

The Autobiography
of
Lady Siphroma Kridakṇ

Translated
by
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Preface

Lady Siphroma Kridakṇ died on September 25, 1978, at the age of 90. She was a daughter of a prince of Nan, a province in the north of Thailand. *Phra* Phromsurindh, a Thai Government official, and his wife, who were childless, adopted Lady Siphroma when she was three and a half years old. She travelled extensively in Thailand with her adoptive parents until she was nine years old. At that time, her parents entrusted her to Her Majesty Queen Saowapha-Phṇgsi, a wife of King Čhulalongkorn (Rama V), because they had to go abroad; her father was appointed ambassador to Russia.

After two or three years at the Thai court, she joined her parents. She spent a year in Russia and six months in England, and then returned to the Thai Royal Palace in the service of the Queen. Towards the end of the reign of King Čhulalongkorn, she became one of his lesser wives. After he died, his successor, King Vajiravudh sponsored her marriage to Prince Sitthiphṇ Kridakṇ in 1916. Even though Prince Sitthiphṇ held a high position in the government, he and Lady Siphroma established a farm in a remote area in the south of Thailand. They hoped to encourage middle-class Thais to take up agriculture, which they regarded as crucial to the future of Thailand, and to help elevate the status of farming as an occupation, as well as to advance Thai agriculture through the introduction of new methods.

With the death of King Čhulalongkorn in 1910, Thai court life changed drastically. For instance, no king after Čhulalongkorn was mourned in the traditional manner. Lady Siphroma has given us a picture of the end of an era.

Lady Siphroma's autobiography was written in nine parts at various times, when she was already an old woman, and was published in installments in the Thai newspaper *Khao Ban Mṇang*. It was reprinted in book form, together with various interviews and her writings on food preservation, by the Jim Thompson Foundation in 1979. It is in fact less a systematic autobiography than a series of recollections and anecdotes about her life up to the time of the death of King Čhulalongkorn. It is of interest to Thais for the pictures it gives of life in the Thai court and in Europe during that period, as well as for the entertainment value of her anecdotes. For the non-Thai it also provides insights into Thai attitudes and customs.

In this translation, I have tried to adhere as closely as possible to the original Thai text. I have striven for a faithful rather than an elegant translation. Lady Siphroma, as I have noted, was quite old when she wrote this, and she was not highly educated by today's standards. Her writing is conversational in style, rambling, and somewhat repetitious. There are frequent ambiguities and even minor inconsistencies. These were not edited out in the Thai, and I have not attempted to remove them in translation. I will not burden the reader with an account of the many problems of translating a Thai text into English, beyond mentioning that there are various grammatical and lexical categories, such as plurals, tenses, pronouns, and certain

nouns, that are required in English but optional in Thai. Therefore, I have been forced to resolve certain ambiguities in the Thai text, sometimes arbitrarily, in order to achieve a translation into acceptable English sentences. A *completely* faithful translation from Thai into English, for these and other reasons, is simply not possible.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the help of three persons in the preparation of this text: The late Walter Vella, a noted student of Thai history and the former Chairman of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii, who encouraged me to undertake this project and carefully edited the first three chapters before his untimely death; Ruth Lieban, who made many editorial corrections on a large portion of the manuscript; and my husband, Jack Bilmes, who helped to edit the first draft of each chapter.

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Historical Note on the Founding of the Čhakri Dynasty

In 1767 Thailand was defeated by the Burmese, after Ayudhaya had been the capital for 417 years under the rule of 33 monarchs.

By the end of 1768 *Phraya* Taksin was able to drive all the Burmese out of the country and quash the other Thai resistance groups. He had himself proclaimed king and established a capital in Thonburi. Throughout his fifteen-year reign there was incessant strife, both internal and external. King Taksin was assisted by two of his officers, who were brothers. King Taksin eventually bestowed on them the noble ranks of *Čhao Phraya*. The elder brother, *Čhao Phraya Čhakri*, was to become the first monarch of the Čhakri Dynasty.

Čhao Phraya Čhakri, after becoming king, was known as "Rama I." In 1782 he moved his capital to Bangkok, which is on the east side of the *Čhao Phraya* River, opposite Thonburi, and named it "Rattanakosin." His reign was devoted to making the country safe from future invasions and to reviving the Thai heritage--moral, legal, and artistic. Most of the palaces mentioned in Lady Siphroma's autobiography were built during Rama I's reign.

