected verses from the Buddhist scriptures is applied with a purpose as a protection against danger or for the promotion of health and wealth, it is called *mon* (*mantra*) and if otherwise it is called *wet* (*Veda*). Hence the confusion of meanings of these four words with the tendency to merge into one and another in popular usage.

1. Phra (พระ) is vara in Sanskrit and Pali. It is an honorific word in Thai meaning “lord, precious, etc., to be found in such Thai words, Phra Chao = God, Phra Jesu = Lord Jesus, and Phra Mahamad = Prophet Mohamad. Phra alone means also God, a Buddhist monk, or a king or a hero in Thai romance.

There is another type of *wet-mon* or spell peculiar perhaps to the Thai where purely Thai words are recited, or sometimes

with Pali terms interspersed here and there for sacredness. Many of the Pali words therein are corrupted ones, while some of the Thai words are sometimes unutterable or unprintable in everyday speech because of their obscenities in meanings. Paradoxically, such a spell is to be pronounced in a loud voice during incantation in order to have an instant effect on a person or thing concerned. This type of spell is called *Mon Maha Ongkan* (ມັນທ ມහາອິງການ = the mantra of the Great Aumkar or Aum) or in brevity and in Thai pronunciation *mon* or *Ongkan* for the reason that most of the spells begin with the Hindu mystic sound Aum .

Many Thais of older generation, particularly the uncultured ones, know more or less of these mantras or spells. They have them by heart for emergency use, but will not divulge the secret for fear of indecency or want of kind consideration,¹⁾ but they may be told to someone as humorous anecdotes during informal conversation among intimates.

Sometimes the set form of words to be recited or muttered is a long one, a selection of initial letters of certain words of the spell being used as a sort of cabalistic word in place of the full-length text. It is deemed that such an abbreviated form will have the same magical effect not unlike that of the magic “abracadabra”. This abbreviated word is called in Thai “the core of the heart” (ຫົວໃຈ); probably the same as the words *hridya* and *bija* in Sanskrit which mean heart and seed.

I may add here also, as a parenthesis, that when inscribing or tattooing the word-form in its abbreviation, Cambodian letters are used for sacredness; only numeral figures are written, in Thai.

1. See The Development of Tantraism in later Schools of Buddhism in Buddhism, by Edward Conze, N.Y. 1959 pp. 180 - 183

Why ? In the old days all sacred Buddhist scriptures were inscribed on palm leaves with the *khom* or Cambodian characters unlike the present day when they have all been replaced by the Thai alphabet. It has been a traditional belief and preserved unreflectively among the folk that *khom* or Cambodian letters of the old days were not unlike runic characters with regard to magical purpose.

Now we can discuss at some length those objects that pertain to class III, *Pluk-sek*. Any artificial objects, apart from Buddha figurines in class II, have to pass through certain processes of “*pluk-sek*” in Order to arouse in them their magical property by the use of certain magical formal figures such as magic squares, circles or other and certain incantations appropriate to the objects or purposes concerned. Talismanic objects in class I *Khriüang-rang* and also even Buddha figurines in class II *Phra Khriüang*, if they are deemed to grow effete in their magical functioning, may go through the same process of “*pluk-sek*” in order to reinforce and renew their potency. What has been said here applies equally to objects in class IV *Wun-ya* also.

As there are a large variety of objects pertaining to the class of “*pluk-sek*,” only certain ones which are comparatively well-known, or so far as I know, will be described as the following.

Takrut (တာကုဋ္ဌ) or amulet (in its limited sense). This class of objects is a long hollow cylinder in shape with varying length and thickness. Usually, as far as is known, it is about two inches long more or less; the shortest one is about half an inch, while its thickness varies as to material used, ranging from about half an inch in circumference to about an eighth of an inch. What has been described here is an approximation only, for there is to my knowledge no hard and fast rule relating to a standard measurement. The material used is a small sheet of metal, such as gold, *nak* (red gold), silver, copper, tin or lead, cut to the desired size and inscribed on a small piece of paper or on the metal itself with mystic letters or other forms and figures as determined in a particular formula of *pluk-sek* which differs with each “school

of teachers". The sheet of metal is then rolled to form a long hollow cylinder. Sometimes a small twig of bamboo is cut to the desired length and enlarged with ample hollowness for convenience of stringing. The *takrut* is worn with a gold or silver chain, or with a cotton string, consecrated or otherwise, as a necklace, a chain worn over the right shoulder as one wearing a sash, an armlet or a girdle, for protection against dangers or for other magical purposes as determined by each particular treatise. Usually the *takrut* as worn is not a single object but comprises many pieces, all of the same uniform sizes and lengths as a set or otherwise.

Sometimes magic figures to be inscribed on the *takrut* are elaborated into many figures and lines of letters so as to form a complete set. These cannot be inscribed in totality on a single small piece of metal but have to be spread out on a number of *takruts*; hence the wearing of a number of "takruts" of uniform size in a single chain. They are usually 3,5 or 7 in number and such *takruts* are called *takrut phuak* (ຕະກຽດພວກ) or associated *takruts*.

Sometime *takruts* of various sizes and lengths are worn on a single chain, because these *takruts* belong to different "acharns" (อาจารย์ - acharya) or teachers of different schools of magic which have each a peculiar virtue of sacred potency, and one ought not to miss wearing them if one has a chance of owning them. There are also Ornaments made in the shape of a *takrut* which have nothing to do with magic, but are for adornment only.

Salika. This is a very tiny kind of *takrut*. The word *salika* is a Pali word (Sanskrit - sarika) which means a mynah bird which features often in folk-tales as a sweet talker. Hence the name of this kind of *takrut*. Whoever has a *salika takrut* inserted in a narrow space between his or her teeth, will find himself or herself, while talking to someone to have sweet and melodious speech commanding goodwill towards him or her. Hence a common saying "he is a *salika lin thong* i.e. a golden-tongued *salika*". If it is found convenient to insert the *salika* in the space between the teeth, the *salika* may be made in a tiny thin form instead of rolling it into the *takrut* shape. Sometimes the *salika*

is inserted on the inner lower lid of either eye to command good-will from other people toward oneself when in sight. Some authorities say that in this case, it is a misnomer to call it *salika*. Its appropriate name is *takrut prasom net* (ດະກຽດຜສມເນດ) which means literally in my own rendering “Takrut of meeting with the-eyes”, i.e. the *takrut* which has the power to condition the meeting of friend or lover to be united in wedding or for gaining wealth, luck or fortune as desired.

Phismon (ພິສມຣ). A talismanic object made from a piece of leaf of talapot palm inscribed with mystic figures and letters through a magical process, and woven into a square shape about an inch in diameter. It is strung on a silk thread, for reason of its relative strength, rather than on an ordinary cotton thread. It is worn crosswise from the left shoulder.¹⁾

Phismon was used during one of the Thai traditional New Years, of which there are two - *Trut Thai* (ຕຽບທ້າຍ) and *Trut Song - kran* - the water-throwing festival.²⁾ The former, *Trut Thai*, falls on the last day of the 4th lunar month (March-April). In the old days it was a time for people to make merit by offering food to monks and to wear a *phismon* during the end of the Old Year as a protection against evil spirits still lurking as supposed during and after a ceremonial expulsion at the end of the Old Year. There was during those days an official ceremony, participated in by both Buddhist priests and brahmins of the royal court, when palm-leaf “*phismon* and *tabong phet* (ຕະບອງເພດ)”³⁾

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1. The description of “phismon” is based on a description and a rough sketch kindly supplied to me some 20 years ago by my friend the late Phra Devabhinimit, one of the famous Thai artist painters.
 2. See J.S.S. Vol. 42 (July, 1954) pp. 23-30
 3. *Tabong phet* means baton made of diamond. In reality it is made of a piece of palm leaf, and is now still used in the “tonsure ceremony” as a survival of the old days. See a sketch of *tabong phet* in plate II No. II of G.E. Gerini, Chulakantamangala or the Tonsure Ceremony, Bangkok, 1895 A.D.

were distributed to the people who longed for some tangible protection against evil spirits and the bad luck of the Old Year.¹⁾ The *Trut Thai* is still observed feebly by the older generation up to the present day when food is presented to priests and monks as a special occasion only.

There are also *phismons* made either of gold or silver which have no magical value, but are for ornamental purposes only, unless they have passed through a magical process. They are worn over the left shoulder in a cross-wise direction strung to a gold chain, or over both shoulders across the breast and fastened in front with a pin or a brooch. When many are worn on a chain, there are also *takruts* in between the *phismons*, and again there are gold beads at both ends of the *phismons* and *takruth* called in Thai *luk skot* (ลูกสะกด) which act as “restrainers” (สะกด) or separates.

The word “*phisman*” is curious. It seems to be a word in a Sanskritized form. It is written as *bismara* but pronounced *phisman* in Thai, but no word *bismara* is, to my knowledge, to be found either in Sanskrit or Pali, the classical languages of the Thai. There is a word *basmala* in Malay, Arabic in origin, which is a formula for the words “In the name of Allah, the Compassionate”. It is inscribed on a piece of paper and enclosed in a small metal case and hung by a string and worn as a necklace. I describe this from memory only when I saw half a century ago a Pathan wearing such a thing around his neck. He told me that it is called *bismala*. It is possible that the Thai *phisman* and *bismala* or *basmala* may come from the same source.²⁾

There are two other words in Malay which are similar to Thai words in connection with magic. They are the words *kaphan*

1. See H.M. King Chulalongkorn, The Royal Monthly Ceremonies of the Year (พระราชพิธีสืบสองเดือน) in Thai.

2. See article “Casmala” in Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion

(กะพะໜ) and *khun* (ອຸນ). The former is usually juxtaposed to another Thai word to form a synonymous couplet peculiar to the Thai language as *Yukhong Kaphan* (ອູ້ຄົງກະບັນ). *Yukhong* is no doubt an indigenous Thai word meaning invulnerability; the same meaning attaches also to the word “*kaphan*” - a word of doubtful origin. The Malay has a word *kabal* with a similar sound and meaning i.e. invulnerability. *Khun* in Thai means an incantation by which a piece of raw hide is magically reduced greatly in size to harm an enemy sending it with means to enter the victim’s body. The magical raw hide will resume gradually its normal size inside the victim, and he will suffer great pain and die in agony. If I remember right Malay has a word “*guna*” with a similar meaning. There is no doubt that because of similar conditions of mind among the simple folk of the people of South-East Asia, there have been in the past mutual borrowings of magical practice. This may apply to other peoples as well; for “civilization is only skin-deep”. One will find similar practices and ideas, though modified and transformed to modern ideas, among people of every race or nation.

Pha prachiat (ພາປະຈິຍດ). This is a piece of cloth about the size of a handkerchief or a napkin inscribed with *yantra*. In the days when people usually wore a singlet or otherwise with a *pha khama* (ພາຈຳມາ) i.e. a scarf hung loosely on a shoulder or as a sash as one’s upper garments, the *pha prachiat* was worn as a neck- or an arm-band when going out as a proof against weapons, as a protection from malignant spirits and to avert any mishaps. Later, when one wore a coat, a hat or cap, the *pha prachiat* was kept either in the coat-pocket or in the hat or cap.

There are a number of books in Thai, mostly in manuscripts in private possession, which treat the subject of *yantras* more or less systematically with copious patterns and designs of the *yantras*. No one who is a stranger to this mystical art will be able to make *yantras* effectively from book knowledge only. He must also know the mysteries communicated or imparted ritually

by a teacher. Hence yantras made by a priest famed for his holiness are eagerly sought for. Psychologically, any object magical in its origin must acquire a religious significance ritually before it can be regarded as an object of *khriang pluk-sek*.

The ritual process by which a *yantra* can be produced effectively is roughly as follows:

After the usually preliminary purificatory act as required in all solemn rites, the practitioner will begin by making an address invoking the help, firstly, of the holy Triple'Gems, i.e. the Buddha, his Law and his Council of Orders; next come the chief deities of Hinduism and semi-divine beings, including in their train also certain *rishis* or holy seers who are traditional preceptors peculiar to the particular rite on hand; then come one's parents and teachers, both in the past and present as relevant to one's particular profession. In certain rites evil spirits, both local and foreign, are coaxed and coerced at the same time.

The list of such conglomerations of beings varies more or less in different "school of teachers", and some of the names in the list, particularly the *rishis* or seers, are combed and difficult to identify with Indian ones. Some of them bear local names only. The invoking address is not confined to the production of *yantras*, but carried out also as a preliminary act traditional for other solemn undertakings, for instance, the rite relating to the casting of Buddha images, the writing of certain literary compositions and the annual homage to teachers and instructors by students. The tradition is a beautiful one as an expression of gratitude to one's benefactors, both imaginary or real and in the past and present, and to ask solemnly for grace, goodwill and success in any undertaking or learning. The tradition has a great influence upon the attitude of most of the Thai towards their parents, teachers and mentors.

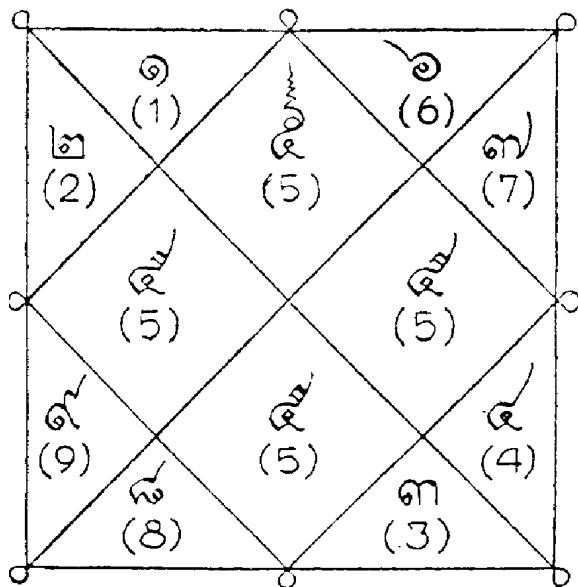
After the afore-said act, the practitioner will concentrate his mind religiously and begin to draw the *yantra*. He has to hold his breath while mumbling certain specific *gathas*, or, in other words, a magic spell, and at the same time he must not withdraw

his chalk or pencil, as the case maybe, until he has completed certain specific lines. What has been described here is an imperfect statement of a layman who has never been instructed in the mysteriec as imparted by a teacher of the art.

Akin to *pha prachiat* there are a number of specific *yantras* inscribed on a piece of cloth or Paper. They are not known by name as a class like *pha prachiat* but called individually by the names they bear with the word *yantra* as a prefix. Their uses in magic are the same as *pha prachiat*, save that they are not worn or carried by a person but hung somewhere as a means of protection against unseen danger from the *phi* or evil spirits. Two of these *yantras*, well-known ones, are described herewith.

Yan Thao Wessuwan (ຍັນດທວງເວສສູວຣະ). It is a *yantra* a figure image of King Wessuwan who is a *yakhsa* or supernatural being of gigantic size. He is no other than Kuvera or Vaistravana the Hindu king or chief of the evil spirits, a sort of Pluto, and also a god of wealth and a regent of the North. His vehicle, unlike that of other Hindu chief deities, is man. In Thailand there has been a belief among the folk that Wessuwan is the guardian of new-born babies which are liable to be taken or killed very easily by numerous evil spirits that swarm and lurk somewhere near the vicinity where a child is bom. Hence a *Yantra* bearing his image is hung over a baby cradle or cot. Evil spirits seeing Wessuwan's image in the *yantra* will be frightened and give it a wide-berth for Wessuwan has a terrible and ugly appearance as a giant holding always a very massive bludgeon. In Hindu mythology he has three legs as his means of locomotion. Why is he very interested in human babies? Because they are his human vehicles. In the old days, some fifty years ago, there were printed copies of this *yantra* on sale in the market. I do not know whether these printed *yantra* were merely ordinary printed ones or whether they have passed through a proper magical process. Anyhow, to the folk this is not important so long as they had faith in the efficacy of the *yantra*.

Yan Trinisinghe (យ៉ាន់ត្រិនិសុងមេ). A *yantra* in the form of a square with four equal sides, and a smaller one interposed diagonally. A line is drawn across either angle of the two squares; thus forming four little squares diagonally within the main one. There are also three small circles to each side at the outer rim of the main square, two at each corner and one in the middle between the two. Thus within the main square there are four little squares and two half-squares each at every corner. In these eight spaces certain numeral figures are inscribed, so that when added up in a straight line they will give certain mystic numbers. Here is the diagram of the *yantra*:



Note figure 5 at the top with a spiral crest. It is a sacred and mystic symbol known as *unalom* in Pali and *urna* in Sanskrit. It is a traditional curled tuft of hair between the eye-brows pecdar to the Lord Buddha.

The *Yan Trinisinghe* has many functions in connection with white magic. In former days when a baby was born, a number of these *yantras* were hung by a string around the perimeter of the room where the mother with her baby was lying near a fire after giving birth. This is a safe-guard against danger from evil spirits especially the *phi krasü* (ຜຶກຮະສູ).¹⁾

There are many kinds of *yantras* of the type of *yan trinisinghe*. No doubt they are elaborations of the said *yantra* even though they bear different names and functions.

Süa Yan (ເສືອຍັນດໍ). Akin to *pha prachia* is the “*süa yan*” or a jacket inscribed with *yantra*. It has the same use and function as a magical protection not unlike the *pha prachiat*. In principle the *süa yan* jacket and the *pha prachiat* are evidently one and the same thing. The difference lies in that the former has ample space for drawing *yantra* in details, enabling one to include on the jacket many patterns of *yantra* to comparatively satisfy one’s needs as desired, while the latter cannot.

The *süa yantra* jacket is usually red and the inscription black. Those that I have seen which belonged to the King’s wardrobe were each in one of the seven colours corresponding to the seven days of the week, (each of which has a specific colour relating to the apparel one wears).²⁾ These royal jackets are called in Thai court language *chalong phra ong long raja* (ດລອງພຣະອັງຄລາງ) which means literally “royal jacket inscribed with *raja*”, (which in this instance means *yantra*), identical in sound and meaning to the Malya word *raja*.

1 See “The Phi” J.S.S. Vol. 41, pt. 2. 1954.

2 See “Swasdi Raksa.” in this book.

Tattooing. Five decades ago or more most male Thai particularly among the folk, tattooed themselves for invulnerability. Travel in the old days outside one's own village was an adventure, with danger both from human beings and the phi or evil spirits. One had to be a law to oneself in some outlying places. Hence to have certain potent magical tattooed charms always on oneself as a safeguard was better than none. Tattooing was also done by other classes of people too, sporadically, for the healing of certain diseases magically. The practice of tattooing for such purposes survives weakly up to the present day.

In Northern Thailand tattooing was practised to the extent that both thighs, down nearly to the knee and up to the waist were totally tattooed. Seen from a distance, if scantily clad, the tattooed man appeared to wear black short trousers. Tattooing of *yantra* may be done on any part of a human body - arms, hands, chest, back and even on the crown of the head, and sometimes on the nape and chin. Prominent tattooed marks are usually made on the breast and back, for the reason that here are comparatively wider spaces for one to include certain *yantras* which require more room for inscribing.¹⁾

Evidently the tattooing of oneself with *yantras* and the inscribing of them on a *süa yan* jacket seem to be one and the same in principle; the difference lies in that the former is made on a human living skin but the latter on a cloth. There is an apparent advantage of the former over the latter in that to have a charm always permanently with one is better than to wear one with a *süa yan* jacket. One need not worry about losing such a valuable thing. On the other hand, the wearing of a jacket of *süa yan* has a compensating advantage over the former for one will not suffer obvious pain at the initial stage during tattooing. On this assumption I am inclined to believe that the *süa yan* jacket might have been a development from tattooing *yantris*.

Tattooing with a yantra has a rite of its own. It is to be done traditionally within the sanctuary of a "bote" (Buddhist chapel). After having made a customary obeisance before the Buddha image, the tattooing begins under the supervision of an

1. See Shway Yoe, The Burman, his life and notions, Tattooin;, chap. 5 pp. 39-47

adept, a priest or a layman, who will recite in a subdued voice certain incantations throughout the time while the puncturing of skin is in progress. When the tattooing is completed, the tattooed man will have to face a more painful ordeal of *pluk-sek* which is specific and different from what has been described. The tattooer will strike hard with his open hand on the tattooed *yantra* many times, until the designs of the *yantra* tattooed emerge distinctly and prominently on the skin. There may be a test done on the tattooed man by throwing something hard at him, or striking him with a sharp instrument and if he comes out unscathed, it means that the ritual process is magically a success. I am here describing what I got from an informant, and I am unable to verify the fact, for very few people I have come across can enlighten me much with any authority. It seems to be in one respect something of an initiation ceremony into manhood for young men.

There are no books on tattooing magically I have ever come across, though there may have been many patterns and designs kept by professional tattooers which were meant more for decoration than for magical purposes. I am inclined to believe that they use the same kind of *yantra* as selected from such books on *yantras*. Perhaps there may have been some specific patterns that are used exclusively by tattooers. In my younger days, some sixty or more years ago, I saw certain tattooing designs appearing on certain persons' thighs often which I have never come across in books on *yantras*. Perhaps it is too late now to find such specimens. I may add here that a person with a tattooed *yantra* or one who can say by heart certain spells will superstitiously not eat carambola fruit or bottle gourd for fear that the charm and spell he has with him will deteriorate in potency.

There were, also, two tattooed designs of by - gone days, one of which I can remember vividly but hesitate to describe them, for they border on vulgarity. However for academic purposes I will write here roughly what they are. These two tattooed designs are no other than phallic symbols representing both male and female generative organs. They are known representively as *ai khik* (อายขิก) and *ee piü* (อีเปือ). No one can enlighten me what

they mean either literally or etymologically; save that the prefixing words “ai” and “ee” are appellations for male and female used now in a derogatory sense. I was able to draw one of them sketchily when I was a boy through a vagary of youth.

These two patterns of dual phallic symbols were usually tattooed, either one or the other, on a thigh or on a forearm above the wrist. The “ai khik” was the more frequent, for it could be drawn easily in a grotesque shape with a tail and two legs added in a rearing position.¹⁾ I have never come across either of them nowadays. Strange to say, as told to me, a person with a tattooed *ee pü* has to express in sacrilegious words or acts things going against his own Buddhist religion, if he wants the charm to operate effectively.

The *ai khik* was also made, as a detachable object of a little size, of metal (usually copper or silver) or of certain kinds of wood. It is similar in shape to the Hindu linga. Many pieces of these little things were worn on a string round a male child’s waist; while a female one would wear instead a chaping (จะปีง) - an ornamental shield suspended from a string round a small girl’s waist. It is a Malay word of Portuguese origin *chapin* which means a metal disc to cover the hole of anything.

Many *ai khik* objects were worn around a small boy’s waist, but sometimes they were worn alternately on the same string with other miniature metal padlocks, bells, and objects in the shape of a chilli or red pepper pod. Such a string of magical objects may have survived up to the present day, probably in outlying places far from urban influence. I am told that they are, when worn, a proof against weapons far those that are tattooed with such figures, and as a protection from animal’s teeth and fang which is in the Thai idiom “fangs and tusks” (เชี้ยวงา). I believe the practice of wearing these little things and also the chaping the little girl wears to hide her nudity was to avert the evil eye, which idea seems to be forgotten now among the Thai word *du*

1. See similar design in Institute Indochinois pour l’Etude de l’Homme, 1941, tome iv pl. 11, 14b.

rai (ร้าย) in ancient Thai law books meaning literally “evil look”. Probably it may mean “evil eye” or “*drishadosha*” in Sanskrit.

In certain localities in out - of - way places, one will still sometimes come across phallic symbols of a comparatively large size in the shape of the Hindu linga. They are mostly made of wood, crudely done and lying or hanging on small tree branches around or in front of a spirit shrine. One will know at once that a female spirit has her abode there: Such thing is called in Thai *dokmai chao* (ดอกไม้เจ้า) or “flowers of chief *phi*“ as an offering to her.

I saw some years ago while passing along a “klong” (canal) in a boat, actually in Bangkok, a spirit shrine with many such “*chao’s flowers*” hanging there. Many *farangs* (Westerners) also have seen them and have asked me as to the reason why. It is a relic of “the good old days” revived as a practical joke by a certain old gentleman now long dead on the sophisticated folk who look at things materially and realistically.

Luk-om (ลูกอม). Anything of a globular shape is called “luk” in Thai and “om” means to hold in a mouth. The “luk-om” is, in this instance, a ball which one can hold in the mouth - a name for a certain class of *khriuang pluk-sek*. The materials used as ingredients to form into a ball of *luk - om* are many. It can be made of a composition of stone, lime, wax, silver, etc. The best and well - known one is a *luk-om* of solidified mercury or quick-silver. Here is the secret formula.