The contact between Thailand and Western traders had started back in the early Ayudhaya period and reached its peak in King Narai's reign (1657-1688) when there was an exchange of diplomats between Thailand and France under Louis XIV. King Narai had a European advisor, Constantine Phaulkon, ennobled as *Čhao Phraya* Wichayen, who served as his chief minister. Unfortunately, the miscalculations of the French and Phaulkon in trying to convert the king and subjugate Thailand made the Thais lose trust in foreign powers. The French and other Europeans were gradually evacuated from Thailand and the relationship remained dormant for a century. The first and only European envoy to come to Bangkok in Rama I's reign was Portuguese, later followed by others. The Americans came last--during the reign of Rama III. Rama IV, or King Mongkut, was the one who realized that Thailand could survive European imperialism not by closing its doors but by getting along with the West. He was the first Asian king to understand, speak, and write English. He saw to it that all his children, especially his eldest son, *Čhao Fa Čhulalongkorn*, learned English. He employed American missionaries' wives, then an English widow, Mrs. Anna Leonowens, and finally an Englishman named Francis George Petterson, as their teachers.

Rama V, or King *Čhulalongkorn*, carried on this progressive policy, but went one step further. He sent all his sons, with the exception of two who were in poor health, to be educated in Europe. He himself was so fond of the English language that his Thai was laced with many English words. He travelled extensively both in Thailand and abroad--twice to Europe. He befriended many heads of state. King *Čhulalongkorn* had wide choices of nationalities among the men he employed to work as advisors, teachers, and technicians.

It was during King Chulalongkorn's reign that Burma and Malaysia were annexed to the British Empire and the French moved in as the protectors of Indochina. From this arose a dispute about the boundaries between Thailand on the one hand and Laos and Cambodia on the other.

Like his father, King Chulalongkorn had a strong determination that Thailand was not to be a Western colony and the way to avoid it was to strive towards progress.

P. B.

Thai Royal Titles and Ranks by Birth

Thai royal titles are usually inherited patrilineally.

All the king's children by his queens and other royalty are called *Chao fa*; but only the queens' children are informally addressed as *Thunkramqm*, others as *somdej*. Children of the king by minor wives are *Phra-Ong Chao* by birth.

Grandchildren of the king have the last princely rank, *Mqm Chao* (M.C.), but may be elevated to *Phra-Ong Chao* by the king. Royal vocabulary has to be used with persons holding these titles.

The children of *Mqm Chao* as well as those of the elevated *Phra-Ong Chao* have the noble rank *Mqm Rajawongse* (M.R.) and their children *Mqm Luang* (M.L.). Members of all subsequent generations carry no title but add "Na Ayudhya" after their last names.

King Chulalongkorn decreed that his full nephews and nieces who were children of his full and *Chao fa* brothers, born from the chief wife, should be *Phra-Ong Chao*.

The chart on the following page shows how royal titles are passed down from the king to his descendants.

Titles of Thai Nobility

The following list of titles begins with the highest.