File down a silver baht coin into powder of $\frac{1}{4}$ baht in weight. Mix the silver powder with pure quick - silver of one baht in weight. (To have pure quick-silver, mix it with one ladleful of boiled rice.) The mixing is done in a small mortar, stirring well with a pestle until they adhere to each other sufficiently to become a compact little ball. Put it in a piece of cloth and tie it into a compress with a piece of string attached for hanging. Hang it above the mouth of a boiling pot for a day; the quick-silver will thicken into a solid. Take a kaffir lime (ມະກູດ - Citrus Hystrix, McFarland’s Siamese-English Dictionary) and cut its top open. Insert the quick-silver into the lime and close it with the piece of the lime

which has been cut as a lid, pinning it with a silver of wood. Boil the lime with the quick-silver in it until the quick-silver becomes a solid mass in a ball about the size of a thumb, very weighty and having a glossy surface. The quick-silver now has a magical property. Anybody having with him such quick-silver will be free from misfortunes and accidents. If it is put in his mouth he will feel no thirst. It goes so far in popular belief that whoever holds it in mouth will feel rejuvenated. Though old, his skin will become smooth, his wrinkles and the folds of skin will disappear. He will in the end be able to fly and become a *pheth-yathon* (semi-divine being, the *vidyadbara* of Hinduism). Having a magic solid quicksilver with you, when going into a jungle, evil spirits will not dare to harm you. A friend of mine jokingly said he once lived in a jungle for some time and was not molested by evil spirits because he had with him such magical quicksilver. But when he left the jungle, after a few days he had an attack of high malaria fever. Assuredly the making of quicksilver into a solid mass which gives a magical property of the alchemist's art. This solid quick-silver may be compared to the "Philosopher's mercury" of Mediaeval Europe.

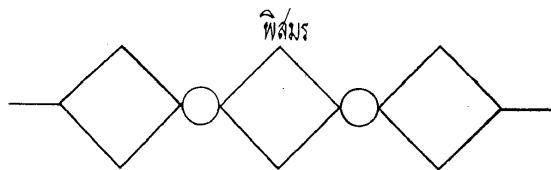
Included in this class III *khriüang pluk-sek*, are the *phirot* arm and finger ring (แหวนพิรอด),¹⁾ used by officiates in traditional ceremonies, the *nang kwak* (นางกวัก = "she who beckons") made of metal,²⁾ *mit maw* (มีดหมอ - "a master knife" inscribed with *gathas*, a weapon against the phi) and many others too numerous to enumerate and describe herein.

As already described, the *khriüang pluk-sek* are consecrated objects aroused into their magical potency by the use of certain incantations and other ritual acts. Many of these incantations are excerpts from certain *gathas* or stanzas from Buddhist literature, and these are certain mystic abbreviations of the texts. A well-known one is the formula *Namo Buddhaya* shortened into

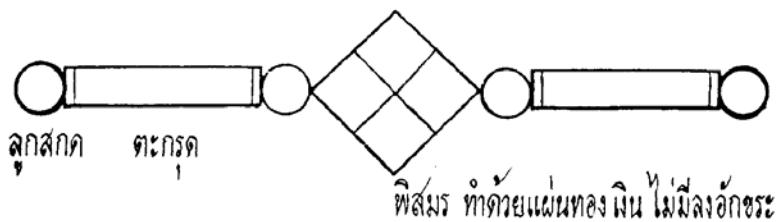
1. See "phirot ring" in Gerini's Chula-Kantamangala, p.154. Also in "Bracelets de sorciers au pays Thai" (Institute Indochinois pour l' Etude de l' Homme, 1941, tome iv).

2. See "Nang kwak" in Clasz IV Wun- Ya.

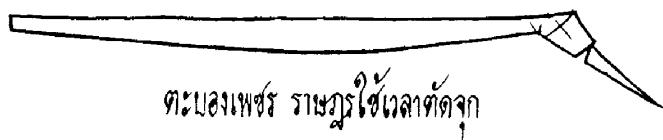
Phismon charm



1. made of palm leaf



2. made of gold or silver, the round ones are “luk skot” or restrainers, and the long cylinders are “takruth” or amulets.



3. Tabong Phet made of palm leaf.

five initial letters of the five syllables *na, ma, bha, dha, ya* and interpreted as the five names of the Buddhas of the period of the age of the world (the *kalpa* in Sanskrit and Pali). E.O. James in his *Comparative Religion* (p. 40) says rightly that “before anything can be venerated as an object of worship it must acquire a religious significance, that is to say, condition religious behaviour” and in another place he says “The Indian does not interpret life in terms of religion, but religion in terms of life” (p. 43). Look with a generous mind on the world’s great religions and one will not wonder why magic and superstition still form an integral part of the faith in every religion in its popular aspect, for it takes all sorts and conditions of humanity to form a world.

Parenthetically, there appear in a book of *yantra* (គំរើរដ្ឋមន្ត្រ ទេសជាក្រុង តួយពេជ្យ សារិកបុត្រ) a set of 14 stanzas of *gatha*, or “spell” in this instance, which are meant to be inscribed specifically each on 14 different *yantras*. The first and the fourteenth stanzas in Pali are as follows:

“Pajota dhamma bhahotu jotavaro satavoha tava riyo suvatabha dharo yogo chasusmma” (first stanza).

“Ti loka magga hana komatam nayo sabba dayo mahas-amapa dhamsa yi ti loka magga hana ko matam nayo” (fourteenth stanza) .

It says in the book that these fourteen gathas originated in Lankadvipa (Ceylon) during the reign of King Devanampiyadis of Ceylon. The scholars and seers of the realm, who wished that prosperity might reign with the great king, selected ail the best referring to the graces of the Lord Buddha and composed them into 14 stanzas together with procedures as to their uses. These were presented to the king who committed them to memory and practice. By the grace and efficacy of the Fourteen Stanzas, king Devanampiyadis had a long and prosperous reign in *Anurat-buri* (Annradhapura), Lanka.

There was a great elder or *maha therā* named Phra Maha Vijaya Mangala Thera, famed for his holiness, who visited Ceylon to pay homage to the famed tooth relic of the Lord Buddha.

Wishing that the great King Brahma Trailok of Jambhudvipa might derive great benefit from these Fourteen Stanzas, he copied and brought them as a present to the said king. By virtue of the Fourteen Stanzas the great monarch became famous for his regal splendor far and wide and foreign kings never dared to oppose his majestic greatness and paid homage to the great king.

Whoever, whether he be a king, a samana (monk), a brahmin, a wealthy man, or a householder, wishes to derive benefit and happiness in the three worlds (heaven, earth and nether world) from the Fourteen Stanzas, he has to study and commit them to memory and to practise them daily and he will be prosperous with happiness and good fortune until the end of his days.

IV. Wan Ya (WAN YA). “Wan” is the Thai name of certain plants, mostly with tuber roots, popularly considered as a class; and “ya” means medicine, either as a healing agent or as a poison. The “wan ya”, as its name implies, is used mainly in folk medicine, and many of the plants are used also in magic. Medicine and magic among the untutored folk are inseparable in practice in most of the remedies. Certain *mantras*, i.e. charms and spells, form a preliminary and essential part for beginners in the study and practice of the traditional art of folk medicine. Certain diseases of unknown cause were deemed as implications of the *phis* or evil spirits which lurked invisibly nearby. Without the aid of magic one could not be sure of the efficacy of a remedy. It however, served a useful purpose for some ailments as faith-healing does.

As most of the so-called *wan ya* are to be found growing wild in jungles, it is no wonder that the lore of utilizing them as remedial agents and posion may have come by experience originally from jungle folk who use them as their sole medicinal remedy. The same plant of the *wan ya* may have different names in different localities, and the same name may be known in certain areas referring to a different kind of plant. Hence it is difficult sometimes to be sure of the identity of any of the plants. George B. McFarland in his Thai-English Dictionary gives under the word “wan” some ten well-known names of the *wan* plants with identify-

ing Latin names, but gives no definition of the meaning of the word “wan” itself. There are more than a hundred names of *wan* with descriptions of the plants and their use transmitted orally as lore which await systematic study before it is too late. We call medicinal materials derived from plants in their crude form *smun phrai* (สมุนไพร). The word *smun* is still etymologically and literally in meaning unknown, while the word *phrai* means a forest or jungle from a Mon-Khmer word. Tacitly such medicinal materials were originally forest products.

As the *wan ya* forms a major part of the study of folk medicine it is outside the scope of this article. We, therefore, will confine the discussion here to one kind of *wan ya*, as an example, that has some bearing on charms and amulets.

Wan nang kwak (ว่านนางกวัก). As hinted previously, *nang kwak* means “she who beckons” with her hand; this *wan* is well-known among shop-keepers. It is used exclusively as a mysterious magical agent to attract more buyers of the goods in the shop if placed somewhere nearby. Here is a rough description of the plant from memory. It is a small plant similar to the arum family with a reddish or greenish colour. It is usually cultivated in an earthen pot. My description here differs radically from the one described in a certain Thai treatise on the *wan* plants.¹⁾ The *wan nang kwak* as known by botanists is *Eucharis* sp.²⁾ There are one or two stalls in the week-end bazaar in Bangkok (Phrarnane Ground) that deal in *wan* plants. Perhaps there are some of the *nang kwak* variety in the collection. The difficultly lies in that one has to believe what the seiier asserts, with no way to verify.

It is a well-known belief, mostly among women of the shopkeeper class, that whoever has the *wan nang kwak* in the stall will enjoy a brisk market for goods through the mysterious attraction of the *wan nang kwak* i.e. “she who beckons”. It may be

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1. ตั่งรากระบิลวาน พลวงประพัฒนสรวพกร (ประพัฒน กัญจน์โภคิน)
ร่วมรวมเล่มที่ 4 ว่านนางกวัก
 2. Through the kindness of Nai Tem Smitinanda of the Forest Department, Bangkok

made from the said *wan* either from its tuber root, certain kinds of wood of the fig family, or cast from metal, into a small figure in the image of a young woman with traditional hair style and dress attire in an attitude of sitting side-ways on the floor, the left hand either placed on the thigh or supported on the floor while the right hand is raised and stretched a little forward in a beckoning attitude of Thai style with palm downward. To beckon with palm upward may create a misunderstanding and a sensitive feeling to certain Thais, for it is deemed undecorous in Thai manners.

Here is one of the three formulas I can find for making a *nang kwak* charm:

Have a piece of mistletoe that grows parasitically on the fig tree, *Ficus glomerata* or other kinds of trees of the fig family. Fashion it in the shape of a woman and on it inscribe with mystic letters: “du” on its left breast,¹⁾ “s” on its right breast, “m” on its forehead, “ni” on its back, “bhogam” (ບົກ) on its left hand and “jana” (ຈະ) on its right hand, then intone an incantation with deep concentrated mind of the following *gatha* or spell ‘bhogam jana du sa ma ni” repeatedly 108 times,²⁾ and follow with a ritual process of *pluk-sek* with an incantation of *mantra* “Maha Ongkarn”.³⁾ A literal translation of which is as follows:

“Om, Maha siddhi jogā.³⁾ Om, the great “Pu Chao”⁴⁾ of the Blue Mountain who⁵⁾ has an only daughter named Nang Kwak. If women See her they make a friendly remark, if men see her they will love her. May the acquisition of luck be bestowed on me. All people know me. Om! traders, lead me to the Maen

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1. In Thai expression left comes first before right in its arrangement of words as left and right, not right and left; but in practice it is now right that comes first before left.
 2. Thai mystic number. Also means very many in Thai idiom.
 3. See Page 175.
Joga means lot, fortune. Probably from Yoga in Sanskrit.
 4. “Pu Chaō (ປູຈາ) means Lord Paternal Grandfather; an epi thet of a certain spirit chief, probably in origin the ancestral spirit.
 5. Blue Mountain means mountain in particular or in general.

Country (เมืองแม่น)¹⁾ where I gain a thousand *than* (ทะนาณ)²⁾ full of ring tops (หัวแหวน).³⁾ I trade in diverse wares and gain profit easily. I trade in silver, it comes to me brimful, I trade in gold it comes to me brimful. Come and partake food my dear friends, for to-day I have varieties of luck. I come home with a full *hap* (หาบ)⁴⁾ of them. I am better in luck than those female traders, even surpassing the master of junks. Om! Lord Pu Chao of the Blue Mountain bestow good fortune on me alone, *svaha svahom*.⁵⁾

The consecrated *nang kwak* charm is to be worshipped daily with pop-rice, flowers, candles and scented pastes accompanied with *mantras*'.⁶⁾

Here is another formula for making a “*nang kwak*” charm. If the *nang kwak* plant is found wild in its growth before it can be dug from the ground, one should fashion from a banana leaf three small leaf cups. Place in each a certain amount of spirituous liquor, a handful of boiled rice, a piece of fish and three mouthfuls of betel for chewing, which include a piece of betel nut flesh, either fresh or dried, a betel vine smeared with stone lime mixed with cutch and *khamin* (*curcuma domestica-Zingiberaceaa*). This forms a usual oblation offered to a spirit before one can deal successfully and naturally with a spirit. After the spirit has been entertained with a sumptuous feast thus, one makes an incantation of “*Namo Buddhaya*”, three or seven times, then one can begin digging up the *wan nang kwak*, and fashion

1. The country of god or “maen”. Legend says that the Maen live on a high mountain. Probably one of the Man tribe of Southern China. There is a cult related to spirits of the “Maen” (ผีแม่น) observed by certain people in North Thailand.
2. A traditional measure of capacity for rice made with polished coconut shell.
3. Wealth in the Thai expression is “precious stones, rings, silver and gold” in a literal translation.
4. Baskets suspended from both ends of a pole and carried as loads on the shoulder peculiar to China and certain countries in the mainland of South-East Asia.
5. There are three other known variations of this mantra sung by children of the older generation as a nursery rhyme. *Svaha* is a word like amen added to the end of a *mantra* in Sanskrit. There are also *svahom* and *svahai* in Thai probably variation of the word *svaha*.
6. Information supplied by Nai Reed Ruangriddhi of the National Library, Bangkok.

it into a figure image of the “she who beckons”. The figure is further to be consecrated with the ritual process of *pluk-sek* before it can function potently as a charm. The performer as a preliminary act has to make a fast and observe the religious commandments. He then makes consecrated water with the well-known gatha formula of “*iti pi so bhagava*”, (Adoration to the Triple Gems, The Buddhist doxology), three or seven times. He has to purify himself with this consecrated water three days consecutively prior to beginning the “*pluk-sek*” act, which has to be done inside the “*wat’s*” chapel. The formula *Namo Buddhaya*” is to be uttered solemnly 108 times before the magical object is functional.

Whoever has the “*nang kwak*” figure object placed in front of his or her shop or stall will have good business in trading. Whoever desires a magnetic charm in himself or herself for love or kindness, rubs and smears the face and body with the *wan nang kwak* accompanied by recitation of “*Namo Buddhaya*” 108 times. If the “*wan nang kwak*” is wrapped with a handkerchief and wrapped round the head, he or she will be invisible. No one can arrest him or her and one will obtain any wish one desires.¹⁾ The *nang kwak* charm in this instance goes beyond the original aim of the charm of placing it in a money bag to attract more money.

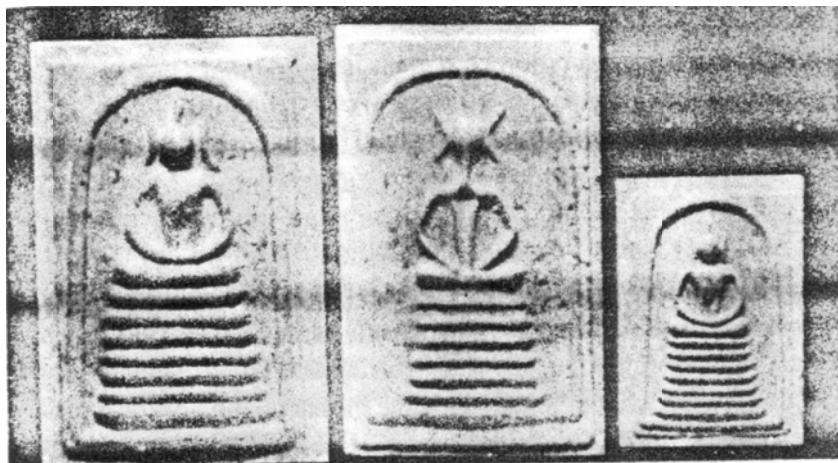
The *nang kwak* now seems to be on the wane. It is gradually being superseded by a *pla tophian* (a fish of the carp family) charm. It is made from palm leaf inscribed *yantra* and woven in the shape of the fish in various sizes, and painted red, black and yellow. It may be seen sometimes hanging in front of certain shops and also in some taxi cabs, hanging in front or behind inside the car as a mascot.

Acknowledgements: I acknowledge my indebtedness to the many people who have given me more or less information and help with “Thai Charms and Amulets,” in particular, Nai Reed Ruangriddhi, an official of the National Library, Bangkok, to whom my gratitude and appreciation are due.

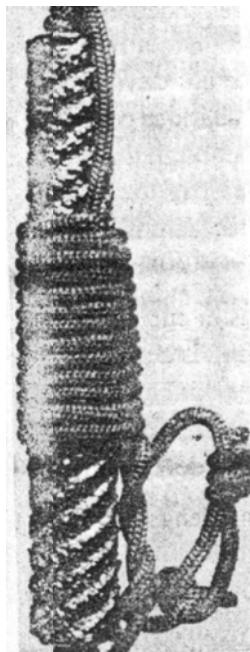
1 ตำรากรรภบลawan ของ หลวงประพัฒนสรรพากร



“Phirot ring” – black in colour, made with cotton yarn mixed with lac.



"Phra Phim"



"Takrut"

Luck-Measurement in Thailand

Some sixty or more years ago a man, especially one of the country folk in Thailand, would usually carry his lucky bamboo cane when going out of his village. If he did not carry one with him he might unintentionally provoke the indignation of the man of another village he was passing by. He must be a challenger, so the villagers presumed, to come defiantly barehanded in their domain. In many cases there might be a challenge to a fight to test the prowess of the would-be darer. In the old days every village had its own champions to cope with such audacious persons. They were called in Thai *nak-leng*, a word of Cambodian origin. The Chief of a “nak-leng” group was called *nakleng toe* which means a big boss, and he had a number of wives, while the ordinary villagers were mostly monogamous.

The word “nakleng” has many meanings in current use, both in good and bad senses. One of its meanings is a generous or sportsman-like person, while the chief boss or “nakleng-toe” now has only a degenerated sense, a chief gangster. The meanings reflect the idea of “nakleng” of the old days and its development.

There is a superstitious belief among “naklengs” that a bamboo cane has a certain inherent characteristic which gives good or bad luck to a person who yields it. There is a method of ascertaining such luck by a certain kind of measurement called *chalok* in Thai, which may be rendered in English as “luck-measurement”. The bamboo utilized as a cane is from the

main stem of a kind of dwarf bamboo, and of a good size and thickness to be used handily as an instrument of combat among the “naklengs”. In fighting, the combatant tries to knock the head of his opponent; “a blow on the head” is therefore a common expression in Thai for an assault.

In every bamboo joint there is a knob, or eye as we call it. Now count the number of knobs of the cane beginning with the first one at the head or the thicker end of the cane and mutter a formula with the words “ku ti müng” which means “I beat you”, followed at the next knob with the word “müng ti ku” which means “you beat me”. Repeat the formula “I beat you” and “you beat me” in succession until reaching the last knob at the end of the tapering cane. If the last knob coincides with “I beat you” the cane is, of course, a lucky one; if on the other hand it coincides with “you beat me” the cane is an unlucky one. It has to be discarded, or else the joint with the unlucky knob is cut off before the cane can be used favourably.

Note the Thai words *ku* which means “I” or “me”, and *müng* which means “you”; these two words cannot be used in everyday speaking. In the Thai language there are different sets of personal pronouns to be used depending on the social scale of rank or estimation of the speaker in relation to that of the person addressed. in this instance the speaker is addressing an imaginary foe in a disparaging manner, for which the words “*ku*” and “*müng*” are appropriate.

If a walking stick is made from a stem of rattan palm or from hard wood of certain kinds a chalok or “lucky measurement” is required in the same manner as the bamboo cane, but with different wording of the formula. The wording comes in succession like this:

- (1) *Sua wey* meaning “Hey Tiger”,
- (2) *Chakhay waa* meaning “Ha Crocodile”,
- (3) *Yak yeak kheo* meaning “An ogre or ogress shows his or her fangs”,
- (4) *Kheo fan* meaning “grinding teeth”.

Now hold the top-end of the walking stick with one's fist muttering the words in (1), and with the other hand grasp the stick just below, muttering the words in (2). Release the first fist and place it below the second muttering the word in (3). Release the second fist and place it below the third one and mutter the words in (4). Repeat the process in succession in the same manner until one comes to the end of the walking stick. The fractional part remaining over, if less than a half, is ignored. If the measurement ends either on (1) or (2) the walking stick is a lucky one. Wielding such a stick while travelling in the jungle, tigers will give one a wide berth, and while crossing a stream crocodiles will not molest or harm one. If the measurement falls either on (3) or (4) the walking stick is, conversely, an unlucky one, as predicted plainly in the words of (3) and (4).

There are many versions of the formula relating to "luck-measurement" of bamboo canes and walking sticks. They differ radically as to wording and number of countings. Even when the counting ends on the same number, most of the versions in my collection show different results as to good and bad luck.

One will notice that the Thai, particularly the wowen, carry loads on the shoulder at the ends of a bamboo pole not unlike that of the Southern Chinese and most of the peoples of the mainland of South-East Asia. Village lasses in Central Thailand, and perhaps in other areas too, have their own collection of bamboo carrying poles, in the same manner as a person in the city or town has a collection of bamboo canes and walking sticks, or handbags, or, in premodern days, "betelnut boxes" which hold betelnuts, leaves and other ingredients for chewing purposes. A girl may have a number of bamboo carrying poles in her possession, and one or two of them are her favourite ones which have an aesthetic value.

A good carrying pole has a graceful shape, slightly curved at both ends, each with its own knob to check heavy loads from sliding and falling off. It is pliable, rising and falling rhythmically while in motion. Such a bamboo carrying pole is reserved

by the owner for carrying food and presents to monks at the wat or monastery during the “Songkran Feast” (old style Thai New Year, popularly known by Westerners as the “Water Throwing Festival”) or on other feasts and festivals. On such occasions the lasses would don their best clothes to carry food as merit-making to the wat. They would vie with one another ostentatiously to be seen wearing the best cloths of the year and having the most graceful bamboo carrying pole. One might wonder where the lass got her beautiful artistic carrying pole, for the art of making them was not traditionally in the province of a woman and there was nowhere in the old days where one could buy them readymade. If she wanted an artistic one she had to rely on a person who was able to make one, and that person in most cases was a monk; for art was born in a monastery. Perhaps that monk-artist was a young man who was ordained temporarily as custom demands. He might make the carrying bamboo pole and present it to the lass as his good-will gift, which might sometimes develop into a romance.

Now, every bamboo carrying pole has its particular “chalok” or lucky measurement. One of the formulas is thus:

- (1) *Khan - khaen* (*khan* = bamboo carrying pole
and *khaen* = a euphonic suffix)
- (2) *Zak - khaen* (miserably poor),
- (3) *Mang - mi* (wealthy),
- (4) *Si - suk* (luck and happiness).

Count the knobs of the bamboo pole from one end and terminating at the other. If the last knob falls on (3) or (4) the bamboo pole is a lucky one; and if it falls on (1) or (2) it is the opposite.

There is a measurement for fighting-cocks too. Count the cock’s scales at the fork - end of its middle toes, or count the number of crests of the cock’s comb with the following wording of the formula:

- (1) *Kai ti* (striking cock),
- (2) *Kai lor* (decoy cock),

- (3) *Kai low* (ensnaring cock),
- (4) *Kai jon* (thrusting cock),
- (5) *Kai thon khon* (plucked cock),
- (6) *Kai long more kaeng* (curry cock).

Nos. (1) to (4) are lucky cocks, (5) and (6) are unlucky ones.

Royal title names and those of high dignitaries, both temporal and spiritual, are inscribed on gold tablets. Before a royal scribe inscribes such a high appellation on the gold tablet, he has to ascertain the “chalok” or luck-measurement. The tradition is carried on, no doubt, to the present day. The “chalok” has four numbers thus:

- (1) *Jayam* (Victory),
- (2) *Vivadam* (Contention),
- (3) *Maranam* (Death),
- (4) *Sukham* (Happiness).

The words are all in the Pali language and reveal themselves, which are of good or of ill luck.

What has been described here is confined to the Central part of Thailand only, and the sources are oral ones. I have never come across “chalok” formlas in printed form. The only persons who know such traditional lore are elder folk, and even among the latter not many know that there is such a thing as “chalok”. I do not know whether there is a practice of “chalok” in the Northern and Southern areas of Thailand. Perhaps there is, but surviving weakly in some outlying districts where the impact of modern civilization is not strong. In the North-East area of Thailand the practice of “chalok” is relatively more prevalent. I have with me many “chalok” formulas supplied by one of my friends, a native of that part of the kingdom. There are about twenty formulas of the “chalok” dealing with a variety of things such as mats, fishing-nets, mortars for pounding rice, weighing-scales, bags such as those used by Buddhist monks and rural people, swords, guns, blow-pipes, arrows, bows, pha-nung (loin-cloths), drums, gongs, house-posts, stair-cases, etc. There are also “chalok” formulas relating to certain parts of the body, both

male and female. There might have come from some written book on the subject, for I have seen a printed pamphlet of the "chalok" formulas belonging to the North-Easterners some years ago in the National Library in Bangkok. Surely the Laos of the Lao Kingdom have "chalok" too.

There are also "chalok" in Indonesia, Malaysia and Burma, according to those of my acquaintances who are natives of those countries, but they cannot supply me with the formulas off hand. As I surmise, the Cambodians and the Vietnamese may have it too. It is alluring but less safe, for lack of comparative data, to say that the "chalok" was probably in its origin an item of Austronesian culture.

Some Siamese Superstitions About Trees and Plants

It is not advisable to plant certain kinds of trees and plants near the house or in the compound. They are unlucky.

1. Tau Rang ເຕົຮ້າງ (Caryota mitis-palmae). This is a type of palm tree which bears fruit - like berries in beautiful clusters but with poisonous fruit walls. The tree may be found in the compound of a European house as an ornamental tree. The Thai people do not grow it for the reason that the second syllable or word of "tau rang" is similar in sound to another word which means deserted or abandoned, (perhaps the poison of its fruit and also its non-economical nature has something to do with its taboo).

2. Sala and Rakam ສລະແລະຮະກຳ (Zallaca wallichiana-palmae). These two kinds of trees are very similar. They are rattan - like palms with sharp spines in whorls around the stem. Saia in Thai means forsaken and Rakam means affliction. Hence they are not grown in a house compound. Owing to their edible sour fruits which in some varieties have a sweet flavor, they are of high marketable value. Gardeners grow them as hedges, for their sharp spines will prevent trespassers.

3. Soak ໄກ (Saraka indica). Soak in Thai means anguish or sorrow, a bad name for a tree to have growing near the house. Perhaps the tree is the Indian asoka which bears red clusters of flowers with a mild fragrant odour. In India the tree is supposed to flower when struck by the foot of a beautiful damsel. Asoka

in Sanskrit means sorrowless, but this word in Thai has lost its first unaccented syllable and becomes soak or sok which means quite the opposite of sorrowless.

4. Lanthorn ລັ້ນທອນ. This is the frangipani or the temple or pagoda flower tree. The word lanthom has a sound resembling the word rathom which means agony. Hence the taboo. It is usually to be found in a wat or monastery where, according to a superstitious belief, any unlucky or ill thing will lose its bad effects.

5 . Kradanga ກະຮັດງາ (Canarium odoratum). A tall tree bearing sweet - smelling flowers. It is usually not found near a house due to the fact that the tree has soft wood, and its branches are easily cracked and broken.

6. Champi and Champa ຈຳປີແລະຈຳປາ (Michelia champaka). These are two varieties of a tree which bear in the former a scented creamy white flower, and in the latter yellowish ones which are in great demand for floral decorations. Both kinds of trees have soft wood and are liable to be broken easily, hence, they are not grown near a house.

7. Rak ຮັກ (Calotropis gigantea). This tree is the araka of India. Its flowers are strung into garlands to be worn around the necks of criminals on their way to the place of execution. In Thailand the rak tree grows wild in deserted dry places. Its trunk and branches have a milky sap and its flowers are used for floral pieces which are to be seen usually at cremations. Now it is the fashion for a bride and bridegroom to wear a garland of these flowers, for the name rak means love in Thai.

8. Chaba ຂບາ (Hibiscus rosa sinensis - Nalvaceae). This is a shrub plant which is raised by the Chinese and bears scarlet-red flower. There are many varieties of this shrub with various beautiful colors. In the old days an adulteress was punished by being exposed to the public on a kind of stilt with red chaba flowers tucked above her ears. A convict to be executed for heinous crimes was also decorated with such a flower behind

the ear on his way to the place of execution. In southern India, a garland of such flowers is hung around the neck of a criminal to be executed.

9. Nang Yaem ນາງແຍ້ມ (Cleredendron fragans). A shrub having fragrant flowers. It is easily propagated as its roots run far and wide underground and shoot up as new plants until they become a nuisance. The people believe that Nang Yaem will turn into a "phi" when it grows old, and disturb the peace of the house by pelting stones at it. Nang Yaem in Thai means to open slightly in bloom or the peeping of a damsel, hence its poetic name is found quoted in Thai erotic literature.

10. Saraphi ສາຮັພີ (Ochrocarpus siamensis). A tree which bears sweet - scented flowers.

11. Phikun ພຶກຸນ (Mimosops elengi). A tree which bears small star - shaped flowers which retain their sweet scent for a comparatively long time. On certain important occasions such as a coronation, Phikun flowers of gold and silver are distributed by the King to officials.

12. Chan ຈິນ (Diospyros packmanii-C.B. Clarke). A tall tree which bears yellow fruit. When ripe the shape of the fruit resembles the moon. Hence its name.

The above trees No. 10, 11 and 12 are not usually grown in the house compound, but curiously are to be found in wats and the royal palace compounds. If a person dares to plant such trees in his residential compound, misfortune will occur sooner or later to the owner.

13. Malakaw ມະລະກວ (Carica papaya-cucurbitaceae). The Papaya tree with edible fruit, has no bark and is liable to uproot easily, hence, it is not advisable to grow in the house compound or near the house. Unripe fruit of the papaya is used as food, but ripe fruit in the old days was not usually eaten because of its strong butter-like smell which Thai of older generations disliked. Recently a number of varieties of this tree have been introduced into the country with improved fruit which suit the taste of the younger generation. The papaya tree is to be found in the compounds of houses, but older people cling to superstitious beliefs, and give well - meaning advice that it is not

good to have such trees in the garden.

14. Phutaraksa ພູຕະກໍາ (Canna Sp.). In Thai, this means “Buddha’s protection”. It is cultivated in a house compound for its beautiful showy flowers. Some people object to the growing of this plant near the house. It is believed the name Buddha has a great deal to do with the superstition, for anything sacred or in connection with “phi” is not allowed to be in the same compound as an inhabited house.

15. Po ໄວ (Ficus religiosa). The religious fig tree under which the Lord Buddha was sitting when he received his enlightenment. It is to be found in most of the wats. Hence, when a person sees from afar a po tree, he knows that a wat is there. Such a sacred tree is not grown in the compound of the house. The po tree in the wat is usually a tall shady tree around which the people sometimes wrap a yellow robe in the same manner as robing a Buddha image with the yellow robe. Some people place bamboo poles, trimmed and whitewashed, as supports to the holy tree. In the old days cowrie shells used as token money, were inserted inside the bamboo poles. Poor people will bury the bones and ashes of their dear ones near the root of the po tree so that they may be near the holy symbol of the Lord Buddha.

16. Nun ນຸນ (Ceibo pentandra) or kapok tree is not grown near a house.

17. Ngiew ສິຈ (Bombax malabaricum - malvaceae). it is unlucky to grow the red silk cotton tree in the house compound.

These two types of trees have soft wood of no economic value. In former days big ngiew trees were utilized as coffins for the soft wood could be dug out easily for the purpose.

18. Takian ຕະເຈີນ (Hopea odorata) and -

19. Yang ຍາງ (Dipterocarpus alatus). These are tall forest trees. They are of course not fit to be grown in a limited house ground. Besides, such big trees are believed by the people to be abodes of tree spirits. There are two kinds of spirits that reside in the trees. One kind is a male spirit half "phi" half *thevada* or god, and the other is a female spirit like the wood nymph. The former, as surmised from the tree cult usually resides in a big tall tree, the wood of which has no economic value, while the latter resides in a tree which supplies economic wood or fruits. Even today people in outlying districts will not dare to cut down any big tree for fear of the tree spirit residing in it. Even in felling a tree of smaller size, the people will first make an offering to the spirit to atone for the offence made. A very big and very tall tree of the kind which the people believe to be the abode of the spirit will not be felled at any cost. In the old days when certain big trees were required for the making of the traditional royal barge or posts for the tall roof of a royal pyre, an offering was made and a royal proclamation was read to the spirit under the tree before it could be cut down. This was a wise practice to preserve big trees of the forest from wanton felling by the simple folk.

The Takian tree in particular is a very well-known one where a female spirit has her habitation. She is known as "Nang Takian" or Lady Takian. In the imagination of the people, Lady Takian usually takes the form of a beautiful maiden who sometimes makes a wailing and piercing sound when the tree, her abode, is felled. Unforeseen and mysterious calamities will befall the person or persons who destroy her abode. A Takian tree growing near the bank of a river with its roots protruding above ground is to be avoided, for the Lady Takian of that tree is a fierce one. Whoever relieves himself near the base of her tree will suffer from ulcers. To add to the belief, both kinds of trees, Takian and Yang are usually found in a wat where all sorts of ghost stories emanate.

20. Phutsa ພູສາ (Zizyphus jujuba). The Indian Jujube bears eatable cherrylike fruit. It grows wild and its thorny branches are used to block the passage of evil spirits when there is a birth. The flowers have a strange nauseous smell. This tree is not grown near the house, perhaps, apart from the smell of its flowers when in bloom, the last syllable “sa” of “Phutsa” also means in Thai to diminish or to grow less. It is unlucky to have it in the compound of the house for one’s fortune in trade will grow less and less.

21. Mayom ມະຍົມ (Phyllanthus distichus-eupobiaceae).

The Star gooseberry which bears acid fruit. Its branches are used by monks who dip it in the consecrated water and sprinkle it on persons or places as a sort of ritual purification. Some people do not grow this tree near the house. The Lord of “phi” is called in Thai, “Phya Yom” from Yama the Indian God of Death. Perhaps because the name of the tree “mayom” sounds like Phya Yom in its last syllable, it is not grown near the house of some people. The branch of mayom tree which is used for the purification ritual is no doubt used in imitation of Yama, the Indian God of Death who holds a staff (Yania Dandha) with which he beats the evil spirits. On seeing such a staff the evil spirits will flee.

22. Marum ມະຮຸມ (Moringa, oleifera-Maringaceae). The

Indian drum stick tree which bears pods like drum sticks. Some people object to having such a tree grown in the house compound. No doubt the objection is due to the name of tree “marum” which coincides with the Thai word ma-rum which means “to come in a crowd”. This may be taken to mean to come in a crowd in order to consume food or to come in a crowd to attack.

23. Kluey Tani ກລຸຍຕານີ. A variety of banana which bears

fruits. Though delicious to taste when ripe, it is usually not eaten on account of its numerous seeds. They are cultivated in gardens for their leaves which have the highest quality for wrapping purposes, or to make into leaf cups. They are in great

demand in the market. Kluey Tani is not grown near the house for it has an evil repute that it has a female “phi” named Nang Tani who every now and then scares people. It is a belief that by certain magical arts the Nang Tani may be induced as an ally in love affairs. Here is one of the arts. You go to such a banana tree which is about to bear a bud and flirt with the Nang Tani imaginary of course. Repeat this many times in the following days until you are sure in your imagination that she consents to love you. Then cut a small piece of the root and carve it into a figure of a woman. While doing so recite a certain mantra or magic spell. Store it carefully in a small receptacle. During the night the Nang Tani will appear to you in a dream as your wife. If you love any girl you can invoke her to the successful end of the affair. Like a human wife the Nang Tani will resent this and do you harm if you marry a girl without her permission or consent .

Appendices



The Life of the Farmer

Preface

Phya Anuman Rajadhon occupies, or rather has created for himself, a position in the field of Thai letters and scholarship which is unique and paradoxical. Though he is not an academician by training, his scholarly attainments have placed younger teachers and students at his feet and made him one of Thailand's most highly respected university professors. Though he is not a trained anthropologist, no one has made so great a contribution as he to the study of traditional Thai culture. Though he is not primarily a student of language and literature, no one can proceed very far in Thai philological or literary studies before he has to seek enlightenment from the contributions which Phya Anuman has made in these fields. Though he is not a product of Western education, hardly anyone has done more than he to introduce and popularize Western learning among the Thai. Though he is much more than a popular author, one could hardly find a professional writer in Thailand who can match the grace and wit of his prose style. Most astonishing of all, though he is not a Thai by ancestry, no student of Thai culture, history, literature, and language, has displayed greater devotion to these fields.

The translator of any of Phya Anuman's prolific writings is faced with two conflicting aims. On the one hand, he wants to render the content as accurately as possible, since foreign readers are likely to be most interested in the factual material that he presents; on the other, he would like to preserve as much as possible the delightful flavor of the author's prose style, which

has all the vigor and pungency of the best conversational language. In the translations presented here it is to be feared that the latter desideratum has had to suffer at the expense of the former.

Thai terms are transcribed in the phonemic system devised by Professor Mary Haas as revised by her in *Thai Reader* (American Council of Learned Societies, Washington, D.C. 1954).

William J. Gedney
Ann Arbor, Michigan
May 1961

The City and the Country

Not too far out from the city, one sees great vacant space as far as the eye can reach; clumps of trees rise at irregular intervals. In the extreme distance one sees the treetops looking as if placed in orderly rows. The sky is clear to the distant horizon. The scene is quiet and lonely, with only the sound of crows and the sound of the wind blowing from time to time. At long intervals one sees a few people in the distance. The air one breathes feels pure and fresh. This is the condition of the meadows and fields outside of town; their characteristics are just the opposite of those of the city. In the city there are many people; whatever places are gathering points for people are crowded with thronging humans. There is a deafening din of people and of cars almost all the time. One cannot see anything at a distance, for buildings and shops and houses intervene almost everywhere. The atmosphere is hot and oppressive and impure; one breathes with difficulty. Foul and rotten odors assail the nose frequently. Some places are disgustingly dirty and cluttered. Life in the city and life in the country offer sharp contrasts. One is close to nature; the other is remote from nature. One is the source of food and health; the other is a place where people gather to share their food, and disease germs. To say only this much makes it appear that in the city there is only evil, not to be compared with the country. Actually if one were to speak of the good points, the city has many advantages over the country, because the center of progress is in the city. If this progress spreads to the country

in appropriate proportion, one can say that the nation, both city and country, achieves prosperity. If the city is selfish to too great a degree - seeking only to accumulate wealth to provide entertainment and comfort for itself, becoming remote from nature and never glancing toward the country - the progress of the city will be like a light that flares up only for a moment and then goes out for lack of fuel, that is to say, food. The country has the function of producing food to feed the city. Therefore the city has to depend upon the country for sustenance. To speak of the country, people living too close to nature will have the living conditions of nature. Whatever life is like, it continues so, with no progress upward and forward, because the country must depend upon the wealth, intelligence, and power of the city for maintenance and improvement in order that the country may advance and grow toward prosperity. World civilization and progress in the history of various nations depend upon both city and country. Each depends upon the other, and neither is better or worse than the other. If there are tools but no rice, or rice but no tools, there is hardship. Therefore in Thai it is said that nation and possession (the expression for "possessions" is literally "rice and things") go hand in hand; if separated, neither nation nor possessions exist fully.

City people call people outside the city "countryfolk". When one speaks the word "country" he thinks at once of backwardness both in wealth and in knowledge, but if city people did not have country people to help them, they could not live, for they would have no rice to eat, and would have no riches or happiness. For this reason we should share our knowledge and our wealth with the country people; thus we help the nation and help ourselves at one and the same time, for the people together form the nation. If one divides them broadly as I do, there are only two groups, the city people and the country people. I will use the term country people (literally, people of rural areas) instead of the term countryfolk (literally, people of outside areas) to avoid unpleasant connotations in the story that I will tell, namely, the story of the life of farmers and country people

who are the majority of the population of the country and who are the part of the population that renders the country prosperous in food by farming, the oldest and most widespread industry of mankind.

If you spread out a map of the country and look at it, cities are located at points where they draw little circles. The big cities are big circles, and small cities are small circles. Outside these circles is an area outside the cities; the area is great. If you take the cities, where a great many people live, put them together, and compare them with the area which is not city, anyone can see at once that the area which is city is many times less than the area which is not city. These non-city areas, aside from forests, mountains, streams, and lakes, are orchards and gardens and farms, made by the country people to plant crops and sustain themselves, from ancient times down to the present. Because of the fact that the country people settle in broad areas, since they must use much land in making a living, people live in clusters far apart from each other, causing one to feel that the number of country people is less than the number of city people. Actually if all country people were assembled together, they would outnumber city people by nine or ten times. They are the majority of the population of the country.

When we say that the country people constitute the largest part of the population of the country or, as they say, the backbone of the country, this is usually an end of the matter. No one is interested in knowing about country people, except to have them farm much and produce much rice, to feed the centers of population, namely, the cities. As for the life of country people and the difference between their conditions and beliefs and amusements and those of city people, no one seems much interested, for it is a question of country people, who could not possibly have anything better than city people. Whatever the country people think or believe is old-fashioned, unchanged with the times. This is true, but the majority of country people live in small groups, not large groups like city people, because none of them has an opportunity to become acquainted with other people to open

his ears and eyes, surrounding circumstances limiting him. Whatever country people have done and believed in the past with satisfactory results, they continue to do and believe, not changing readily. It is as if we had always used our own tools until we are handy with them; if we replace them suddenly with new tools it is like an about-face; we have not sufficient time to adapt ourselves. Such change causes confusion among the country people, for the old familiar tools are destroyed before use of the new tools has been learned; this amounts to destroying good things without providing anything better, so that the only door is broken. For this reason the country people advance slowly. Alone they do not dare change the old for the new because they are unsure, differing from the city people who have seen things of various kinds and so advance quickly; but sometimes they misstep, because of advancing too fast. Therefore it is said, "Knowledge of the life of mankind, from the remote past down to the present, besides helping us to predict the future, shows us our duty toward the world, which each of us finally must leave more beautiful than when we first found it." ¹⁾

Preparing the Fields

In telling about farming, I will speak first of the characteristics of the rice field. A field is a flat piece of land with a ridge of earth all around it for holding water to nourish the rice plants. Each field so marked off by ridges is called *an naa*, or *kabin naa* or *tabin naa*. The classifier for fields used in old books, such as *Chronicles of the City of Nakhon Sithammarat* (Version of Village Headman Naaj Khaaw), is *tabin*. Each field is usually rectangular in shape, sometimes large and sometimes small depending upon the area divided up. If the field is very big, it is necessary to work many days in plowing it. The lower end of the field is not always rectangular, because of adjoining hills, trees, marshes, or canals. This area is left over, but cannot be allowed to go to waste; a ridge is made in it according to the shape of the area. If a field has a long slender shape like a flag it is called *naa siaw*. If one side is long and straight but the other side is curved, the

long straight side is called *ween* and the curved side is called *run*, while the other two sides are called *kwaan* as in normal field; this sort of field is called *naa run naa ween*, but at present the word *run* has come to refer to the side or *kwaan*. There are also fields with ridges of small size; these are usually sowing fields, in low places. In the wet season they are flooded for a long time, and it is not necessary to make strong water barriers, but only to divide the fields to keep separate various sorts of rice that are sown, and to serve as paths for walking. In the hot season, during the fourth and fifth lunar months, the fields are dry, and not a drop of water is to be found. In the fields one sees nothing but rice stubble everywhere, and some places are burned over in black strips, sometimes still burning. They set fire to the rice stubble in the fields to burn the rice straw and turn it to ashes to provide fertilizer for the fields again, for these fields are rainwater fields, incapable of receiving sediment from the river water which overflows its banks and provides fertilizer.

Implements used in farming are the plow and the harrow, which everyone has seen. In the farming season one sees oxen or buffaloes drawing the plow through the fields, with a person holding the plow and following along behind. You have no doubt already seen such a plow. It is a curved piece of wood waist - high. One part is called the *khan jaam*; the end which the plowman holds is called *hâan jaarn*. There is another part with a hole in it to fasten it to the lower part of the *khan jaam*, curving forward to join the *eeg nooj*, which has two ropes tied to it. Beyond this is the ox or buffalo that draws the plow. This curved wood is called the *khan* of the plow, and the rope tied to the *eeg nooj* is called *khlâw* rope. The bottom part of the plow appears from time to time in the water and earth; at the time of plowing lumps of earth form along the forward edge, which is a thick piece of wood about one-half meter long, the front of which curves up like a shoe and is called the "pighead". The upper part is a high projecting piece for cutting the earth, called the pighead blade. At the end of the pighead there is a piece of iron, triangular in shape and a little larger than the palm of the hand, fitted over

the end of the wood, for jabbing the earth and breaking it apart so that it can be easily turned up. The iron is called the *phaan* of the plow, or in some localities the *pàkhaan*. The plow as well as the harrow are made by the farmers for their own use, except for *phaan* iron which must be bought. These are bought from traders having oxcarts loaded with various sorts of iron, including *phaan*, knives, hoes (*coob*), spades (*stam*), etc.²⁾ They come from provinces where there are people who mine iron ore and do blacksmithing for a living, such as the province of Loei. In the dry season during the third lunar month, merchants bring iron articles in oxcarts to sell among the villages, coming in groups of nine or ten carts. When they arrive at a village they stop and sell there. Whatever kind of iron implement the peasant needs, he buys at the oxcart parking lot, which is called the "oxcart dock". In every province there are regular places for this. When the traders have finished selling at one village they move on to another. When they are sold out, if they see anything that strikes their fancy, they buy it and take it away either to sell or to use. What I have described is the story of people's trading in former times. Trading was originally like this, whether the transport was oxcart or beast of burden or carrying pole or boats along waterways. Upon arriving in a village, a trader would stop and sell for many days, moving on to other places as the situation demanded until sold out. There was no trader serving as middleman to purchase goods wholesale for resale later as nowadays.

Farming may be said to begin at the waxing phase of the fourth lunar month, for beginning at that time the farmers prepare their farming equipment such as plows and harrows to await the auspicious day to conduct the first plowing ceremony. This is a day in the fourth lunar month, and they seem to choose even-numbered rather than odd-numbered days. They find the day in a textbook.³⁾ If they have no textbook, they borrow one and memorize it or copy it out, or ask those who know. This textbook is apparently obtained from monks learned in astrology and is therefore most likely to be found in monasteries. Anyone who can read and write goes and copies it out in a Thai folding

book, and it is then copied again and again. It is a book in the same category as textbooks of medicines and textbooks on methods of worshiping spirits. Textbooks of this sort are found everywhere and are called household textbooks. If the villagers have a government calendar, they usually accept the first plowing day given in the calendar. As for the time, in bygone days when the textbook gave the time in hours and minutes it was not convenient, for the old-time farmers had no clocks to watch the time. Therefore they used the Indian method of telling time in stages of sunshine; that is they measured the length of their own shadows by the number of consecutive footlengths. The number of times one , had to set his foot down to equal the length of the shadow was the number of stages of sunshine. In the moming when the sun had just risen, the shadow in the open sunlight would be longer than in the late morning. They measured their own shadows with their feet, and the number of footlengths gave so many stages of sunshine.

Before the auspicious hour, they built a temporary shrine to the guardian spirit of the field, called an eye-level shrine, in a place near the field appointed as the place of the first plowing. They had to prepare both objects of worship and offerings. This eye-level shrine was built only firmly enough to serve temporarily as a shrine. They used six bamboos planted as pillars, as high as eye-level, with crosspieces tied with creepers. The shrine had the form of a high rectangular platform of no very great size, only sufficient to lay the objects of worship and the offerings. The floor of the shrine was made of bamboos laid in a row, or they might be split and flattened. If it was not firm and steady they used creepers or strips of bamboo to tie it; one need not speak of nails, for they had none. What has been described was the usual method of building. If they could not find bamboo, they could use other wood; it was a question of using whatever they had, without limitations. The same was true of offerings; whatever they had to eat, they offered, as chance might afford, or as the popular phrase is, "prawn salad or fish salad". There had to be an offering of rice; this could not be omitted. They were

required always to use the top rice of the pot. These offerings were arranged in a flat basket, or at the very least laid on flat banana leaves. As vessels to contain offerings they used only flat baskets or banana leaves, even in making offerings to the gods the same was the case. This custom probably comes from India, where some groups of Indians of high caste like to eat rice from banana leaves, regarding them as cleaner and purer than other containers, which might be polluted because of having been used by others. To use a vessel that has already been used by a person of low class, such as a *sudra* or a *candala*, is considered a sin, the stain accruing to the person using the vessel afterward; however clean one might wash the vessel, the stain is not removed, according to the belief. Banana leaves are better, both clean and convenient. After use they can be thrown away. We ourselves also like them, because they are convenient. Their only disadvantage is that we like to throw used banana leaves away everywhere, cluttering the place disregarding the locality in a barbarous way. As to objects of worship, there were flowers, incense sticks, and candles. There was some difficulty with respect to incense sticks; in those times they did not know how to make these themselves, and it was not easy to buy them, for there was no place that sold them. The people had to depend upon monks, asking them for one or two sticks according to their needs. The candles used for worship were not hard to procure; the peasants made these themselves. Beeswax is not hard to obtain in the country; in the forests there are lots of bee's nests and beehives. Usually these are *min* bees, with small bodies. If one heats the honeycomb with fire he obtains wax. These objects of worship depended upon what one had or could procure. If one had nothing it did not matter, depending on chance. If they simply worshiped and made offerings without any marker for the place of the spirit of the land, and had a feeling of emptiness, they picked up a lump of earth and laid it on the shrine, pretending that the lump of earth was the place of the spirit. At the time of worshiping and making offerings, they would make a speech asking that their farms this year be fruitful, that their rice produce fine grain, that there be no dangers such as biting crabs or nibbling worms. When they finished

worshiping and making offerings they set to work plowing a field, for which the auspicious hour had been set, to serve as a ceremony of first plowing. The work of first plowing took about one hour; when they had finished, they might return home, and need do nothing further. They left the shrine of the land spirit as it was; there would be one more ceremony of making offerings and worshiping when they began to transplant rice. In the northeast they call the spirit of the land *phii taa héeg* or *phri taa rêeg*. There is a ceremony of making an offering of a chicken and making a wish as described elsewhere (in my work, *Belief in Spirits*). In some places, for example in the district of Ayutthaya, so far as it has been possible to investigate, they make four triangular flags of white or any color, and set these up at one of the north corners of their fields. They set them up in a rectangle and then sit down and address the Rice Goddess, the Earth Goddess, and the Spirit of the Place, asking that harmful creatures such as aphids and crabs not damage the rice which they are about to sow.

In olden times people who depended upon crops as their major source of sustenance had knowledge and experience in planting. They knew which sorts of earth were suited to which sorts of crops, what should be done at the time of planting to get good results, what to do to provide fertilizer for the earthd. But even if they had knowledge and experience in these matters, and were as diligent as they could be, the people in former times were helpless in matters of weather and crop enemies. When they thus found themselves helpless, it was natural for them to turn to magic things for aid, with doctrines and conduct handed down traditionally, to ensure fruitfulness for their farming. For this reason people formerly feared dangers which might befall their farming, because nothing was such a source of disaster as failure of crops. Because of this fear they had to have ceremonies of making offerings to spirits and gods, and rites connected with every step of farming until their crops were harvested and put away, before their worries were over. For the same reason various nationalities, even those which have progressed, still have various rites and ceremonies connected with farming which

have been handed down to the present time. These serve as evidence as to original beliefs, behavior, and conduct. But even if the beliefs have now faded out because famines do not occur often as formerly, and there is not much worshiping and begging of spirits of the place as described above, nevertheless the selection of auspicious hours has not been given up at the time of the first plowing, because this is regarded as important. In extreme cases, some people, even if they do not select their own auspicious hour, watch to see when others, such as the village headman or the important man in the village, begin the first plowing, and then begin their own. Those who are still cautious and fearful take flowers, incense sticks, and candles and lay them at the head of the field ridge, and make vows to the shrine, speaking to it in traditional ways. There are still people who do this; it is deep in their bones, and they must perform one thing or another to be happy. People who believe in auspices and who are learned make sure the first plowing is done in an auspicious direction, avoiding inauspicious directions such as the directions of the *phi laun luaw lèg*, *thágkàthìn*, and *yommákhán*, which are given in textbooks of astrology. In the first plowing they plow only three circuits to serve as ceremony. Probably they plow three circuits because three is a number regarded as magic. In some places they have a textbook for beginning the first plowing according to the age of the farmer; for example, if he was born in the year of the rat, he begins to plow on Sunday, and if born in the year of the ox, he begins to plow on Wednesday, etc.⁴⁾

When they have finished the first plowing they leave the field as it is. When it rains and the earth is wet enough to begin plowing, they set to work plowing the field of the first plowing before the fields. While they are waiting for the rain, they have to plow for sowing, that is, plow the field in which they will raise seedlings for transplanting. In plowing for sowing, if they are superstitious, it seems that they select an auspicious day, avoiding days when rats will bite or birds will carry off the rice; these things are told in the textbooks. Fields for sowing rice for transplanting may be made in many places, one plot for sowing "heavy rice,"

which is rice that forms grain slowly, taking about four months to ripen and be ready for harvesting, also called “four-month rice”; and another plot for sowing “light rice”, which is rice that forms grain quickly, taking about three months to ripen and be ready for harvesting, also called “three-month rice”. There are other plots for sowing black glutinous rice and white glutinous rice, etc. It is also possible to sow them together in a single plot, dividing it into sections by digging ditches. For a place to sow rice for transplanting, they select a spot near enough to water that they can scoop up water to nourish the seedlings easily. The rice that they sow for seedlings is rice that they select and keep aside from the year before; they take the rice of the Rice Goddess, which they summon forth from the field at the time of the previous year’s harvest and tie up in the form of a small human doll and keep in the barn, and mix this with the rice to be planted. There are only a few heads of this Rice Goddess rice which they mix in for ceremonial purposes to cause the seed rice to have life and heart (see my work on the Rice Goddess).

The method of sowing rice is to put the rice in a flat basket and soak it in water in order that the light-weight paddy grains and empty grains will float to the top; these they pick out and throw away. Then they pour the paddy into another flat basket which is lined with straw or grass, and water it constantly, not letting it get dry, until the rice germinates. This is called in the province of Nakhon Ratchasima *khâaw tèeg càab*. Then they take it and sow it in the seedling plots, which have been plowed and formed into ridges and ditches in advance. The ridges, formed of mud and made smooth and flat on top, are separated by ditches. Besides dividing the plot according to kinds of rice as described above, these ditches are also used as paths for walking while sowing, so that they need not tread on rice grains already sown; the ditches also serve as water channels. Before sowing the rice they speak a simple invocation to the Rice Goddess, informing her that they are about to plant her rice to make future crops, and asking that the rice plants flourish and be fruitful. Then they sow the rice; this is called *tôohd klâa* or *tog klaa*. After sowing

they must keep watch. If it rains hard during this time the seedlings are in danger, for their roots have not yet taken hold of the earth and even the distribution of the sowing will be destroyed, the seedlings being thrown together in crowded cluster; if this happens they will not grow well; the plants will be of unequal size, some small and some large.

Plowing the Fields

After sowing, if there is no rain for two or three nights, the roots of the seedlings take hold of the earth. After this even if it rains hard it does not matter, but it is necessary to watch and scoop up water, although not in excessive amounts. The farmers watch over the seedlings until they are about half a meter or more in height, when they are fit to be transplanted. If the seedlings are too long, they do not do very well when transplanted because they lose strength and the rice plants do not flourish.

Rice seedlings which are oversize are called *khâaw klâa kee reeg khéé noè kâj* (literally, “old seedlings jointed like a chicken’s legs”); they turn into plants similar to those of broadcast sown fields, which are less productive than those in transplanted fields.

Seedlings, if they have good earth with plenty of fertilizer and water, will grow to a size to be pulled up and transplanted in about fifty to sixty days. If they are left long for lack of opportunity to transplant them, they may grow old and produce grain, but the crop is small. The greatest enemies of rice seedlings are water birds; they like to eat rice seedlings and will come down in flocks. As soon as the rice grains burst into green leaf and are about to become plants, these birds like to descend and peck at them. In only a moment the seedlings lie flat and ruined.

These wretched birds come down and eat at night, and there is no way to keep one’s eyes open and watch for them; if they come to eat during the day it would be possible to give some protection. They are dreadful. The duty of watching and protecting rice seedlings includes scooping water and letting it flow onto or off the seedling plots, in order to let the young rice seedlings receive new water to nourish them constantly. This is

the job of the women, because the men are busy with plowing and harrowing. You have no doubt seen rice seedlings in the fields. They are visible as patches in the fields, fresh light green in color, attractive and refreshing to the eye. When they have grown to a height of a quarter meter or more, in the fresh morning air the breeze blows in gusts and the tips of the seedlings flutter and wave back and forth in rhythm, graceful as dancers welcoming the sun at dawn. If there is also a fine shower falling, the picture is all the more refreshing and pleasing. Those of you who have been farmers but are so no longer, have you ever felt and seen this in the past? Whatever your reason for abandoning the fields and coming to live in the city, have you ever seen this sort of natural scene in the city?

During the time that the seedlings have not yet grown to the size to be transplanted, the men rise in the early morning. If the fields are distant, they must leave the house as early as 4 A.M., carrying the yokes, plows, knives, hoes, and spades on their shoulders and leading the oxen or buffaloes out to plow. If they do not carry these things themselves, they may have the oxen or buffaloes carry them instead. They set to work to plow the field where they had the first plowing before the other fields. For the plowing at this time there is no auspicious time. They do *dàa* plowing (the Thai term is retained here because no exact English equivalent is known; *dàa* is a verb meaning to plow an entire area the first time) in a circle along the boundary of the *naan* that they have marked off in the field. If the particular field is divided into two parts, or two *naan*, they do the plowing in two time periods. They plow one *naan* in the morning; when it is finished, they continue to plow the second *naan* in the afternoon. If it is a large field, they may divide it into as four *naan*. They usually ask one another, "How many *naan* (shifts) of plowing will finish this field?" The answer is, "It will probably take four *naan* (shifts)." This shows that the field in question is very large, that it requires four shifts of plowing. At the first plowing they plow straight from the head of the field ridge in one corner to another corner. If they plow with their right side toward the

field ridge, the ridge of earth plowed up falls to the left the whole length of the furrow. When they are near the end they raise the plow to help the buffaloes, and have them turn to the left along the end of the field. This is called "*bian haan thai, liaw hna naan*", and means that they have finished plowing one row. Then they continue plowing till they have traversed the end of the *naan*, and turn the plow straight along to the other side. Then they plow across the end and come back to the starting point. They have finished the outer margin of the *naan*, and now plow new rows inside the first row which are gradually smaller until they reach the center. Then the *naan* is finished and they stop to rest, and begin the second *naan* at another time period. When both *naan* are finished, and one field is completed, they must plow two or three more circuits around the part next to the field ridge, keeping it to the left, because when they plowed the first time they kept the field ridge to the right. The head of the plowshare which fits over the pighead turns to the left and bites more earth to the left than to the right; thus they must plow with the field ridge to the left in order to have the plow bite the earth to the left, next to the field ridge, completely. In terminology for areas, one *râj* is four *naan*; this probably comes from the *naan* or shift in the work of plowing fields. During the plowing, when the earth is broken and turned up in sheets by the plow, there are many small red earthworms turned up also. Earthworms of this kind are called field earth worms. One will see Thai mynah birds (*Acridotheres siamensis*) descending in flocks to eat the earth-worms. These birds are tame, because people do them no harm, their flesh being unpleasant to eat and the birds being regarded as dirty; for this reason they are spared danger.

They begin to plow in the early morning. About 10 A.M. or later, that is at *naan pheen* (they have no watches to look at, and depend upon watching the sun's shadow and noticing their own hungry stomachs), they stop to rest, releasing the oxen or buffaloes from the yokes to rest and eat grass and straw. The men eat their rice; this may be called eating morning rice or, in the ancient term, eating *naaj*, because ever since rising in the morning, when they rinsed their mouths and washed their faces,

they have eaten nothing at all, except to smoke a cigarette, and, if they are betel chewers, to chew a wad of betel. They cannot be without a tobacco box, which is usually made of the inner shell of the ripe sugarpalm fruit, and a flint and iron; these are always kept on the person. If they chew betel, their wives prepare betel and areca and put them in a box for them. They wrap these in their *phaa khaaw máa*, and tie them around the waist, or else tie on a triangular cloth bag into which they stuff betel box, tobacco box, and other things. In some places they plow in the morning and stop to eat in the late morning, then they continue plowing till *pheen* (11 A.M.) and stop. Thus as a rule farmers eat their morning rice or eat *phruw naaj* in the late morning. There is therefore no midday meal; when they eat again it is the evening meal. It is the duty of those at home to prepare food and send it to the fields. Sometimes if they have the opportunity they also catch raw fish and eat them with pepper sauce. They squat and eat at the head of the field ridge or wherever convenient, selecting a big tree to furnish shade from the heat of the sun. For this reason if there are big trees they do not cut them down as in the city, where they are not tolerated because they are in the way; they usually preserve them as a place to rest and eat, sweeping the area flat and smooth for sitting and lying down. At the bases of big trees with cool shade like this, if in midday the heat of the sun is so intense as to be visible, and the wind sighs from time to time, and otherwise it is so quiet that one hears no noise at all, one feels lonely and is tempted to spread a mat and stretch out comfortably. It is precisely this which gives rise to the Thai idiom, "shade of trees, eaves of roofs", but for the farmers, even if they have endured the sun and are weary, there is no opportunity to rest comfortably like this, because there is much other work which they must do. When they have finished eating, they put the pots in the basket and hang them up on a tree branch at the head of the field. Then they go out and inspect the land. If they see grass growing thick anywhere in the fields, they cut it. If weeds have grown up obstructing the field ridges, they cut them. At points where the field ridges are broken or sunken, they plug them or raise them with earth. They keep watch to

preserve and improve the land. In some places the fields are open, and it is impossible or inconvenient to find big trees nearby to provide shade for rest; they build a temporary hut for shelter, or they may build a field shed. Originally a field shed of this sort was called in Thai *thian naa*, or by corruption *chian naa*. Sometimes field sheds are built with elevated floors and open spaces beneath, of permanent construction. They are probaby used as farming quarters throughout the season, that they are built in this way.

As for the oxen and buffaloes that are turned loose to rest and eat grass and straw, they are not turned loose to eat alone. If they are turned loose thus, to follow their noses and eat grass farther away, they might easily be stolen. It is necessary to take great care with respect to oxen and buffaloes, because they are the important source of power in farming, and so there are always evildoers waiting to steal them. When they turn oxen and buffaloes loose to eat grass, there must be a person to tend them. This duty falls to the children. They tend them together in groups of many households; sometimes a group numbers many tens of individuals. They are called oxherds and buffaloherds, and everyone knows full well what sort of youngsters they are. They are hopelessly naughty, and go to extremes in their play. If there are trees they climb and clamber up all of them. Sometimes they play at fighting crickets, and sometimes at pitchpenny. What do they use for pennies to pitch? They use the closing lids of large snails which occur plentifully in the fields; these are the pennies that they pitch. Worse yet, during the farming season when there are large snails, they roast them and eat them. It is unnecessary to speak of quarrels and fights; they occur constantly. As for crickets, which city children have a very hard time finding one at a time, or must buy from others for many *sàtaan* apiece, in the fields in the cricket season there are plenty, and they are easily found; it is only necessary to part the dry grass to find nine or ten at a time. Buffaloherds being so naughty and inclined thus to play more than to keep watch, how can they be much trusted in the matter of tending buffaloes? To trust them is to associate with children

in building houses (a Thai proverbial expression for trusting youngsters in serious matters). Therefore usually four or five adults, when they have free time, go and take charge. Actually oxherds and buffaloherds are just like monastery boys, or any other group of boys, whether of low class or high class; when they get together in a group and are turned loose to play by themselves they are all alike, instinctively naughty, because boys will be boys, and not adults.

When afternoon comes and the sun starts its descent, about 2 o'clock, the boys drive the buffaloes back and plowing of the second *naan* is begun. (If they use oxen to plow, they plow only in the morning; in the afternoon they turn them loose and do not use them to plow, for oxen do not have endurance.) They plow until the sun is very low, about 4 P.M., and then unhitch the plows to give the buffaloes another period of rest. This time of day is called *bàaj khwaaj* (literally, "buffalo afternoon"). The buffaloes know well that their work is finished for the day; they head straight for their wallows and soak themselves happily, for they have been in the hot sun. When they come up from the wallow they eat grass, eating and walking at the same time as they gradually shift along. In the evening they turn their heads toward home. They have an excellent memory for their own homes; even if they go far away, unless someone ties them up they know their way home. When they arrive they enter their pens themselves; no one needs to herd them in. The reason for turning oxen and buffaloes loose to rest like this is necessity; otherwise the animals cannot stand the work, and become chronically listless, weak, and thin; they are no good the rest of their lives. At this time when the buffaloes are turned loose to eat grass, there is some time left before dark; the farmers seek fish, set fishtraps, gather vegetables, and break up firewood, according to what they have. They carry this themselves or load it on the backs of buffaloes to take it home. In the evening when the sun is low, in order to rest they ride the buffaloes and let them walk idly through the fields, trudging straight toward home. There is a breeze from time to time, refreshing the spirit. One's weariness

disappears completely, and one's heart feels as unobstructed and clear as the vacant fields stretching to the horizon. They ride the buffaloes along singing quietly the whole way. The happiness and content of the famers at no other time can equal this evening time. This is related from the past of a man who once was a farmer. The true life, when one forgets troubles and sorrows and worries and has happiness and contentment for a moment, is at the time when the arduous daily work is done and one rides a buffalo and sings quietly as described. The meadows and fields, forests and mountains, playing a flute while riding a buffalo, these things it is that the chinese regard as the ideal of happiness, peace, and contentment which mankind should seek. The farmers have too much of this and so like to come to town, where there is naught but gaiety and comfort, but happiness and peace are hard to find.

The first plowing as described above is called *dàa* plowing; it consists of turning up the earth in ridges. After plowing it is left for many days in order to let the grass rot and become fertilizer. They plow each field and then leave it in this way, and then return to plow it again; this is called *prnn* (literally, "turning") plowing, and consists of plowing the overturned ridges back rightside up again. This is tantamount to loosening up the soil. For both *dàa* plowing and *prnn* plowing, it is not desired that there be too much water in the field. If there is a great deal of water, they do not see the furrow and mau replow an old furrow or diverge from the straight line of the first straight furrow. In this case some of the earth will be cut by the plow blade and some not, rendering harrowing and transplanting difficult. What has been described is what happens when they have enough time to plow twice. If they are unable to finish in time, they simply do *dàa* plowing and then harrow, omitting the *prnn* or second plowing, but the transplanted rice is not fully productive because the grass is still fresh, not having had time to ferment and rot and become fertilizer. If the field is a sown field, not a transplanted field, there is no previous plowing; they simply sow the rice on the field and then plow it under, doing only the

first *dàa* plowing. But if there is much grass in the field, they must first do *dàa* plowing just the same; they plow to pull up all the grass, and then sow and plow again to turn the seeds under. If sown fields are plowed under only once, there are usually grass and weeds growing up with the rice plants. These are chiefly *Triumfetta bartramia*, *Cyperus rotundus*, and *sod kàthiam*. If these grow among the rice to any extent it is necessary to keep watch and pull them up often.

It is sometimes said that if we changed our plows and used iron plows like those of western countries, we would get better and quicker results than with our old plows which have been used for a long time and have never been altered or improved in any way. The explanation is given that Western plows are very heavy; oxen and buffaloes can scarcely draw them; and they dig too deep into the earth. Also, they are more expensive than local plows;⁶⁾ the farmers usually do not have enough money to buy them to use. This is fact, but there is also another fact, namely, that in the case of anything that has been done in the past and has produced visible results, and has long since become custom, not normally manifesting any defects or disadvantages, it is usual among farmers not to want to change, for they do not trust new things, being uncertain that if they change they will receive the expected benefits. If their expectations are not fulfilled, they are in trouble, and so they prefer to do as they have done in the past rather than venture to change to unaccustomed things, unless someone first acts to serve as an example proving that good results are obtained, in which case they consent to change. Their ideas stopping at this point, it is impossible that there should be any thought of change or improvement to fit circumstances, unless someone acts as leader to set an example. At present it is learned that there is a new style of plow, an improvement on the old style, but this is a question of modern farming and has nothing to do with the farming of the peasants we are describing. Speaking of this reminds us of a plowing story set long ago in Burma. They say that an important European financial commissioner with intelligent ideas and good intentions

desired to see the various nationalities living in the north of Burma, who are backward forest and hill people, receive the benefits of progress. He reasoned that the plowing by these people was done with backward, out-of-date plows. If they used a Western plow, which plows very deep, they would be richer than before. Having made his decision, with good intentions, he invested in the purchase of a modern plow and sent it to the governing committee of a local district with a detailed explanation of the method of use, requesting that they instruct the jungle people the new plow. This plow that he sent for them to try out really plowed deep, so deep that it turned up the hard undersoil as well. When the jungle people saw this they were displeased, because they knew full well that it is impossible to grow anything in the hard undersoil, and so they refused to use the new plow. The welfare of the district officer depended upon his convincing the jungle people; he therefore tried in every way possible to induce the jungle people to use the modern plow. All his explanations and recommendations were useless. Finally he had to use threats, saying that if they did not consent to use the modern plow, the commissioner would be very angry, and if he ever became angry there would be dreadful consequences, because one of the commissioners had a flaming fire to burn the stubborn to death. For this reason the commissioner had to wear a monocle to cover his eye so that it would burn no one. Even when thus threatened, the jungle people were still unwilling to use the Western iron plow. Finally the commissioner learned of the matter and came himself. He reasoned with the jungle people, explaining the merits of the iron plow, and saying that he felt very sorry that these jungle people were stubborn and unwilling to act in accordance with his good intentions and his hopes for their progress and prosperity. The commissioner was absorbed in his explanation, when by chance his monocle fell out. There was an instantaneous scream, and the jungle people present fled in panic from the flaming eye, fearing that it would burn them to death. From that time on all the jungle people disappeared; searchers could not find them, for they had fled into the jungle. Thereafter they were never

seen again. This is a story of breaking a knife handle with the knee or pushing an ox's horns down to force it to eat grass (Thai proverbial expressions for trying to achieve results by force). It was an attempt to achieve sudden change, without trying to alter things gradually in order that the people may follow step by step, and so it failed.

Harrowing and Transplanting

To return to our story, after the plowing comes the harrowing. A harrow (*khrâad*) is an implement to comb the grass and weeds out of earth. It is a piece of wood with teeth in a row which are called *luug khrâad*, and it is drawn through the field by buffaloes. The first harrowing must be done in the plot where the ceremonial first plowing was performed. At the time of harrowing they must let water into or off the field in order to get the proper amount; the water must cover the plowed earth slightly. They harrow back and forth until the plowed earth is broken up in mud and forms a flat smooth area. Wherever there are weeds and plants, they are pulled out and thrown away, to facilitate the transplanting of rice. When they have finished harrowing they leave the field for a night or two for the mud to settle, and then they bring the rice plants and transplant them. At the time of harrowing the youngsters catch snails, crabs, and fish in the plowed and harrowed earth in great fun. Not only the youngsters have fun; the pond herons also enjoy it, for they get a chance to catch fish, and one sees them wading through the water in white flocks.

When they have harrowed the fields and left them to stand, they begin to pull up the rice seedlings and separate them according to variety. This is the work of the women, because the men are busy with plow and harrow. The method of pulling is to stoop over and take the plants in both hands to cause the clay clinging to the roots to fall off. Then they grasp the rice plants at the base and strike them against a wooden panel, which they have prepared, in order to even up the bases of the seedlings.

Then they tie the upper part of the plants together with a bamboo strip. Each bunch is called a *kam*, but in the province of Nakhon Ratchasima it is called a *khob*. The ends of the seedlings have to be cut short and even. If they are not cut, but are left as they are, when they are transplanted they are long and disorderly and the leaves will grow slowly. When they have finished they tie the bunches together in pairs, which in the province of Nakhon Ratchasima are called *pun*. They insert a bamboo which is flattened at both ends into the *pun* and use this as a carrying pole to take them to the place where they are to be planted.

Before setting to work to plant the seedlings, they again prepare offerings for the Spirit of the land at the shrine which was built at the time of the first plowing. They must plant the field of the first plowing before all other fields. This field is divided into two parts. In one part heavy rice is planted and in the other light rice. The rice that is planted in this field is for use as seed rice for planting the following year, because it is regarded as rice which has been properly treated according to auspices and ceremonies in an auspicious field. Other fields are also planted in rows and sections according to varieties, without mixing. The method of planting is by stooping over, as everyone has seen. They take hold of the clump of seedlings in the left or right hand, whichever is convenient, and turn the base of the seedlings away from the body. The free left or right hand takes hold of the base of the seedlings and picks off six or seven plants, and then plunges them into the mud with the thumb. Before withdrawing the hand from the rice plant, they press the mud with two fingers to bury the base of the rice plants firmly and to smooth the mud around them. Using the thumb to press a hole in the earth, particularly if the earth is rather hard, and they work at it for long hours for many days, makes the thumb very sore. For this reason in some localities they have to use a stick to poke a hole first. This method is certainly slower than usual, but if necessary it must be used. This stick is called in the province of Nakhon Pathom *hua jôog* or *tânòog*. They take a piece of bamboo as high as the knee, with a projection from a node

serve as a handle, and whittle the base sharp. They jab this into the ground to make a hole as deep as desired, and then poke the rice plants in and press the mouth of the hole with the fingers. If they do not do this, but use the sore thumbs to press a hole, they cannot bury the rice plants deep, and the plants may come loose and float. Transplanters always keep their backs to the sun in order to keep the sun off the face. For this reason, in farming - at all stages, whether plowing, harrowing, transplanting, or reaping - it is necessary always to wear a shirt and keep the back to the sun. On the head, if they are women, they wear eenb (farm hats); if they are men they usually take their *phâa khaaw máa*, which they always have with them, off the waist and wrap it around the head. If they have betel boxes, cigarette boxes, or pocketbooks, they take them out and lay them down at the head of the field.

When they have finished transplanting and time has passed, the rice plants burst into lush green clumps. When touched by breezes or showers the tips bend gracefully with the wind, chasing each other like waves in the sea. They take up the rainwater, which gives them a fresh green appearance. This is the period between the beginning of Buddhist Lent and the tenth lunar month. When the time arrives for the rice to bloom (in the province of Ayuthaya this time is called *khâaw plôon*) the rice forms flowering heads, and clusters of blossoms, light green in color, appear throughout the meadows. The rice always flowers all at the same time, not at different times, because it was all planted at the same time. The farmers rise in the morning, rinse their mouths and wash their faces, and then go out to inspect the rice plants in the fields. When they see the rice plants full of blossoms you may be certain that they are happy, because the fragrance of the rice blossoms in the morning pervades everything. It is a fragrant odor like the odor of the *chommánâad* flower, but weaker; for this reason the *chommánâad* flower is called the "new rice flower". When one thinks of the morning air in the fields at the time when the rice is in bloom, one feels refreshed, for one breathes fresh air scented with the fragrance

of the rice blossoms drifting down with the wind. In the eastern sky one sees the sun as a great red ball just appearing and throwing its light upon the sky, yellow and brilliant as gold. It is quiet and peaceful, and one hears only the humming of the bees which hover about collecting the pollen of the rice blossoms.

The farmers do not come out to the fields to admire the beautiful scene or to breathe the fresh cool air, because farmers are familiar with such natural beauty and purity. They come out rather to inspect the rice and fields. If they see that the rice in any section is bent down and about to topple over into the water, they find a bamboo to make a rail to hold it up, for if the rice plants fall into the water the tops will be completely eaten off by the *Anabas testudineus* and *Puntius javanicus* fish which abound in the fields. If weeds are growing anywhere, they pull them out. When their work is finished they either stand admiring the scene and the rice plants which are in full bloom, or return home.

When the rice begins to form fruit, short leaves appear around the heads and the stalks begin to swell, with thin leaves enclosing and covering the grain. The rice is said to be pregnant. The farmers in the province of Ayutthaya call it *khâaw klâd haan plaa thuu*. At this time there is a ceremony of invoking the Rice Goddess. In the province of Ayutthaya they always select a Friday for the ceremony, probably being superstitious about the name of the day (sug), which is homonymous with both the word for happiness and the word for ripe. They select a time for the ceremony in the afternoon, between 3 and 5 o'clock. They go out to perform the ceremony in the fields at the place where they planted flags on the day of first plowing. They prepare offerings, including one orange, one banana, and a banana-leaf cup of sliced sugarcane; the banana is a *náam wáa* banana cut up. These things are placed together in one small wicker basket, and there are also powder, perfume, and a comb placed on a stand. They take the basket and the offerings and hang them up on a flagpole, and sprinkle the powder and perfume on the rice leaves and rice plants. They make a gesture of combing the rice leaves with the comb. This is an act of dressing the Rice Goddess. The

offering of an orange is said to serve as a remedy for morning sickness in pregnancy. When they have finished they pronounce an invocation, saying that at the present time the rice, or the Rice Goddess, has conceived, and so they have brought offerings to her and things to dress her; may she be happy and well and fruitful; and let no dangers disturb her. Thus the ceremony is finished.

At this time they usually set up a square *chàlēew* (magic pentacle figure made of two interlaced bamboo triangles), or a fish basket may be used instead. The setting up of a *chàlēew* is said to be merely to provide a symbol to make it known generally that the rice in this field is “pregnant”, and boats or oxen and buffaloes are not to be allowed to enter and damage the rice plants. In reality *chàlēew* is a protective device connected with spells and charms of the sort which Europeans call “magic”, to keep spirits and animals out. It is the same sort of thing as the *chàlēew* placed at the mouth of a medicine pot, the *chàlēew* that they set up in the house when they have taken a corpse out of the house, as is done in the north and the northeast. Originally it was probably a real fence, and then no doubt it was reduced to a *râadcháwád* fence and a *chàlēew*, because it was seen to be rather a matter of warding off spirits or magic spells.

In the south (Chaiya District) they perform an invocation called *khód khâaw* when the rice first starts to form fruit. For offerings they use only cakes, such as red boiled cakes, white cakes, bean cakes, sesame cakes; there are also powder and perfume. When they reach the field they select rice which seems to be forming fruit very well, and at this point they set up their offering of cakes. They light incense sticks and candles and pronounce an invocation to the Rice Goddess. Then they smear the powder and perfume on the rice leaves in the manner of anointing them. They do this to three to seven clumps. They lay the offering of cakes down in a suitable place. When they have finished they take the cakes back home, while the powder and perfume are left usually in the barn.

The farmers in some localities of the province of Ratburi, after returning home from making merit at the monasteries at

the time of the *sàad* festival, take a portion of the *sàad* cakes and fruit which they keep aside at the time of making merit, and put these in a small bamboo-leaf cup or funnel and lay them on a vessel which is woven in the form of a crude basket with legs. They plant this at the head of the field ridge, in a single place or in many places. This is an act of making an offering to the rice in the field and invoking the Rice Goddess to come and watch over the rice; it is called *sòn khâaw bin*. This last ceremony seems to be mixed with the Sraddha ceremonies of the Brahmans, in which they have *pindas* of rice as offerings to the dead, and with the Sarada (or Sarada ceremony), which is another ceremony associated with autumn; this will be treated in a separate study. The first ceremony of making offerings to the rice seems to be the same as the ceremony of making offerings to the Rice Goddess which is explained in the *Old Textbook of Rice Planting* (National Library edition published in 1924).

The matter of making offerings to rice and to the Rice Goddess no doubt comes from the belief that various things have life; whether a human being or an animal or a plant, everything has something abiding in it which is called the *khwan*. If the *khwan* is not constantly present, the living thing dies. Rice is regarded as having life and a *khwan*, and so the *khwan* of the rice must be treated in such a way as to cause it to remain present and not slip away, for this might cause the rice not to flourish or cause it to die (for the *khwan* see my work on *khwan* ceremonies). If the fields are near the edge of a forest, when the rice has flowered and the grains begin to form, there is usually a certain danger, namely, from forest animals such as hogs and deer. These animals like to come and eat rice; they cause great damage to the rice plants. The owner of the fields must go and sleep there in order to be on hand to drive away the animals; this is very difficult, because this is the rainy season and the ground is still wet and muddy, so that it is necessary to build a hut to serve as a shelter, or to use bamboo pounded flat and laid on the ground in a high spot, such as beside an ant hill, spread an oxhide on this, and then build a fire on either side and sleep on the oxhide. If

it happens to rain there is great trouble; the oxhide used for sleeping must be taken up and used as a roof to keep off the rain, the smouldering fires go out, and there is danger from wild animals. This is the life of farmers in some localities. If they cannot endure these hardships they go hungry.

Profit and Loss

In planting rice they leave different intervals depending upon whether it is a lowland field or an upland field. If it is a lowland field they leave rather distant intervals, because the rice may form big clumps, with eighteen to twenty plants in a clump. If it is an upland field they usually plant the rice at rather close intervals, because the rice does not form very big clumps. Farming depends upon the ground. If the soil is loamy and black it is regarded as rather good, because there is sand mixed with the mud. If the soil is too clayey it is not very good; it is hard to plow and harrow, and the soil binds the clumps of rice, not allowing them to expand and flourish. But this is still better than soil which is entirely sand. If it is sandy soil it must be "duck manure sand", that is, with some admixture of earth; this is usable. If the soil is white like diatomaceous earth it is not good; although it may be possible to raise crops, the rice will not do well and produces a small crop. In fields which are newly cleared or have too much fertilizer, the rice usually grows too well; it grows so much that the plants are tall and big and the leaves are crowded thick as a kingfisher's nest, clinging together like tousled hair; the rice usually produces big grains but in small amounts and with little meat, being all hollow. Also, if the rains are not good; failing to fall when the time arrives for the rice to produce grain, the young rice grains will wither and die on the plants throughout the meadow. This is called *khâaw màan* or *khâaw taaj phraaj*; it is such a calamity to the farmers that they must sit hugging their knees and weeping, because the rice will come to nothing and their weary labor has been in vain. Worse still, they know they must soon reach the point of going hungry, because a crop failure is a calamity afflicting the entire community

and there is no one to turn to for aid, everyone being in the same predicament. If the fields are near a river or a canal, it is possible to bring water and preserve some of the rice plants, but not enough to cause the rice to produce as good a crop as if there were rain to sprinkle the plant tops, because the young rice blossoms which are bursting open are baked all day long every day by the blazing sun, and the water below which nourishes the rice plants is also hot, combining to cause the rice to spoil. If this happens to rice seedlings they are said to *taaj foj*.

There are many other sources of damage to rice, such as floods, biting crabs, and nibbling worms. The crabs mentioned are field crabs. When they want to do harm, there is no knowing where they come from. They come in great numbers, as if they were migrating. Where they are born, where they come from, and where they go later has never been learned from research. They do not simply come; they also bite off the rice plants so that they float about everywhere. They are like beasts of fate to the farmer, because after biting off the plants they do not eat them. They simply bite them off for fun, or so it appears to one who does not know why they bite. In midday when the sun is hot they can be seen fleeing from the heated water climbing up the rice plants; one plant has many of them, up to nine or ten. Elsewhere they may be seen wriggling and floating in rafts. Any attempt to destroy them, as by trapping, is impossible; their numbers are tremendous. The farmers are very much afraid of these wretched animals. In any year that they come, troubles are many. After investing money and labor to plow and transplant until the rice has grown, the farmer loses everything because of these dreadful creatures. Fortunately they come only at long intervals, only once in many years. It is a matter of taking a risk. You who like to eat crabs no doubt think that since field crabs are so numerous, the farmers enjoy eating them. Not so, for field crabs do not have a great deal of meat like saltwater crabs. If they trap them they do not know what to do with them, for there are too many to eat and they are not delicious. It is possible to make a boiled coconut-cream curry of some of them, but there are very

many left over and nothing can be done with them. The only thing is, if there is salt, to stir up live crabs with salt as they do to preserve *sàmee* crabs, to cause them to die of drinking saltwater. Then they pound them with roasted rice and squeeze out their thick juice to use as sauce. But if there is much of this one eats it often, one gets tired of it.

Another kind of animal that damages the rice plants is the worm. Worms occur in the fields at the time when the rice plants are growing well; if one tried to estimate the numbers it would probably reach millions and tens of millions. They float in the water in rafts so dense that one can hardly see the water, looking so green and crawling that they give one gooseflesh. When the young shoots of the rice plants rise a little above the surface of the water, these worms float up and eat them comfortably. They eat ravenously, skipping nothing. They cannot resist the tops of the rice when they emerge; as soon as they rise above the surface of the water they are all eaten off short. The worms eat not only the rice plants; if there are grass and weeds growing on the field ridges, they eat these as well. They eat all the leaves on a plant, leaving only the stems and branches. The farmers are unable to combat them, because there are so many of them. They can only make vows to the shrines and invoke the spirits of the place as best they know how. The worms descend on a field and live in it like this for about fifteen days, and then disappear completely without leaving a trace. Worms like this appear once in a great many years. It is necessary to take chances just as with crabs, but they are better than crabs in that they bite only the tips of the rice plants, whereas the crabs bite the plants off at the base; the plants are still young and tender; the stems are flat, and not yet rounded out, and are unable to produce new leaves to survive. A great enemy to the farmers at a time when the rice plants have survived flood and drought are these wretched crabs and worms. One might call them a plague descending to eat up the rice plants. They are terrible. There is also the grasshopper, which also damages rice plants. It is likewise a creature which comes in migrations once in many years. They come in great

numbers, flying so thick as to darken the sky. Wherever they light, they eat the rice plants for a time, making waste a whole area, but they are not as violent as crabs and worms. One might classify them as a secondary plague to rice. These grasshoppers are probably of the same category as the half-grasshopper, half-cicada which in England is called locusts, because locusts descend and eat grain plants in foreign countries in the same way.

The kind of losses we have been describing only occur once in many years. If a natural disaster comes after the transplanting season, the farmer is distressed to the point of tears, for it is too late to plant rice again, and he must go hungry and poor. If this happens everywhere there is a famine, which is a terrible calamity. There are also gains in farming, and the gains are greater than the losses. Thus in any year that there is plenty of rain, the crop is abundant beyond expectation. Rainfall that is regarded as good is heavy in the beginning of the season, moderate in mid-season, and occasional at the end of the season. If it falls according to this schedule, there is profit in farming. By rainfall that is inappropriate the farmers mean occasional showers at the beginning of the season, little or no rain in mid-season, and heavy rain at the end of the season. If it rains heavily at the end of the season, and there is too much water, or if there is moderate rain at the beginning of the season, light showers in mid-season, and drought at the end of the season, this is called "rain which deceives the farmers." When the farming is done a drought sets in and the rice dies while the grains are forming; thus the entire crop is lost. With rice that produces well it is possible to obtain fifty baskets to one basket of seed rice. It produces fine big heads, equal on all the plants, with heavy, firm grains and a minimum of empty grains, differing from the kind that has unfilled, light-weight, angular grains. If it has much meat it is good rice, with round grains without angles, the base curved and fine.

Transplanting rice is usually begun in the eighth lunar month or, if the farmers have been a little bit slow, in the ninth lunar month. Light rice transplanted in the eighth month begins to form heads in the waning half of the ninth lunar month. Heavy

rice transplanted in the eighth month forms heads in the waning half on the tenth month. The age of rice is counted from the day of sowing the rice seedlings. When they have finished transplanting it, they keep watch over it and pull out weeds and grass and watch the water that nourishes the rice plants. When they are unoccupied, they fish and seek food. At this time the heavy work that they have done is over, and they have no worries for a time. During the farming period from the beginning of the plowing to the end of the transplanting they must leave home early in the morning; when they arrive they set to work until time to stop and rest and eat the morning meal. The working time at this period is at least four hours. The wives and children are at home; if they do not busy themselves with looking after the rice seedlings, they are not idle; they have the duty of cooking food to send out. Boys of the age of nine or ten go to the buffaloes. The aged who are unable to do heavy work like the others stay to watch the house and do small jobs, weaving and repairing utensils and baskets, as it is against the nature of old people to remain idle. If any family has only the husband and wife and young children, they have a very hard time; they must shut the door of the house, take up the ladder, and leave the house, carrying their infants along and hanging up a cradle for them in the hut or field shed. They do their cooking on the spot. When there is a great deal of transplanting and farming to do, it is impossible for one person to finish in time. They help each other as bees, but they don't have as much fun as harvesting bees; there is only racing to see who transplants faster or slower than the rest.

Going out to farm in the early morning, and stopping to rest and eat at 10 A.M., delays the time for eating until very late. They eat nothing to sustain themselves; exercising and working from early morning, they are very hungry by the time they eat. Sometimes when the time arrives they stop and wait for a long time before the people at home send food to them; they no doubt are very hungry and irritable. This sort of thing probably happens often. A story is told that a man went out to plow. When the time arrived to stop and rest, his mother had not yet brought food

to him. He watched and waited, restless and irritable from hunger. When his mother brought his food, in his hunger he glanced at it and felt that there was only a little, not enough to eat. He became angry, berated and reviled his mother, and beat her. When he set to work to eat he could not finish it all. He realized his great fault in having been harsh to his mother, and felt very sorry. When this man died he was born as a tiny bird the size of a bulbul, with green body and grey head, which perches in the fields and cries *niid diaw niid diaw* ("only a little, only a little"). It cries like this all day long. Wherever one goes in the fields, one always hears it crying.

Animals and Plants in the Fields

When the rice forms heads and ripens it looks bright yellow everywhere. The farmers still have to busy themselves guarding the rice, not allowing paddy birds to come down and eat it. The paddy birds come from time to time; if they are chased away they flee for a time, but if one is careless they come back to eat the rice in the fields. They come in flocks numbering thousands, flying so close together as to darken the sky. If one does not take care, they pluck off the heads of rice and carry them off, eating the grains and throwing the husks away everywhere. But the damage resulting from paddy birds, though it occurs every year, is not as violent as that from crabs that bite off the rice plants, for there is all told a great deal of rice, ripe and yellow all over the meadows. The birds eat without fear; when they descend to eat and one chases them away, they fly away to eat rice in the field of someone else. The owner of that field chases them on, and so they proceed by stages. Sometimes they disappear for many days and then return. This shows that they have been eating rice in the fields of others at a distance. It is not easy to keep watch and go out to chase them away often, and so the farmers make wooden rattles and hang them up in various places; a person sits and pulls a cord in the field shed. Sometimes they make windmills for the wind to turn and make a noise. The birds are afraid to alight in the fields. Sometimes the villagers make figures in the form of

persons. Wherever the field is low and near to ponds or marshes, there birds of many kinds abound. It is necessary to build a hut to live in while chasing birds. This duty falls to the women and children. If birds alight they chase them away. One hears a cry of chasing away birds, *wàa hèew* *wàa hèew*, drifting down the wind in the quiet midday air; it is a peculiar, lonely sound. If birds do not come down to eat the rice, the women spin cotton and silk in order not to lose time at their work. The cotton that they spin is to be used for weaving monks' robes, in which the villagers compete in craftsmanship on the day of presenting *kathin* robes, which I have already written about (See my work on the custom of presenting *kathin* robes). If the fields are near the forest and there are wild animals, it is necessary to build a platform in the trees or a tower as a place to rest while chasing away birds. When the birds come they use a plummet made of a lump of earth with a long string to swing and throw far out. Children like this work, enjoying the task of throwing these at birds. If a young woman goes to chase away birds, she is usually accompanied by a younger brother. This is an opportunity for the young men to come and flirt, or if they are already sweethearts, they chase birds and eat together; this is a story of love in the fields.

If you walk past the market, sometimes you will see them selling little birds the size of sparrows, boiled and yellow in color, tied in bunches of three or four. These are the paddy birds which come down and eat rice in the fields. They make a snare out of a fishnet, with a rod to spring the snare and cause it to fall. Sometimes there is a paddy bird tied up as a decoy under the net. When a flock of paddy birds comes down to eat rice under the snare, the person who is hiding and watching pull the springpole loose. The fishnet which is spread falls down over the birds. They are able to catch many tens of birds at a time; if there are a lot of paddy birds they may catch as many as a hundred. Another kind of trap is called "tiger sweeping its tail". It is made with a springpole which is simply a broom. This kind of trap catches the birds dead more than alive; any bird that is swept violently

by this springpole dies, or if it does not die it is in a very bad state (literally, "has a yellow chin", idiom for being on the point of death); its legs are all broken. The name of the paddy bird is familiar from childhood; lying in our cradles we are told that it has yellow head. I have had this lullaby poured into my ears so often that I can remember it :

O yellow - headed paddy bird,
You come with two heads of rice from the cityfields in your break,
You bring them saying you are going to make a royal farm;
Your cheeks are fat.

Another kind of animal that eats rice in the fields is the guinea pig. It digs holes and lives in the fields. If in the rainy season its hole is flooded, it can make a nest of grass floating on the water. The amount of rice that it eats constitutes no serious damage, because it does not bite off heads and throw them away; it only eats the rice grains one head at a time. If there are many of them, there is considerable loss. These animals can be eaten by human beings. Farmers catch them and roast them like pork; they say that they are very delicious.

Speaking of animals that occur in the fields, one is reminded of field turtles, which are animals of two habitats; they live in marshes and ponds, and in meadows and grass thickets. They do not like to live in fields for they know that there is danger from people who watch to catch them and eat them. The eleventh and twelfth lunar months are their season for laying eggs, but nevertheless they are molested by people who seek their eggs to take and eat. People are not as bad as the flamingo and the mongoose, which are better than people at seeking turtle eggs to eat. In any place where there are flamingoes and mongooses, cobras and other harmful snakes cannot live happily; they are harmed by these two species. This is all a matter of nature seeking a balance. If there are too many or too few of any species, human beings are caused trouble. Look only at field crabs; because there are too many, farmers are caused inconvenience. If there are

many cobras, one may take a false step and tread on them and be bitten; but if there are none to eat the mice in the field, there are many mice to damage the rice. If the flamingoes and mon-goosees should destroy all the snakes, it is not known what damage these two species might then do. They say that in some places in India tigers are very common and do harm to many hundreds and thousands of people every year, to the point that they have to be destroyed. When they destroy all or most of the tigers, the wild pigs which are food for tigers no longer have tigers waiting to kill and eat them, and so they increase and there is insufficient food for all; they come and trample down fields and eat crops that have been planted, causing not a little damage. It takes a long time to put them down and reduce their numbers.

Speaking of animals in the fields, there is still another kind, namely, the field waterbug (*Belostoma indica*) which occurs frequently in marshes, ponds, meadows, and grass thickets. When there is rain or a storm, some of them stray into the fields. People like to eat these waterbugs. It is very strange for they have an unpleasant odor like that of the *kâthée* insect, but people of every class, whether commoner or aristocrat, really like to eat them. They tear them apart and pound them up with pepper sauce or pickle them with fish sauce. The body of the creature has no flesh or skin. Its only merit is its unpleasant odor, which is a fascinating smell. This is probably the same sort of thing as the odor of the human body. It appears that not only the Thai like to eat insects and worms; other races like to eat them as well. In the Bible of the Christian religion it is said that Saint John, who was rather like the teacher of Jesus, was observing a fast in a lonely forest, eating grasshoppers dipped in honey. Grasshoppers of this sort are what are called locusts, which Africans also eat as food. If they come in great numbers, darkening the sky and covering the earth, the people catch a great many of them and press them into bars to keep to feed the livestock. The field waterbugs are caught in the morning, when they come up to lay eggs or are clinging to their eggs on the grassstops. People steal up and pounce on them. When the sun is hot and heats up the surface of the water,

the waterbugs usually flee from the heat and climb to the tops of the grass, wriggling there, or hide in the water at the base of the grass plants. If any grass plant has waterbug eggs, it is sure that there is a waterbug nearby. If one shakes the grass with his hand, it rushes up out of the water, worried about its eggs and ready to fight to protect them. People pounce upon the waterbugs and take them away to eat. If one is not careful in catching them, they may sting one painfully with the stinger in their mouths. In Bangkok one sees people catching waterbugs at night. They are driven astray by rainstorms, and fly into big electric lights like those of the Equestrian Statue. Both children and adults watch to trap and catch them. When they fly low, people beat at them with cloths to knock them down. Formerly the price for which they were sold was at the cheapest five *sataan*. The upper classes in their automobiles also go to lie in wait, to trap and catch field waterbugs - or to buy them - showing that it is not only farmers who like to eat them; city dwellers riding in automobiles also like them.

In the farming season there is floodwater everywhere in the meadows. Wherever there are field ridges, the rice plants are in bright green leaf, attractive to the eye. When the rice heads form, some plants cannot withstand the weight of the heads, and fall over half in the water and half out. This provides bait for the fish in the fields, such as *Anabas tesrudineus* and *Puntius javanicus*, which eat their fill. People like to trap them for food, because they are fish with much meat and oil from having eaten their fill of rice all the time. There is an idiomatic expression, "new rice and oily fish" which probably refers to these kinds of fish. There is a kind of creature which causes annoyance of farmers, namely the leech. The water looks clear and quiet as if there were nothing in it, but if we only disturb the water and make a splash, the leeches swarm in. There are both "needle leeches" and "buffalo leeches". Wherever there are marshes or ponds, leeches abound; when the ponds overflow, they swarm out in to the fields. When they are thick, the farmers who are plowing and transplanting rice are attacked by them on the

legs, many at a time; it is not easy to pull them off, because they cling tightly, sucking the blood. It is necessary to prepare a cloth ball containing strong tobacco and lime and keep this tucked in the waist. When one feels that a leech has taken hold, he rubs this cloth ball against it; the leech cannot stand it, and falls off voluntarily.

In a field the water looks perfectly transparent, because it is still and the mud settles to the bottom. Fish of the sorts which like to swim near the surface are clearly visible, for example *Trichopodus trichopterus* and *Rasbora argyrotaenia*. Also one sees water-loving weeds and edible plants growing lush on the surface of the water and spreading out verdantly and attractively. . These plants include watercress (*Jussiaea repens*), *saaj tin*, *Desmos crinitus*, *Begonia obovoidea*, "turtle's liver", *Ottelia alismoides*, and *saaràaj*. Along the field ridges there are vegetables *Centella asiatica* and *Ipomoea aquatica*, growing down into the water. The farmers utilize these, dipping them in pepper sauce and *plaa rása*. They are crisp and tasteless, not particularly delicious. Some species are rather acrid and bitter. One sees the farmers gather these vegetable and pile them up in big heaps, squatting in a circle and dipping the raw vegetables in pepper sauce and chewing them up noisily in big bites as if they enjoyed them. For food to eat with pepper sauce, they catch fish and cover them with mud and put them in the fire. When they are cooked they peel off the earth, the scales and skin coming off also; the pure white flesh of the fish is visible, very appetizing indeed. If the fish that they catch are small, they wrap them in leaves of plants such as *Zingiber zerumbet* and put them in the fire. If there are many bones they first chop them up fine. This kind of food is called *nob plaa*. If people who are not farmers go out of the fields in the wet season or the farming season, they cannot resist gathering the plants in the fields, for they are very lush and appetizing, and make one feel gay and amused. At this season the farmers have an abundance of fresh vegetables to eat, and do not go hungry. The best known vegetable is *Ottelia alismoides*. It has white flowers and floats on the water, intermittently visible like the head of a snake;

the stems which are visible in the perfectly clear water are also curved back and forth like a snake, so that one has long since heard it said that when the *Ottelia alismoides* plant grows old it turns into a *Herpeton tentaculatum* snake. Actually one encounters real snakes of the group of fish snakes that watch to catch fish in the water, and so people jump to the conclusion that these are born from the *Ottelia dismoides* plant. Wherever the water is deep, there are lotuses in full bloom. These lotuses are pulled up and sold. They are called flexible stemmed lotus : sometimes they are called bitter lotus, because the heads have a bitter flavor. The heads are round and large, two or three inches in diameter. The leaves are circular; the underside of the leaves is pig - blood red and hairy. The edges of the leaves are jagged like saw teeths. The flowers are white, the outer petals tinged with pink. The tips of the petals are blunt or slightly pointed. They bloom at night, and close in the afternoon of the following day. Their name in botany is *Nymphaea lotus*, var. *pubescens*. They are lotuses of the same category as the white - flowered *sàdtabud* lotus and the red - flowered *sàdtaban* lotus, which are domestic lotuses, not growing wild. Besides flexible - stemmed lotuses there are other lotuses which grow thick in the fields in the wet season. If you ride past on the train you will see them often. They have abundant attractive white flowers, only a quarter - inch or more in size, but it is learned that there are also big ones as large as five or six inches in diameter. These lotuses are *phyan* and *phan* lotuses, which in botany are called *Nymphaea steliata*. They have round heads about one inch in size. The leaves are oval, purple underneath but not hairy, and the edge of the leaves is smooth, not jagged, or at most the edge is wavy. The petals of the full - blown flower are long and sharp - tipped; they are entirely white, or the tips may be faintly tinged with indigo when they first bloom and then change to pink and purplish pink when they are old. These are day - blooming lotuses; in the evening they close. The species that has entirely white flowers, or faint indigo at the tips of the petals and does not change color, is called the *phyan* lotus, while the species that changes color from indigo to pink is called the

phan lotus. The *phyan* lotus is less fragrant than the *phan* lotus. The lotuses of which they eat the heads or roots are these lotuses, for they are not bitter. The stems can be eaten raw, for example, by dipping them in *plaa ràa*, but they are not boiled or made into curry like the flexible stemmed lotus.⁷⁾

They looked lovable and delicate, sending forth pollen,
The *phyan* lotuses growing lush beside the path,
Prawn's claws (*Begonia obovoidea*) in overlapping layers,
crowding the *saaràaj* beneath the water;

Saaj tin alternating with “turtle's liver”
In clusters seen in rows to left and right;
Water chestnut, water lettuce, and lotus blossoms full blown,
Scattered white like glittering stars.

Oh, if the girls come and see this
They will descend to play in the meadows;
Those who have little boats will float and paddle about,
Pulling stems of *phan* lotuses and *santàwaa* plants (*Ottelia alismoides*)

These are lines in admiration of fields in the wet season by Sunthoon Phûu, showing that the fields also have a distracting beauty if one has a poet's eye to see.

We have been absorbed in describing things of nature in the fields in the rainy season to the point of forgetting the frogs and bullfrogs, which come what may, there must be. At night they cry loudly, their voices very deafening, but poets hear them as “like the sound of gongs and drums resounding”; but these are certainly less deafening than the sound of motorcycles and loudspeakers. Actually things of nature, if we speak of their good points, include many lovable and attractive things occurring in the fields; they all appeal to the eye and heart. One sees:

The rice plants in the field
Flourish cheerfully;
The rice is quick to form heads,
in waving clusters.
Their tips and leaves soar

In every meadow and field,

...

Producing drooping heads,
Most admirable.

Reaping the Rice

When the rice in the field forms heads which ripen to mature rice grains, between the twelfth lunar month and the waxing phase of the first lunar month, they set to work harvesting, in the first and second lunar months; or sometimes they delay until the waxing phase of the third lunar month. First they harvest the rice in the field of the first plowing, harvesting and putting the rice aside in portions to be used as seed rice later. Then they set to work harvesting the rice in the other fields. in some localities before harvesting they first lay the rice in order to reap it easily; that is, they use a pole held at the center by a person who walks through the field, which at this time is getting dry is still damp, and presses down the rice plants to left and right with the pole, so that they lie in flat rows to be reaped easily. If they do not do this, but leave the rice plants to fall over of them - selves as chance directs, they are tangled and difficult to reap. It is as they say, "To have a drunkard husband is like reaping rice beaten down by pigs"; that is, it is tangled as if pigs had gone - in and trampled the rice plants. Laying the rice is done according to the direction. It does not matter whether it is done lengthwise or crosswise in the field. The only requirement is that it be done correctly according to direction. For example, sections which it is desired to harvest in the morning must have the rice laid toward the west; if it is to be harvested in the afternoon, they must lay the rice to fall toward the east. All this is in order to be able at the time of reaping to turn the face away from the sun and the back toward the sun.

Whenever there are bees to help one another in harvesting rice, young women and young men are glad to come and harvest together, for they will have an opportunity to mingle merrily,

playing while they work, reaping and singing at the same time, and flirting gaily. At this time there are not yet likely to be sarcastic repartee songs because it is a time for work. If such songs are sung at this time, it is only because some young man is in love with a woman and takes this opportunity to express his feelings by singing wooing songs. The young woman is aware of this, knowing that if she reaps rice near to this man she is certain to be wooed; but usually she is perfectly willing, for she will get to sing repartee songs showing off her verbal skill. If she is not good at singing and has no confidence in herself, she invites intimate girl friends who have verbal skill to reap on either side of her. If the man sings cuttingly, he is answered at once. The fun is in this. In reaping rice they reap side by side in a row. When they have gathered the rice plants in the hand and cut one handful or not, as convenient, then they carry it on the arm, or may pile it up at once. Whoever finishes reaping his row and reaches the field ridge stops to rest, waiting for the others who have not yet finished reaping their rows. When everyone has finished reaping, they go to harvest another section. Therefore whoever reaps slowly and arrives late is the victim of teasing. If it is known that someone is awkward and slow at reaping, the others reap in such a way that their own rows veer out, in order that the row of the slow reaper will be widened and he will have to lose even more time in reaping it, while those who have finished reaping their own rows go and sit waiting on the field ridge. Reaping like this is called "reaping around an island". Whoever is a victim of reaping around the island is mocked gaily by his companions, both men and women, who sit laughing at him. As the song has it, "Reach out, sister, reach out; hurry to reach the field ridge and we will be able to chat." In this merry fun the old people hardly concern themselves; they usually reap by themselves, striving only to work more than to play. Even if they play, they do not find it amusing. They let the young have their fun, for the young will be young; it is the natural order of the world, and to act otherwise is to obstruct natural laws. "If anyone complains that he is bored, don't believe him." Therefore there are some who even though old still like to let themselves

go; usually these are widowers or men who leave the monkhood when they are old; they join in the fun with the others, furnishing an object of raillery for the young people.

They usually begin harvesting rice early in the morning. When the sun gets hot later in the morning they stop to rest, beginning again in the afternoon, following the same schedule as for plowing and transplanting. Whatever amount anyone reaps is piled up together in stacks. It is the duty of the owner of the rice, when the harvest is over, to tie it up in sheaves to be easily carried. For cord for tying they use bamboo strips; if they have none and it is not convenient to use these, they use rice stalks twisted into ropes for tying, called *khànèd*. For tying it is also necessary to have experience and skill. If the sheaves are not tied well, or not tied tightly, they may come loose.

Let us speak of the old people who stay to watch the houses, and do not come to reap rice with the others. They do the cooking and have the children deliver the food to the fields to feed the workers in rest periods. In the evening when they have stopped reaping rice, they all play harvest singing games. At this time they play in earnest, not merely playing while they work, but playing for play's sake. This is called *tēn kam ram khiaw*; that is, each player holds in one hand a handful (*kam*) of rice and in the other a sickle (*khiaw*). As they sing they gesture, dancing in rhythm to the melody that they sing. Please read the article on harvest songs in the book, *Thai Culture: Native Games*. One suspects that playing a *tēn kam ram khiaw* was not originally merely playing at harvest singing games for amusement as at the present time. It may be a form of playing and dancing handed down as a custom from olden times, consisting of singing and dancing in connection with harvesting rice according to certain belief; but later these beliefs were lost or changed and there remained only the fun, while the original purpose was forgotten. Nothing can be learned from examining the words of the harvest songs, because the words that are sung have changed with the times. There remains a bit of evidence in the name *tēn kam ram khiaw*.

While they are playing at *tēn kam ram khiaw*, the owner of the rice is tying up the handfuls of rice stacked up, making sheaves and assembling these in groups and stacks, while the players play on. When night falls they stop playing and everyone returns home; there is no feast of any sort. The owner of the rice and his assistants hurry to separate the sheaves of rice into groups - seed rice, glutinous rice, etc. Then they set to work to carry it to the threshing ground at the house. If the sheaves are very big, a person who has never carried them cannot carry even two of them because they are very heavy. Once they have lifted the rice to the shoulder, they cannot set it down midway for fear that the rice grains will fall off. Carrying the rice from the fields to the threshing ground, if the distance is not great, is not very difficult, but if the distance is great and there is a large amount of rice, they haul it by sledge or oxcart, but this is the case only with people of means. Ordinary people usually carry their rice. If the fields are far from the house, it is not easy to carry it in one trip; they carry it and deposit it at a midpoint where they have a rest hut sufficient for sleeping and guarding the rice. They harvest and carry the rice in this way every day until finished.

During the period preceding the harvest, the old men who remain at home guarding the house prepare a ground for threshing the rice. (Threshing is the process of causing the rice grains to come loose from the straw.) They flatten the space to be used as a threshing ground until it is perfectly smooth and the earth is hard and firm. Then they take fresh ox and buffalo manure and dissolve it in water, mixing in wood bark that contains gum, or this may also be omitted, and smear this all over the threshing ground, covering the earth completely. If they can smear it thick, all the better. Even if a heavy rain falls the ground is not spoiled, because the water does not soak through to the soil; the water stands on the surface, and before long evaporates by itself. Rain that falls at this period is called rain that cleanses the threshing ground. Smearing the threshing ground with ox and buffalo manure is done in order to protect the rice while threshing; the rice does not get mingled with dirt and sand. When

the people in the fields carry the rice up to the threshing ground, it is the duty of the old people to arrange a prism of rice on one side, keeping the varieties of rice separate. The prism is made in a shape like a triangular pillow; the size depends upon the amount of rice. They say that stacking the rice in this shape protects it from the rain. Even if it rains hard it does not matter much; only the rice on the outside is wet by the rain, and the rice inside does not get wet because the rain water runs off the surface of the triangular stack, which serves as a roof. If the threshing ground is located far from the house, they build a roof over it, and old people sleep there to guard it. There are both large threshing grounds to be used collectively by the entire village, and small threshing grounds for threshing rice belonging to one household.

When they have finished harvesting the rice and carrying it to the threshing ground, in some places they set up a flag on the stack of seed rice. This flag may be made of cloth or anything else; they generally use white or red cloth, of a single color or two colors. I have been unable to find out why they set up this flag. When they have threshed the rice and carried it up into the barn, they take this flag or a new one and set it up on the stack of seed rice in the same way. After setting it up, when the work is finished they throw it away, taking no further interest in it. Why do they set up the flag? If one were to guess, he would have to say that it is a marker to indicate that the rice in the stack is to be saved for seed; if this is stacked with other kinds of rice in one place they might forget, and a mixup might occur. The original use of flags was as markers and indicators, before they came to be used as decorative banners as well; also, flags were first used in religion, so that setting up flags has a sacred air, making them better than other things for markers.⁸⁾

After carrying the rice to the threshing ground, they go out to gather scattered fallen rice heads in the fields. There are not many. They gather them up, of whatever variety, in sufficient quantity to suffice as a gesture. This is called inviting the Rice Goddess. When they are going to gather this rice they speak

the words, “O Rice Goddess, come you up into the rice barn. Do not go astray in the meadows and fields for mice to bite you and birds to take you in their beaks. Go you to the happy place, to rear your children and grandchildren in prosperity. Come you! Kúu!” (On the word “Kúu” they draw their voices out long.)

If they do not know the invocation, they speak whatever they can think of that seems appropriate. Then they gather the rice of all kinds that has fallen and put it in a cloth wrapper or in a basket, and put it away in a suitable place in the threshing space. This rice that is gleaned is called the rice of the Rice Goddess, which is regarded as the life or the spirit (*khwan*) of the rice. When they have finished performing the ceremony of making merit at the threshing ground, they mingle straw with these heads of rice and tie them together as a figure of the Rice Goddess, which they put away in the rice barn together with the seed rice, to be used together with the seed rice for future planting, as described at the beginning.

In the province of Ayutthaya they have a ceremony of invoking the rice *khwan* to the threshing ground (according to notes made for me by Naaj Maanid Wanliphoodom). At the time of harvesting the rice and carrying it to the threshing ground, when they have carried in almost all the rice, they prepare to perform a ceremony of inviting the *khwan* of rice or the *khwan* of the Rice Goddess to the threshing ground and the house. They prepare ceremonial food, including one banana leaf holder of red boiled cakes, one banana leaf holder of white boiled cakes, one banana leaf holder of “elephant’s ear” cakes (made of glutinous rice flour moulded into a triangular shape, boiled till done, and then rolled in salt and coconut), one bunch of *námwáa* bananas, one boiled egg (sliced in sections), one lump of rice from the top of the pot, or this may be put in a banana leaf funnel, and one new set of clothing, that is, one new stole and one new lower garment, which may be of either cotton or silk. For the day to perform the ceremony they choose Friday in the late afternoon. When they reach the field they unfold the garments and spread them out on the ground; or they may simply unfold

them as a gesture. Then they bring out the food and make an offering. When this is finished they tie up rice stubble in the form of a small human figure and hold this up while they speak an invocation to the Rice Goddess, saying, "You have come out and borne the sun and the rain for a long time in the fields. Do you return to the cool shade of the threshing ground and the house." Then they take this figure into the threshing ground, leaving the offerings in the field, and at that spot they must cast harvested rice, in an appropriate amount, as alms to the birds and crows. When the rice has reached the threshing ground, they must unfold the set of garments and drape them over the stack of rice sheaves which have been harvested and brought together. Then they plant the figure on the cloth, pretending that they are putting new garments on the Rice Goddess, and bring out a new set of offerings including the same items as those taken out and offered in the field. They offer these and make various speeches according to whatever they think auspicious for their making a livelihood. Thus the ceremony is finished.

In the province of Ratburi there is a ceremony of making an offering to the threshing ground very similar to what has been described. That is when they have finished carrying the rice sheaves to the threshing ground, they spread a mat in the middle of the threshing ground, and sometimes spread a white cloth on top of this. They set out a meal of meat foods and sweets as an offering, and lay out farming tools such as sickles, straw hooks, hoes, spades, etc., together with a new set of garments. They light incense sticks and candles to worship and make an offering, and then take a cotton thread dyed with turmeric and tie it around the tools in a *khwan* ceremony. As for the large tools which are hard to carry in, such as harrows and plows, as well as the oxen and buffaloes, they need not be brought in; taking the thread out and tying it on them to tham khwan is enough. To the center pole of the threshing ground they tie one bunch of *námwáa* bananas and one dried coconut. When they have finished making an offering to the Rice Goddess, they put this coconut away in the rice barn together with the rice of the Rice Goddess. They simply

put it away so, not doing anything with it until the time for making merit; then they bring this coconut out and use it to make offerings for the monks. As for the ripe *námwáa* bananas, when the ceremony is finished they are left on the center pole of the threshing ground, and are not taken away and used for anything, but they do not last long, for the children pull them off and eat them one or two at a time until they are gone. Sometimes they do not last even overnight.

In the south there is a ceremony of *tham khwan* when the rice is ripe and ready to be harvested, called “tying the rice”. If the rice that is planted includes both light rice and heavy rice, they must perform the ceremony of “tying the rice” every time. After this there is a ceremony of *tham khwan* for the rice which is performed both when they are going to thresh it and when the rice has been put away in the barn; this is performed occasionally, not regularly like the ceremonies of *tham khwan* at other times.

This matter of gleaning fallen rice and regarding it as the rice of the Rice Goddess is strange in that various nations of Europe also have this belief, but they take the last head of rice that is harvested as the rice of the Rice Goddess. Whether harvested or picked up from the field, the important feature is the same, namely, that the last remaining rice is the life or the spirit (*khwan*) of the rice. If it is not brought in, the rice that is kept for seed might not grow well, because it lacks the life or the important part of the rice. (See my article on the Rice Goddess.)

The *khwan* ceremonies for the rice and the threshing ground are performed when all the rice is gathered in from the fields. Usually this occurs around the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth lunar month. This is only for sown fields. For transplanted fields the time is earlier, around the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the first lunar month.

Threshing the Rice

When they have finished inviting the rice of the Rice Goddess to the threshing ground, they set to work threshing. They thresh the various kinds of rice separately, always beginning with the rice harvested from the field of the first plowing. If one is going to thresh his rice at a communal threshing ground, he threshes this first rice on a special private threshing ground. There are two methods of threshing. In one method they use two pieces of wood about a meter long, tied together at the head with a rope. The rope is long enough to form a loop to go around a sheaf of rice and be caught up at the far end of the piece of wood. They raise the sheaf of rice and bring it down sharply on the floor of the threshing ground or on a mat, and the rice grains fall off the straw. This piece of wood is called a "wooden threshing pole". The method of threshing is similar to that used by wester - ners, who have a threshing implement called a flail. The other method, used when there is too much rice to use the first method easily, employs oxen or buffaloes to tread on the rice. They set up a pillar as high as one's head in the center of the threshing ground, called the center pole (*saw kiad*); sometimes this is corrupted to *saw clud*. At the top of the pole they generally tie a branch of thorns; usually this is a branch of Indian jujube. It is reasonable also that it should be for protection against birds and crows lighting. This pole also sometimes has garlands of flowers hung on it. They lay the rice sheaves in order around the center pole, placing the "heads" of the sheaves, that is, the bottoms of the sheaves, upward. The other sheaves placed next outside are laid with the rice heads up, just the opposite. Probably they desire to lay the sheaves with the rice heads up, and so they lay the sheaves nearest the center pole with the "heads" of the sheaves up to serve as a support for the rice sheaves that are laid in rows around the center pole. If there is a great deal of rice, the sheaves are laid profusely around the center pole and extended to a distance. They tie the oxen or buffaloes to the center pole, arranging them in a row extending out from the center. Then they drive the oxen or buffaloes round and round the center pole to tread on the sheaves of rice. The sheaves of rice are broken down

and the rice grains fall off the rice heads and straw. Before bringing the oxen or buffaloes in and tying them up, they spread straw on the threshing ground for them to tread on. If they do not spread straw, the threshing floor, which has been properly smeared with ox and buffalo manure, might crack and break from the weight of their hoofs. They usually make baskets to put over the mouths of the oxen and buffaloes used in threshing, so that they will not eat the rice. If buffaloes are being used, they put old ones near the Center pole, where the running circuit is small, because old buffaloes have less strength and walk slowly. Also, they are elderly buffaloes and not playful; they can be trusted; while other buffaloes with the strength of virile youth are not placed near the center pole because they will walk too fast, and other buffaloes in the big outer circuits will not be able to keep up. Therefore they put the young male buffaloes at the extreme outer end. If there is a mother buffalo with calf mixed with the others, the calf runs around the circle following its mother. When the buffaloes have made many circuits treading on the rice sheaves, the stacks of rice break down and the rice grains drop off the straw and fall to the bottom. At this time there are people standing in a row, usually young men and women, holding straw hooks (*hoo chaaj*) in their hands. These are long bamboo poles with knots in the ends, cut off short enough to serve as hooks. Straw hooks with iron hooks at the end are a modern invention. In some localities they are called *máj doon haaj*, which is the same as the term used in the old laws. The name is also corrupted to *máj kàdoon haaj*. Actually *chaaj* and *haaj* are the same word, meaning to make smooth (*chaaj* = *camhaaj*, = *doon* = long pole like a carrying pole : Cambodian). When they see a rice sheaf break down, but with the straw still sticking to the sheaf, they pull it up with the straw hook and then thrust the rice sheaf toward someone else. If he does not duck in time and is struck squarely, it hurts. The one who thrusts is usually a woman, and the victim of the thrust is usually a man, but sometimes the opposite occurs. If there is going to be a game of thrusting rice sheaves it is necessary to give advance notice to be prepared. When someone makes a thrust, the other raises his straw hook and receives the thrust, like Chinese actors fighting. This can also provide fun. In some places they do not thrust the rice sheaves; they use their sickles to cut

away the straw cords and bamboo strips which tie the sheaves, and then spread out the rice. This is called *chiig? òg*. When they have spread out the straw, they have the buffaloes tread on it again, watching to pick up the straw with the straw hooks and shake it for the rice grains to drop off and fall to the bottom. In some localities this is called *ru?* When they see the rice grains drop off and the straw come to the top, they pick up the straw and lift it outside. They do this until only rice grains remain, and then they turn the buffaloes loose and the threshing is finished.

Threshing is done beginning in the early morning. Later in the morning they stop to rest because the sun is hot, and if the straw is struck by the sun it turns brittle. There is no threshing in the afternoon for the same reason. Sometimes they thresh at night. At this time they have fun, and the young people all gather. As the verses for the buffalo *khwan* ceremony have it, "I'll tie you up to the stake, and then thread a rope through your nose and lead you around in a circle, in the presence of all the young men and young women, and the rice is leveled all over the threshing ground." If it is the dark of the moon, they build a straw fire to give light. They have refreshments, consisting chiefly of glutinous rice cooked in coconut cream with "fragrant" bananas. (The "fragrant" banana of the Thai is the familiar variety sold in the United States.) They have an uproariously gay time while they sort out the straw from the threshing floor. One can imagine that this is fun, for it is a simple sort of play mingled with work. This is work that they gladly and willingly help one another do. It is in the clear open air, with no unpleasantness to interfere. Formerly at the time for threshing rice each village usually made a big threshing ground to thresh the rice collectively, taking turns at using the threshing ground for one day or two depending upon whether the individual had much rice or little. They use what oxen and buffaloes they have for the threshing, even having ox and buffalo races; that is, they seek out oxen and buffaloes with speedy feet, and tie them at the end of the row in descending Order to the number of twenty. If the animals at the end of the row are not fast enough they get dragged; if the animals at the end of

the row are very fast they can run and curve the row; for this they are praised as good. This is all great fun. When the rice has been trodden and some of the straw begins to float up, it is picked out. After two or three spells they stop and rip open the sheaves and then pick out the straw again. After two or three spells more it is finished. At this time of picking out straw and ripping open the sheaves, the people all assemble with their straw hooks, picking out straw and shaking it as they sing. For songs sung while picking out straw and shaking it, they use brief, simple Verses, like:

Pick out the straw, sister, pick out the straw; brother has come to sit at the edge of the threshing floor and help sister pick out the straw.

Shake out the straw, sister, shake out the straw; O sister with joined eyebrows and graceful throat, come and shake out the straw.

If there are good songmasters and songmistresses, they sing long repartee songs as at the harvest. But nowadays if you go out to the country you will have difficulty finding a big threshing ground. There are only small threshing grounds using two or three oxen or buffaloes to tread on the rice. Each person has his own, and they do not work together well. The spirit of the farmer has deteriorated seriously, and threshing songs have deteriorated as well !⁹⁾

They thresh the rice until the triangular stacks are all gone; when every triangular stack is finished they ask everyone to help winnow the rice, winnowing and pouring the threshed rice grains. Both men and women help. Women who do this work must wear a crossed stole (the method is to bring a scarf around from the back, cross it on the breast, and tie the two ends at the back of the neck, like a modern “halter”), because they have to stoop over constantly, and if they do not wear crossed stoles like this, they (“they” is a euphemism for the breasts) will swing and flop unattractively, or will be half visible and untidy looking. The winnowers stand in a long row holding wooden shovels with which

they scoop up the rice and winnow it. They pour it against the wind, for the bran and rice dust to blow away with the wind. Even this is not enough. There must also be people to shake the mats with their two hands and help to blow away the dust and empty rice husks. In shaking the mats they have dancing gestures, not simply shaking them, for they dance to show off to the women and so must shake gracefully and in rhythm. Therefore shaking the mats becomes the duty of the young men who are strong. They do not feel very tired, for there are people smiling nearby to cheer them. To work like this is good in that one never gets tired. The mats that they shake are panels woven of bamboo, in shape like big monk's fans. In the verses for the *khwan* ceremony for threshing and winnowing rice it is said neatly: "Oh do not take fright when you are put on the threshing and winnowing ground for the buffaloes to tread on. We carefully sweep you up and winnow you to make you clean, and carefully scoop you up for the wind to blow you. Not even a tiny particle of straw will remain mingled with you". When they have finished winnowing every stack of rice, they scoop up the rice in triangular heaps. If there is a large quantity of rice it is slow and difficult to scoop up the rice; generally they use a board to scoop it. This board is called the "rice scooping board". Sometimes they make the rice scooping board with a rope threaded through each end to pull the board with and reduce the labor. If the heap of rice is small they use a small board with a long handle for scooping the rice. This sort of board is called *thádhhaa*, sometimes corrupted to *kràthaa*. When they have finished making the triangular stacks, they measure out the rice to be used for seed into portions, counted in basketfuls according to a "dog's tail" account. That is, they break and bend bamboo strips, and each break represents one basketful. When they have made breaks representing many basketfuls, the bamboo strip will curve up like a dog's tail, and hence the name. When they have finished measuring out and heaping up the rice according to variety, they take bran ashes and smear a streak on the heap of rice. This is called "ghost's streak" or "ghost's mark". They say the reason for doing this is to provide protection against thieves; if anyone steals they will

know it, but they would probably know only that the rice was short. Perhaps they smear the rice to render it "defective", to deceive spirits into thinking that the rice is spoiled, so that they will not molest it, just as the Indians have a custom of daubing cupboards and vessels in order to show the spirits that the objects are defective. Or perhaps they smear and mark the rice to indicate that this rice is the property of spirits and gods, marked by the spirits; if anyone steals the rice he will offend the spirits. What the explanation is, is not clear, but in any case, when they put the rice away in the barn they measure it again according to the "dog's tail" account. This is a recheck for certainty. When they finish winnowing the rice, they have a traditional feast.

As for the straw from which all the rice grains have dropped, they leave it piled up on the threshing ground. Later when they have time they carry it out and heap it up in a triangular stack, for feeding to the oxen and buffaloes when there is a shortage of grass. But while the straw is still stacked up on the threshing ground, they have to be rather careful, for the children are very mischievous and like to play tag and hide - and - seek in the straw. Sometimes they take wood and make a cave, cover it with straw, and crawl in to lie inside, where it is warm and comfortable, this being the cold season. Merely lying there does no harm, but if they play with fire near the straw it is as likely as not that a disaster will occur. The straw catches fire and blazes up quickly, and may roast the children to death. There have been instances of news of this sort in the pages of the newspapers.

Making Merit at the Threshing Floor

Before carrying the rice up into the barn, the time arrives for making merit at the threshing floor. They make a pavilion and set up a place for the Buddha image and seats for monks at the threshing ground. In the evening of the day appointed for making merit at the threshing floor, when the time arrives monks come and perform evening chants at the threshing ground. The host invites relatives and close neighbors to gather and make merit, listen to the chanting, and present food to monks at the

threshing ground next morning. The pavillion is usually built of bamboo and roofed with rice straw. Sometimes they tie rice heads on the pavillion as sprays and drooping garlands to decorate the pavillion, and they bring the rice of the Rice Goddess, put it in a vessel, and lay it down as one of the ceremonial items. On the threshing floor they set up parasols made of rice head, planted on the stacks of threshed rice in the same way that they plant parasols on sand pagodas. The stringing of a sacred cord in the ceremony begins with the Buddha image and goes to the begging bowl. Then it is tied around the center pole of the threshing ground. From the center pole it goes around the area of the threshing ground and then goes back to the starting point. When the monks have finished chanting, one part of the ceremony is completed. If they desire to have entertainment at night, they have any sort of games they choose, enjoying themselves in the traditional manner of the peasants of the area. The following morning they make merit by putting rice in the monks' begging bowls and feeding monks at the threshing ground. Then they feed everyone who has come to help. The monk who presides over the ceremony is usually the abbot of the monastery. He sprinkles the rice of the Rice Goddess and the rice kept aside for seed, the center pole, and the other stacks of rice with holy water. When this is finished the monks return to the monastery. In this matter of making merit at the threshing ground, if their farming has produced an overabundance of rice they make merit gaily and feast joyously. If they get a great deal of rice they are very happy; it is like getting a wishing jewel, for whatever they lack, there will be people to bring it to them in exchange for rice. If they get little rice, they are not happy, and they do not have a big ceremony of making merit, abbreviating it to just enough to preserve the custom. They only offer food to the monks, the crucial part of the merit making. There is nothing strange about this because everyone is in the same condition. In the book of collected *khwan* verses there are verses for a *khwan* rite for the fields. I have been unable to learn clearly when they perform this. It is probably a custom that is not much performed nowadays, and so no one knows as much about it as the case of the other *khwan* rite.

When the affair described is finished, they carry the rice up into the barn. If there are children living separately they apportion out shares for them. If they can carry the rice up into the barn quickly it is all the better, for the rice is stacked up on the threshing ground, and if their luck is bad there will be a heavy third lunar month threshing ground cleansing shower. They have no advance warning, and the rice may get rained on and spoiled. They must find mats and prepare to cover the rice well whenever rain clouds appear. In carrying the rice they first carry in the rice of the Rice Goddess and the rice to be kept for seed, of every variety, as a ceremonial gesture. Then they carry up all the other rice until finished. It is at this time that they recheck the rice according to the dog's tail account. The different varieties of rice can be mixed in the barn, except glutinous rice, which is kept separate in a *krs?* or *phoom*. A *phoom* is a large basket, swelling at the center and with a wide mouth, but without the finished rim around the mouth found on a regular basket. For a lid, they use a flat basket of the sort used for sunning things. The rice that is kept for seed is put in a *phoom* or other receptacle and set aside in a part of the barn. Then they take some heads of the rice of the Rice Goddess, mix them with straw, and usually tie them up as a doll with legs and arms, just good enough to be recognizable as the figure of a seated person. Sometimes they dress it in clothes to show that it is a woman. The figure is not very large, usually about half a meter high. When they have finished tying it, they set it up on the stack of seed rice. While "inviting" it, they speak an invocatim in the same vein as at the time of gathering the fallen rice in the fields; it is a request to the Rice Goddess to remain and guard the seed rice. In this invocation there is no offering of any kind except flowers, incense sticks, candles, scented powder, and perfumed oil. Why they tie together a figure of the Rice Goddess only when they put the rice away in the barn, unlike the European custom, which is to tie it up and bring it in from the fields when the harvest is finished, and what the purpose is, are not clearly known. There is another belief which is maintained in the province of Ratburi, namely, that once the rice is put away in the barn, they must not open

the barn and take rice out often. They may open it only when they sell rice, or when there is necessity for using a great deal of rice for some purpose. When they are going to open the barn they must first light incense sticks and candles and worship the Rice Goddess. What words they speak, my informant cannot remember. No doubt they beg forgiveness of the Rice Goddess for disturbing her and taking her rice out. The reason for forbidding opening the barn frequently is probably fear that the Rice Goddess will become angry and flee away. For this reason before putting the rice away in the barn, they first apportion out enough rice to eat for a long time, so that it will not be necessary to worry about opening the barn unnecessarily.

In the province of Ayutthaya they have a ceremony of closing the barn and a ceremony of opening the barn. They perform the ceremony of closing the barn when they have finished threshing the rice and put the rice all away in the barn properly. They must leave about a bowlful of paddy on the threshing ground for use in the ceremony of closing the barn. For the day of the ceremony they likewise choose Friday. They select a woman or man born in the year of the dragon, regarding this as a zodiacal sign (so the original !) which does not harm crops, to perform the ceremony. They prepare offerings including white boiled cakes, rice from the top of the pot, and an egg, as usual. They have the Person born in the year of the dragon make the offering at the threshing ground. Then they use a big spoon to pick up the paddy remaining on the threshing ground and put it in a metal bowl. As they scoop up the rice they speak, asking that the Rice Goddess cause there to be so much rice that they will never finish scooping it up and measuring it. When they have filled the bowl with rice, they take the bowl and empty it in the rice barn, like the seed rice of the Rice Goddess. When they have finished making the offering, the ceremony of closing the barn is completed.

In the south (as noted down for me by Naaj Win Chaijárád of Chaiya District) there must always be some rice left in the bottom of the barn, called the “*khwan* of the rice of the lord of the place”. When the time comes to put new rice in the barn, they scoop up

the remaining old rice in the bottom and place it in the center of the barn. Then they set up offerings to the *khwan* of the rice, including three heads of first ripened rice which were brought in from the *khwan* ceremony in the fields. Then they make an offering of cooked rice from the top of the pot and roasted fish. They take a little from the head and the tail and the middle of the body to serve as a ritual representation of a whole fish; they call this “fish with head and tail”. This is of the same category as the offering made to spirits and gods in other regions with a whole pig, that is, the head, tail, and four feet. Besides these there is one small stone, one plate for cooked rice, one small cup for water, and one piece of iron. It is not known what the stone and iron are used for or what they mean.

The ceremony of opening the barn to sell rice out of the barn involves superstitions about days; they absolutely refuse to measure out rice to sell on a Friday. On other days they may open it to sell. (In Ratburi they add the Buddhist holy days as days when they refuse to open the barn to sell rice.) The refusal to sell rice on Friday no doubt comes from a superstition about the sound of the word Friday (*suk*), fearing that they will sell their happiness (*suk*). The ceremony of opening the barn is to scoop up a bowlful of paddy with a metal bowl used for offering food to monks. At this time it is not necessary to use a big spoon to scoop. Then they speak an invocation to the Rice Goddess, telling her not to be alarmed, and asking her to abide with the home and the fields, giving them rice measuring a hundred cartloads or a thousand cartloads. When they have finished speaking the invocation, it is all right to measure out rice to sell. As for the bowlful of rice that was scooped out, they take it and grind it to white rice, and cook it to put in the begging bowl of a monk to end the matter.

In the south they have superstitions about days in which they may not take rice out of the barn, namely Buddhist holy days, the *saad* days, the beginning of Lent, *Sonkraan* day, and the last days of the year, that is, from the thirteenth day of the waning phase of the fifth lunar month to the beginning of the waxing

phase of the sixth lunar month. They regard these as days when the Spirit of the Rice Goddess desires to be calm or to meditate, and does not wish to move. Whoever persists in taking rice out is wicked and may be caused to become poor again. The prohibition of taking rice out on these days also applies in other regions. The reason for this is self - evident. When they take rice out to sell they must mention the name of the Rice Goddess every time, asking her pardon for daring to take away her rice. In this affair there is an offering of cooked rice from the top of the pot and fish, as usual. This duty falls to the woman who is mistress of the house.

The barns which they build for storing rice are low buildings, but in the north they elevate the floor higher than the floor of the house in which they live, probably to show respect to the Rice Goddess. There are pillars and scantlings outside the walls. The walls may be of woven bamboo or of real wood, as the builder chooses. In the main, country people hardly use boards for the walls because they are hard to obtain. Usually they make the walls of woven bamboo. In the province of Nakhon Ratchasima they weave them of a kind of grass called *tàkhú* ?, which they lay on to make walls for the barn. This kind of grass has round, hard stems as a lead pencil and two meters or more in length. They use this kind of grass, believing that termites do not eat it. The, inside of the barn walls are smeared with fresh ox or buffalo manure in order to close up any holes that may exist and prevent the rice stored in the barn from leaking out. In some places they use mud to smear. Please do not be hasty to criticize the farmers as terribly uncivilized, to use ox and buffalo manure to smear the floors and walls. If they do not use these things to smear, what will they use? These things they have already or can obtain easily; they need not spend money to buy them, and so they use them. What else can they use? It is a question of living far from modern progress and not having to spend money to buy things. They must depend upon themselves almost entirely. The good and the bad must go together. It is impossible to choose only the good; the bad must also go with it in order that we may know

the good and the bad. When we speak the word barn (*jun*), the word *chaan* almost always follows it. A *chaan* is a large barn, built in a long shape as a place for storing large quantities of rice. They may be seen at railroad stations. They differ only this much. Farmers who have no barns in which to store their rice weave *phoom* for storing it, or weave big baskets, but with open bottoms, or make round baskets to cover or enclose the rice which is heaped on the ground, smearing the area with ox manure and covering it with mats. If they do not use mats, they spread straw to prevent seepage of water which might make the rice damp. Then they build a small shed covering this to keep the rain off. They merely cover the rice. The rice may rot in the lower part and so they twist straw into a cord and loop this around the lower part of the basket. On the inside they likewise smear fresh ox and buffalo manure. This sort of place for storing rice is called *taloom* for rice, but if they surround it with mats or weave an extension with bamboo strips, they call it a *tiam*, about which there can be no doubt that it is a word borrowed from Chinese. Even if they have a barn for storing rice, if they wish to separate varieties of rice - for example, nonglutinous rice and glutinous rice - they may make a *tiam* or *taloom* as a separate storage place.

Household Tasks and Implements

The farmer's receptacle for measuring out rice is the basket (*kràbun*), which there is no need to explain as it is well known. But the baskets which they use for measuring rice are of two sizes. The small size is called *kràbun luug sàd*; the large size is called *kràbun sibhaa*. If we compare the sizes of these two kinds of baskets in terms of units for measureing paddy, one *kràbun sibhaa*, when ground to white rice, amounts to about one and one - half pails of white rice. If it is a *kràbun luug sàd*, it amounts to about one pail of white rice. This is only an approximation; it depends on the large and small sad measures of various individuals. Forty *sàd* of rice are one *kwian* (literally, cartload,) showing that formerly the oxcarts used for transporting were used as measures of large quantities of rice. Another kind of *kràbun* is the *kràbun*

haab (used for carrying on a pole over the shoulder), short and squat in shape, with the bottom curved more than that of the *kràbun luug sàd*. These have handles for attaching cords, used for carrying paddy or other things on a shoulder pole. This kind of basket, if woven very tightly and then bathed in oil or pitch both inside and out, with a handle for carrying or for inserting the carrying pole, becomes a *khru?* for carrying water. There is also the *kràchee* which is another kind of basket, with flaring mouth. The flaring mouthed baskets which we always see the Chinese using to measure rice are also a kind of *kràchee*. The *kràchee* is used everywhere as an instrument for measuring rice, but it is not a standard measure like the *kràbun luug sàd*. Another kind of receptacle used for cooked rice is called the *kràbaaj*; in shape it is like a waterbowl. It is woven closely, and there are various sizes. If it is small in size but flat in shape it is called a *kàbaan*, and is used in place of dishes and plates for cooked rice. After eating rice with a *kàbaan* it need not be washed; they beat (*khoog*) it to shake off the rice still sticking to it; after shaking it clean they hang it in the sun. Perhaps it is this that is meant by the expression *khoog kàbaan* ("to thump the head"), that is, to knock a vessel of this kind, or really to thump the head, used in meanings. There is still another kind of woven receptacle also similar to the *kràbun*, but with curved bottom, like a spittoon with bulging middle. They called this a *kràthaaj*, and use it to carry things about on the hip, as in the verses for the preaching of the Chuchok canto (of the Vessantara Jataka), when they praise Lady Amitda: "The beautiful Amitda walks along with the old Brahman, holding on her hip a *kràthaaj* painted with appliqué figures, looking radiant and lovely" If the *kràthaaj* has a flat shallow shape, with very wide mouth, it becomes a *kràcàad*. The *kràthoo* is the name of another kind of woven receptacle, in shape almost the same as the *kràthaaj*, but round like a lamp chimney, with a lid and handles for threading cords to hang it up or carry it on a pole. The *kràthoo* is usually lacquered and gilded for holding clothing and other things which should be put aside. The *kàloo* is also another kind of woven receptacle, woven closely, with round flattened squat shape like a *can* fruit

and a wide mouth, for carrying things on the hip. I have formerly seen lady barbers carrying their hair - cutting implements in these on the hip as they went to cut hair in private homes. There are two kinds of *kràdon*: the *kràdon* for sunning things and for use as a lid for the *phoom*, whose shape it is not necessary to describe, since they are still used everywhere; these are mates to the *tàkreen* for sunning things, which is woven more coarsely, with large interstices. The other kind of *kràdon* is smaller in size than the *kràdon* for sunning things, oval in shape like an egg. This is the rice - winnowing *kràdon*. There are wooden crosspieces for separating sizes of rice at the time of winnowing. There is still another kind, the *tàkreen*, which is shaped like a fishtrap. They use it for scooping up fish. When the word *tàkreen* is spoken alone, one does not know it, and thinks always of the shape of a *tàkreen* for sunning things.

These receptacles will soon disappear, because they have been replaced by better receptacles made of other materials, as we have seen new things substituted for old ones already. But in any event, to speak of the past, the farmers did not buy from others, but made these things for their own use. They studied the method of weaving and making these receptacles from generation to generation. When they had free time from farming, they wove baskets. How can one accuse farmers of being lazy ? They had to spend as much as eight months of the year farming, performing heavy work at least from before daylight till evening. As has been described, the remaining three months they did not remain idle. For one thing they still had to make gardens, according to their needs. Their greatest amount of free time was when they had harvested the rice and put it away in the barns, about four months, but they had other personal and traditional duties, as has been described elsewhere. The time when they were genuinely free and need do nothing at all was at the time of the *Sonkraan* festival.

You have no doubt heard the criticism, "They pound white rice and pour it in the pot only in sufficient quantity to eat." This means that whenever the country people would cook rice,

they must pound white rice right then, pounding only a little, enough to pour into the rice pot and eat. This seems terribly lazy; even rice, which is the daily food, they have no desire to pound, no desire to prepare adequately in advance. If you think thus it is because you do not know the condition of the life of farmers. The reason for not pounding a great deal of rice in advance to eat over a long period is that they cannot eat it fast enough and if it is kept long it does not taste good. It is not like newly pounded rice, which is much more delicious. They pound only enough to eat from day to day. The duty of pounding rice goes with that of carrying water; these are minor household tasks, and fall to the daughters and granddaughters. They usually mention the two tasks in a single phrase. Before pounding the rice they first sun the paddy until perfectly dry. If they do not do this, when they pound it the rice husks will be hard to break open. The first time they pound it, it becomes *kloon* rice; that is, rice that has bran still clinging to it. They must pound it again, called *sóom*. On the second pounding the bran slips loose, leaving only rice grains. When they have finished pounding the rice, they winnow it for the husks to go in one direction, and the rice grains, broken rice, and rice bran in another. In the language of farmers this broken rice is called *kòg khâaw plaaj khâaw*, to be kept and mixed with other things as food for animals. This rice winnowing is strange: it looks easy, but when one tries to do it he fails. He cannot separate a single grain of rice from the broken rice. He gets angry and shakes the rice a little harder and the rice spills. If you don't believe this, try it. As for the mortar for pounding the rice, they also make this themselves. They cut a tree stump and whittle it into shape, and then cut a hole in the center of a size to form an appropriate hollow. This need not be very deep. Then they build a rice bran fire in the hole. The fire burns down into the wood until they see that it is deep and wide enough for use. When they use it for a long time, the rough rice husks will of themselves polish the mood in the hole smooth. The longer it is used, the deeper the hollow of the mortar gets, until the bottom is thin and finally cracked and broken and unusable any longer. Then they replace it. Most mortars are for hand pounding.

There are also mortars used for pounding with a big hammer-shaped pestle, but women do not much like them because if one is not skillful the work is very heavy. Lever-pestle mortars and rice milk are later innovations. Only some families have them, for pounding rice or milling rice in large quantities for making merit and for feasts.

Carrying water and pounding rice are the duties of the daughters and granddaughters. Besides carrying water and pounding rice, they must also cook rice, spin cotton, and weave cloth. If it is a mother with small children and no one to help, she is very busy and hardly has free time. She must apportion her time for various jobs appropriately. Any time a young unmarried woman works, no matter what the work is, there are always young men around. This is the great drama of the world; if there is a heroine but no hero it seems wrong. Therefore at the time of pounding rice there are young men who come to provide amusement, or even volunteer help in pounding. "When night fell I always pounded rice and waited *càgkàlan* (sound imitating the lever-pestle mestle mortar); brother walked down the highroad. I forgot the basket, and brother went straight to take it to his sweetheart". After the rice is pounded, next morning it is the duty of the aged women to *soom* it again, because in the morning the young women are busy carrying water. Carrying water is done at two times, namely in the morning and in the evening. In the morning they carry water for the betal vines and other plants, while drinking water is carried in the evening. At this time they usually return home more slowly than in the morning, for young men watch for them to flirt at the landing or well or pool. It is for this reason that they say girls are always willing to carry water, for they will get to see their sweethearts. If the place where they get water is a pool in the monastery, the evening is the time when the monks bathe. If they have a sweetheart in holy orders, they thus have an opportunity to make a reverence to the reverend brother. If convenient they may remind him by asking, "When are you going to leave holy orders ? How many more months or years are you going to remain

a monk?" The duty of carrying water falls to the women apparently everywhere; pictures of people carrying water in Europe and India are always of women. They always use pots carried on the head, or carry the water on the shoulder. One notices that the Chinese who draw city water along the streets are more often women than men. All this is because the work of carrying water was daily work of the household in olden times, and fell to the women everywhere, of whatever nationality, and so it has come down to the present.

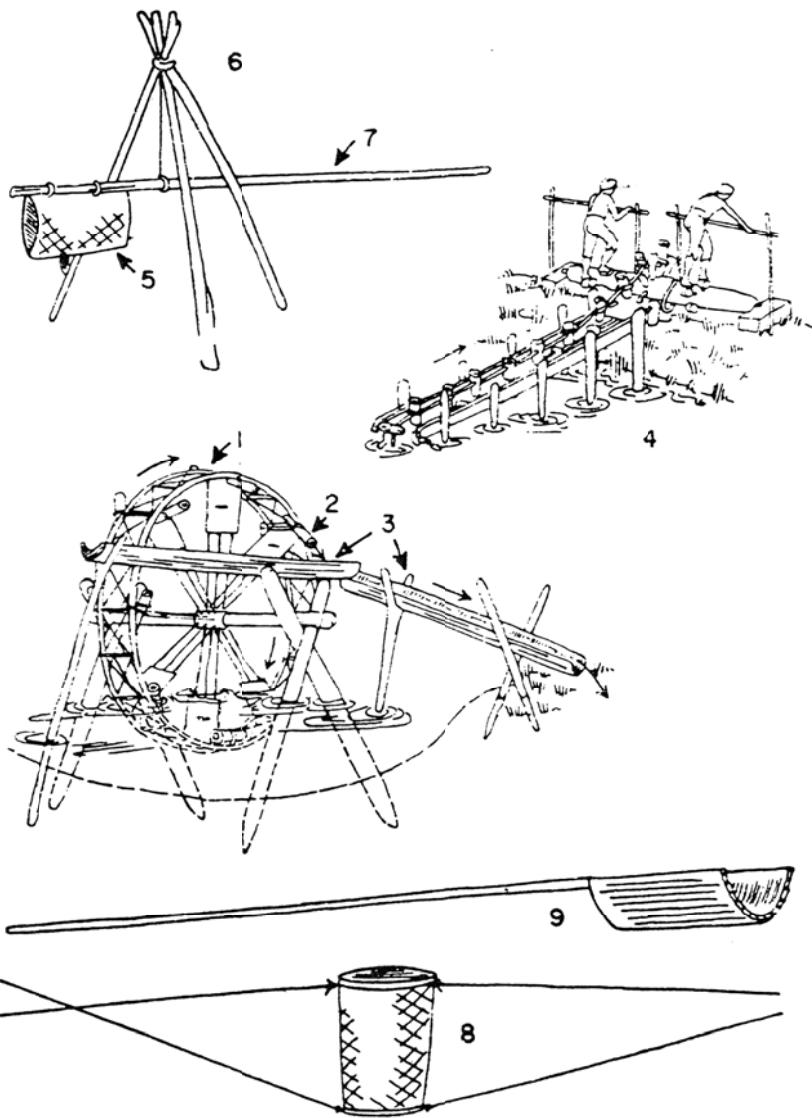
Now that we have told the story of farming, it will be seen that the gaiety of farmers depends upon farming productively. It is as they say, "rice to spare and salt cheap," or "the fields are full of rice, the water full of fish". This is to be regarded as prime happiness, because there are few other needs. If one has rice he can exchange rice for all other things that he needs. There are traders who bring things to the spot to trade; it is not necessary to seek them out. If one does not have a cotton field, there are people who bring cotton to exchange for rice. When cotton is obtained, the women spin and weave it into cloth for the family's needs. The happiness that comes from not lacking food and clothing belongs not only to the countryfolk. The monks derive benefits, not lacking for food and robes. The important thing for all human is the desire for happiness, fun, and comfort. To speak only of farmers, if they are not addicted to evil ways, such as gambling, they have not a little happiness, because they have few needs. It is happiness deriving from the surroundings, namely nature. When they have enough to eat and enough to use they are happy. We have only just recently gotten away from making things for our own use and providing our own amusement, and so we do not feel the great value of making things for our own use and providing our own amusement like the farmers. I have told the life of the farmers, which is a simple, smooth life, not adventurous, not progressive, not wealthy, and not powerful. However things are, they go on like that. It appears that famers would seem to have extreme happiness; not so! Normally a badge on the chstst has two sides. One side

is beautiful and glittering. There must also be a reverse side, whether it be a big badge or a small badge; there must be a reverse side in suitable proportions.

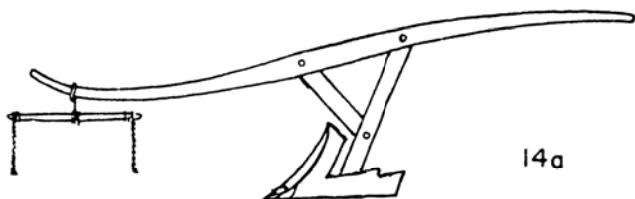
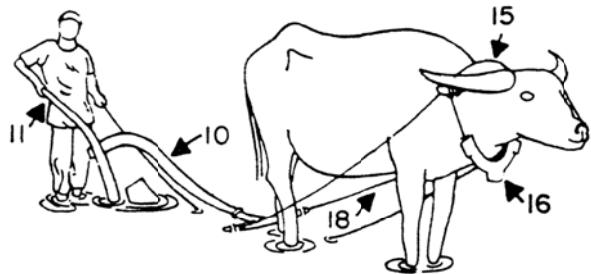
Before closing my story I wish to ask you a riddle: "What is it that cooked in the earth can be eaten, cooked in wood is good to eat, and cooked three times becomes sweetmeats?"¹⁰⁾

Translated and Edited
by **William J. Gedney**

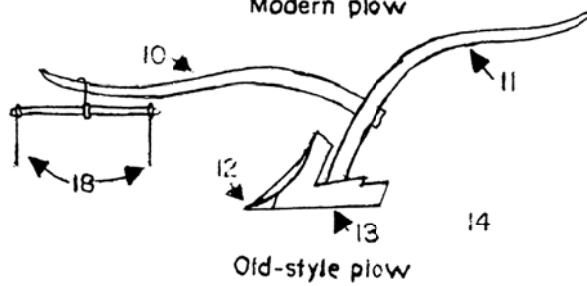
Published by kind permission of HRAF Press.
Life and Ritual in Old Siam, HRAF Press, New Haven, Conn. 1961



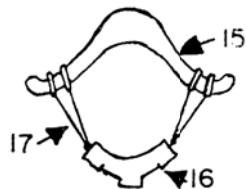
WATER WHEELS AND WATER SCOOPS



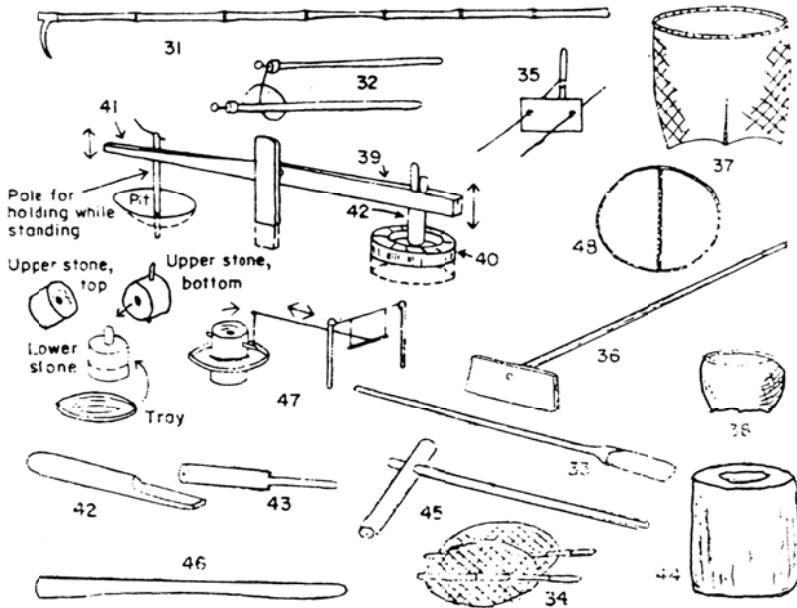
Modern plow



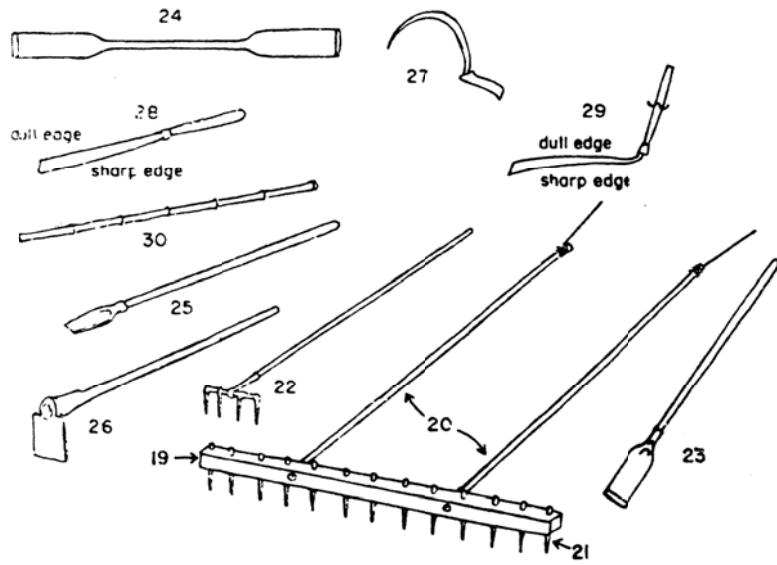
Old-style plow



PLOWS AND YOKES



THRESHING, POUNDING, MILLING, WINNOWING AND MEASURING IMPLEMENTS



SMALLER FARM IMPLEMENTS

Farming Implements

Key to Drawings of Farm Implements

WATER WHEELS AND WATER SCOOPS

1. water wheel
2. bamboo tube for dipping up water
3. conduit for receiving water, sugar palm tree or bamboo conduits are chiefly used
4. drag-type water wheel made entirely of bamboo and hardwood
5. tripod - suspended dipper
6. tripod
7. handle of tripod - suspended dipper
8. dipper or water scoop
9. half - dipper, woven

PLOWS AND YOKES

10. *khan* of the plow
11. *dâm*, or handle, of the plow
12. plowshare, tip is of iron
13. “pighead”
14. *?eeg nooj*
- 14a. modern plow
15. yoke
16. *?ən*, made of bamboo
17. hitching rope
18. *khlâw* rope

SMALLER FARM IMPLEMENTS

19. harrow
20. *khan* of the harrow
21. harrow teeth
22. iron rake, Chinese style
23. iron shovel
24. wooden shovel, old style
25. spade
26. hoe
27. sickle
28. chick-head knife
29. *liam*, a kind of big curved knife with long or short handle
30. bamboo pole for carrying rice seedlings over the shoulder

THRESHING, POUNDING, MILLING, WINNOWING, AND MEASUKING IMPLEMENTS

31. straw hook, made of bamboo, used in threshing and picking out straw
32. threshing "chopsticks" of hardwood and bamboo for holding rice sheaves and beating them
33. shovel with groove, made of lightweight hardwood, for tossing rice
34. mats for shaking out rice dust, woven entirely of bamboo including the border
35. board for pushing rice, of the kind having ropes which they vie in pulling ceremonially
36. *thádthaā*
37. *kachee* or *sád* for measuring rice, woven
38. *kàbun* or *lîug sád*
39. lever pestle, for pounding
40. lever-pestle mortar of wood, buried in the ground
41. tail of lever
42. pestle for pounding

43. pestle for sóom
44. hand mortar, of wood
45. big hammer-shaped pestle, for hand mortar
46. pestle for hand mortar
47. rice mill, woven
48. winnowing basket woven of bamboo bark with wooden crosspiece, for winnowing rice

Footnotes

1. Tylor, Edward B. *Primitive Culture* (London, John Murray, 1871). A.R.
2. The people of Nakhon Ratchasima and the northeast call a spade *còob*, and call a hoe *còg*. A.R.
3. See *Old Textbook of Rice Planting* (National Library, 1924) and “Days Forbidden for Ploughing” in *Royal Ceremonies of the Twelve Months*, in the section on The first plowing. A.R.
4. See Textbook of *Farming According to Ancient Methods* (Bangkok , Canthánáphlin Printing Press , 1930) by Dr. Chan Cajtron. A.R.
5. See “Kinds of Rife” in *Manners and Customs*, Part 3. A.R.
6. See the section on plows in the chapter on “Farming” in *History of the Ministry of Agriculture*. A.R.
7. Through the kindness of Phrajaa Winid Wánandoon (Too Koomêed).
8. See “Banners” in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 2 , p. 348. A.R.
9. See “Concerning Singing Games” by Phrá Phinid Wannákaan (Seen Saalitun) in *Manners and Customs* Part 25. A.R.
10. The answer is rice : it is cooked in earthenware pots, or can be cooked in bamboo tubes, or for certain kinds of sweetmeats is put through an elaborate series of processes involving three cookings.

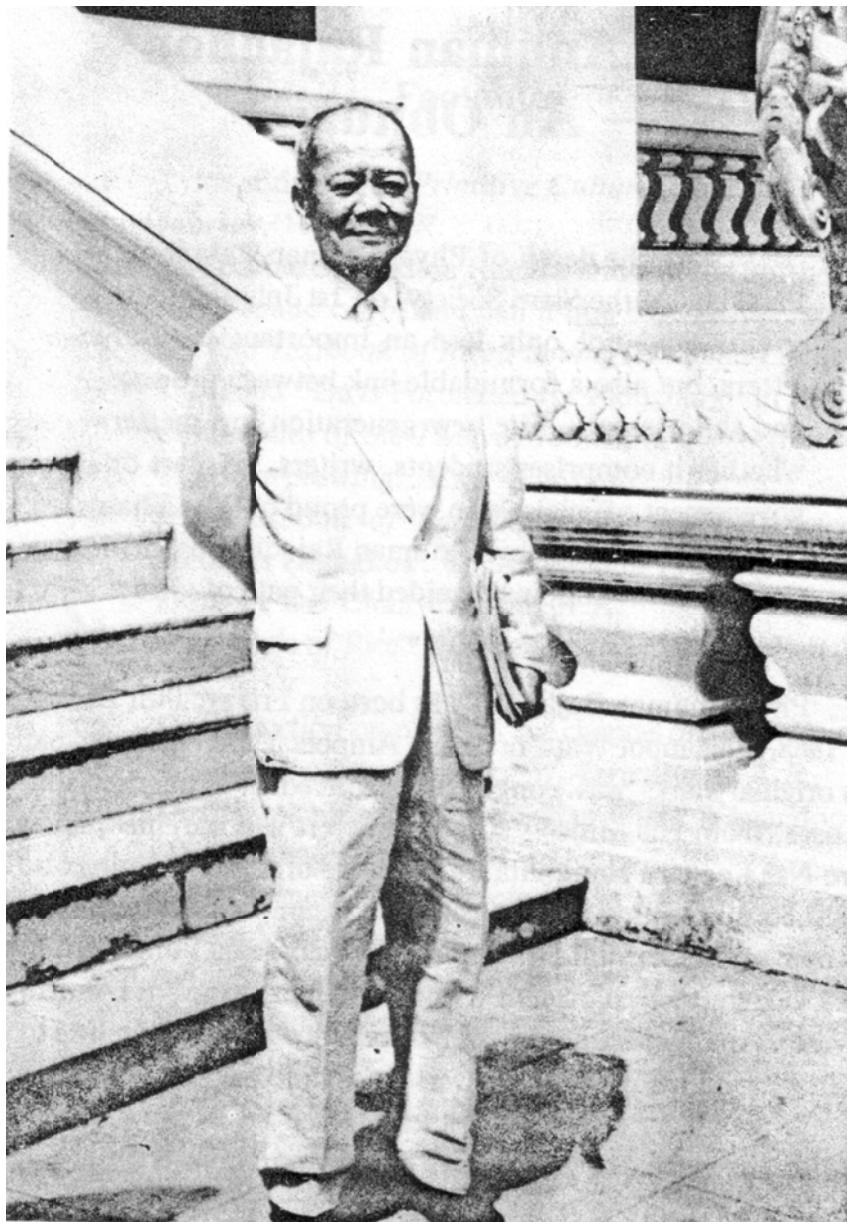
Phya Anuman Rajadhon

An Obituary

With the death of Phya Anuman Rajadhon, President of the Siam Society, on 1st July 1969, the country did not only lose an important man of letters, but also a formidable link between the past and the present. The new generation, no matter whether it comprises students, writers, scholars or government officials, who were proud of their Thai heritage, regarded Phya Anuman Rajadhon as their teacher - the lamp who guided their path of virtue.

* * * *

Phya Anuman Rajadhon was born on Friday, 14th December 1888, at Tumbol Wat Phra Krai, Ampher Yannava, Bangkok. His original name was Yong and he received his surname, Sathikoses, from His Majesty King Rama VI. His parents' names were Nai Lee and Nang Hia. They were ordinary people, who sent their eldest son to be educated at Assumption College until he completed standard 4. After this the young Yong went to work at the Oriental Hotel and later he entered the government service in the Department of Customs. He was given the title of Khun Anuman Rajadhon and was finally promoted to be Phya. He started his career as a clerk and ended up as an Assistant Director-General. After the 1932 *coup d'etat*, he was dismissed from the service to give way to the promoters of the *coup*. He was then reappointed as Head of the Cultural Division in the



newly-established Fine Arts Department, of which he finally became Director-General.

After his retirement, he carried on as a part-time lecturer in linguistics at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, having taught this subject from the first year that the University extended this course to the degree level. Later he gave lectures on other subjects in the Faculties of Education and Political Science at the same university. For this service as well as for his contributions in the field of Siamese culture, Chulalongkorn University conferred on him the honorary Doctorate Degree of Letters and elected him an honorary professor of literature.

At other institutions of higher learning, Phya Anuman Rajadhorn also shared his knowledge with members of the younger generation; for example, he lectured on Comparative Religion at Thammasat University and Comparative Literature at the College of Education. He was one of the founders of Silpakorn University, which conferred on him the honorary Doctorate Degree in Archaeology in the first year that the University held a degree ceremony.

His talent had been noticed from the time that he was a young man, working in the Department of Customs, for his work was recommended by the Royal Literature Society in the reign of King Rama VI. H.R.H. Prince Damrong tried to persuade him to work for the National Library. Although Phya Anuman did not accept this offer, Prince Damrong nevertheless proposed him as a member of the Literary Association that was founded in the reign of King Rama VII. Prince Damrong was always helpful to Phya Anuman and predicted to Prince Naris that Phya Anuman would become a distinguished man of letters. Prince Naris was in the habit of corresponding with Phya Anuman when the latter started his career in the Fine Arts Department. This correspondence was later published in five volumes entitled *Notes on Siamese Knowledge*. When UNESCO and the Thai Government celebrated Prince Naris's 100 th birthday anniversary, Phya Anuman was chosen to deliver and address before the royal audience.

When the Royal Institute was established in 1934, Phya Anuman was elected a fellow in the field of belle letters. Later he became Acting President of the Institute until his death. In this position, he was responsible for the publication of the *Thai Dictionary* in 1950, for the publication of the *Thai Gazetteer* in 1964 and the first 8 volumes of the *Thai-Encyclopaedia*. He himself wrote many books for the Royal Institute, among other: *Linguistics*, *Comparative Religions*, *The Study of Thai Tradition*, and *Thai Life Before the Present Times*. He played a leading role in coining new Thai words and thus helped develop the Thai language in the modern technological age.

Phya Anuman served as member of the National Research Council, Chairman of the Committee for Historical Accuracy, and the Committee for the Publication of Historical and Archeological Documents. If there was any work to be done concerning the culture, history, language and customs of the Thai people, the government always asked him to participate in it. Having accepted the invitation, Phya Anuman worked to the best of his ability. For his services, the government asked His Majesty the King to confer various decorations upon him. He received the highest class of the order of the White Elephant only recently. During the reign of Rama VIII, he briefly gave private tuition to the young King on Thai culture, for which he received the royal favour of the Ratanabhorn medal. As to the order of Chula Chom Klaow, when he was made a Phya, he only received the third class. Not until the present reign was he promoted to the second class order, special division, which was taken to be a royal sign of appreciation of Phya Anuman's contribution to Thai knowledge. Among the royal decorations accorded to Phya Anuman, the one of which he was most proud was the Dushdi Mala Medal, the equivalent of the British Order of Merit. He also served as a member of the committee set up to consider the qualities of candidates for this honorific award.

His writings became famous under the pseudonym "Sathirakoses", which usually appeared with "Nagapradipa", the pen name of Pra Saraprasert. The two were co-translators

of the *Hitoprathesa* as well as their masterpieces *The Pilgrim Kamanita and Friends' Religions*. They also encouraged their first publisher, Khun Sopitaksornkarn (Hae), to bring out new editions of Siamese classics. His experience in writing and editing became very useful to Phya Anuman when he later worked with the Fine Arts Department and published a number of valuable books as well as the famous journal of the Fine Arts Department.

Phya Anuman wrote all through his life. He was also in the habit of writing introductions to books written by young scholars, and writing letters to encourage would-be authors. His last work, which is unfinished, was the third volume of *Recollections from the Past*, partly autobiographical and partly devoted to the historical background of Bangkok. The first two volumes were produced on his 79th and 80th birthday anniversaries respectively.

“Sathirakoses” was not very concerned with royalties from his many books. Any friend could ask for the books to be published for sale or for free distribution. When he reached the sixth cycle (72 years old) a group of his former students set up a research fund after his name. If he received some money from Copyrights he then gave it to this fund. In 1968 when he was 80 years old, a number of writers who respected him established the Sathirakoses Foundation to raise money to support poor writers and to encourage would-be authors and artists. He then gave all the benefits that might result from his copyrights to this foundation. In addition, the government and the people who appreciated his contributions to the nation set up a special library to honour him in the National Library Building. After his death, the municipality of Bangkok renamed the road on which his house stood after his name.

He was appointed a member of Parliament in 1932 and also a Senator in 1947, but he played no important role in politics and refused to join any cabinet.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon was harmful to none. He was a teacher who supported his pupils, a master who encouraged his subordinates. He lived by righteous deeds, and was detached from worldly things. He did not love to accumulate much. He preferred to give more than to take, and was always grateful to his parents as well as to other benefactors. Although he was quick-tempered, he regained his composure easily. He liked to be friends with people of any class, nationality and age. This made him well-known in society; he was frequently invited to initiate wedding ceremonies. Everyone who knew him loved and respected him. It was felt that among the ordinary Thai people, there was no one who had done so much for Thai Studies as Phya Anuman Rajadhon. In his most recent book , *Essays on Thai Folklore*. Prince Narathip, the president of the Siam Society, wrote in the preface: "Phya Anuman is, indeed, a well known authority on the Thai language and Thai literature. Foreign scholars who come to Thailand either go to him direct or are referred to him." When Professor W. J. Gedney, of the University of Michigan, edited Phya Anuman's work and published it as *Life and Rituals in Old Siam* he had this to say: "Phya Anuman Rajadhon occupies, or rather has created for himself, a Position in the field of Thai letters and scholarship which is unique and paradoxical. Though he is not an academician by training, his scholarly attainments have made him one of Thailand's most highly respected university professors. Though he is not a trained anthropologist, no one has made so great a contribution as he to the study of traditional Thai culture. Though he is not primarily a student of language and literature, no one can proceed very far in Thai philological or literary studies before he has to seek enlightenment from the contributions which Phya Anuman has made in these fields. Though he is not a product of Western education, hardly anyone has done more than he to introduce and popularize Western learning among the Thai. Though he is much more than a popular author, one could hardly find a professional writer in Thailand who can match the grace and wit of his prose style. Most astonishing of all, though he is not a Thai by ancestry, no Student of Thai culture, history literature and language, has displayed greater devotion

to these fields."

Phya Anuman had never been to Europe until he was 70 years old. He only completed grade 4 of Assumption College, in Bangkok, yet Cambridge University asked him to be a tutor to a Ph.D. candidate. Calcutta University also asked him to be an external examiner to a Doctorate Degree. He wrote so profusely that he won recognition from foreign scholars who were interested in this country. His English articles were usually published in the *Journal of the Siam Society* and he served as Member of the Council of the Siam Society for many years and was finally elected President of the Society this year. This was the first time that a Thai commoner had been elected President of the Siam Society.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon was generally healthy, worked hard, went to bed early and had a morning walk almost every day. He first went to hospital three days before he died. His only wife, Khunying Lamai, survived him. They had nine children, the eldest son being H.E. Somchai Anuman Rajadhon, ambassador to the United Arab Republic. His Majesty the King graciously agreed to light his funeral pyre at the Royal Crematorium, Wat Depsirind, on his birthday anniversary - 14th December 1969.

S. Sivaraksa

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The Comission recommended that the General Conference should adopt draft resolution 24C/DR. 215, the text of which is reproduced below :

The General Conference,

Considering the Royal Thai Government' s intention to celebrate the Birthday Centenary of Phya Anuman Rajadhon on 14 December 1988 and the Royal Thai Government' s request to enlist the name of Phya Anuman Rajahon as an internationally celebrated personality,

Recalling the success of the Bicentenial Celebration of Sunthon Phu in 1987 and the participation of Unesco in the commemo-rating activities,

Recognizing that Phya Anuman Rajadhon was a great scholar whose contributions to the literary world will always be remem-bered and appreciated, and was the light that guided his con-temporaries and the succeeding generation towards truth, good-ness and beauty,

Considering that the international commemoration of the anniversaries of great intellectual and cultural personalities contributes to the realization of Unesco's objectives and to the promotion of the mutual appreciation of national identities and cultural values,

Recalling that in resolution 4.351, adopted at its eighteenth session, it promoted the commemoration of the anniversaries of great personalities and events,

Invites the Director-General, within the budgetary resources provided in the programme and budget (24 C/5), to involve the Organization with the activities organized on the occasion of that anniversary in Member States.

The following are books which should be had or given to friends who love Siam or want to know Siamese Buddhism

Dhammadic Socialism by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

142 pp. Bht 80 locally (abroad US\$ 4 post free).

Popular Buddhism in Siam and Other Essays on Thai Studies

by *Phya Anuman Rajadhon*

216 pp. Bht 300 (hard cover) Bht 200 (paper back) locally (abroad US\$ 15 hard cover, US\$ 10 paper back post free).

Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society by S. Sivaraksa

276 pp. Bht 120 locally (abroad US\$ 6 postfree).

Siamese Resurgence by S. Sivaraksa

492 pp. Bht 260 (hard cover) Bht 180 (paper back) locally (abroad US\$ 10 hard cover US\$7 paper back post free).

Angkarn Kalyanapong : A Contemporary Siamese Poet

82 pp. Bht 80 locally (abroad US\$4 post free).

Religion and Development by S. Sivaraksa

81 pp. Bht 90 locally (abroad US\$5 post free).

Looking to American to Solve Thailand's Problems by Phra Rajavaramuni

94 pp. Bht 90 locally (abroad US\$5 post free).

Some Traditions of the Thai by Phya Anuman Rajadhon

196 pp. Bht 200 locally (abroad US\$ 10 post free).

Selflessness in Sartre's Existentialism and Early Buddhism

by *Phramaha Prayoon Mererk*

224 pp. Bht 150 locally (abroad US\$ 8 post free).

A Socially Engaged Buddhism by S. Sivaraksa

206pp. Bht 300 (hard cover) Bht 200 locally (paper back) locally (abroad US\$ 15 hard cover, US\$ 10 paper back post free).

A Siamese for all Seasons by *Puey Ungphakorn*
383 pp. Bht 130 locally (abroad US\$ 6 post free).

Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World by *Phra Rajavaramuni*
(*Prayudh Payutto*)
178 pp. Bht 100 locally (abroad US\$ 5 post free).

The Thet Maha Chat Cerernony by *C.E. Gerini*
63 pp. Bht 40 locally (abroad US\$ 2 post free).

*Please order through Suksit Siam 1715 Rama IV Road, Bangkok.
no postage charge to anywhere in the world.*