Somdej Chao Phraya

Chao Phraya

Phraya

Phra

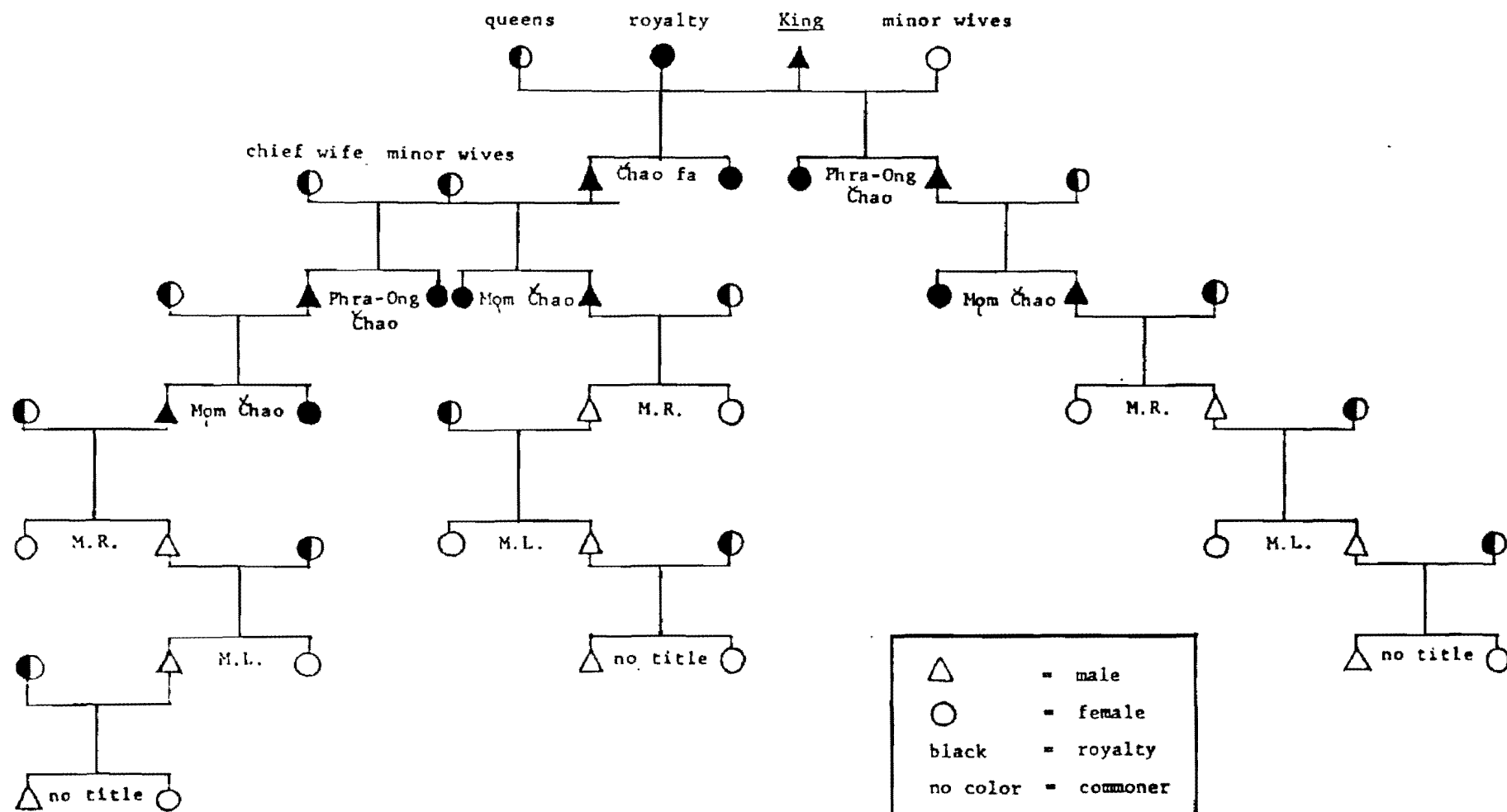
Luang

Khun

Muen

All of these noble ranks were abolished in 1932 after the revolution.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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Biographical List of Members of the Royal Family

Mentioned in Lady Siphroma's Autobiography

Ananda Mahidol, King (1925-1946). A son of Prince Mahidol of Songkhla and a grandson of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawang-Wattana; ascended the throne in 1934 when King Prachadhipok abdicated and was killed by a bullet wound in Bangkok in 1946.

Asadang-Dechawud of Nakhon Rajasima, Prince (1889-1924). Third son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi; had no children.

Bhumibol, King (1927-). A son of Prince Mahidol of Songkhla, a grandson of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawang-Wattana; became king after death of his brother King Ananda in 1946; in 1950 married *Mom Rajawongse* (M.R.) Sirikit Kitiyakon, by whom he has one son and three daughters. The present king.

Boriphat of Nakhonsawan-Woraphinit, Prince, also known as *Thunkramom Chai* (1881-1944). Eldest son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sukhuman-Marasi; founder of the Boriphat family.

Burachat of Kamphangphet, Prince (1881-1936). Son of King Chulalongkorn; founder of the Chatchai family.

Chakraphongse of Phitsanulok-Prachanat, Prince (1882-1920). Second son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi. The only one of King Chulalongkorn's sons to be educated in Russia; married a Russian woman, Catherine Desnitsky, by whom he had one son, Chula-Chakraphongse. He is the founder of the Chakraphongse family.

Chula-Chakraphongse, Prince (1908-1963). Only son of Prince Chakraphongse and Catherine Desnitsky, born a *Mom Chao* (M.C.), elevated to *Phra-Ong Chao* by his uncle King Vajiravudh; educated in England at Harrow, then at Trinity College, Cambridge, taking his degree in history. He wrote extensively, his best-known work being *Lords of Life*, in English and Thai.

Chulalongkorn, King (1853-1910). A son of King Mongkut and Queen Dhepsirin; ascended the throne at the age of fifteen after the death of his father in 1868. He was the first Thai king to travel abroad and made two visits to Europe. He pursued his father's policy of modernization.

Chuthadhut-Dharadilok of Phetchabun, Prince (1892-1923). Fourth son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi; founder of the Chuthadhut family.

Chutharat Rajakumari, Princess (1882-1930). Seventh daughter of King Chulalongkorn.

Damrong-Dejanuphab, Prince (1862-1943). A son of King Mongkut, born *Phra-Ong Chao* Dis-Worakumarn. He was like a right-hand of King Chulalongkorn, serving as a Minister of Education, then of the Interior; also served under King Vajiravudh and King Prachadhipok. The National Library owes tremendously to his efforts. He was known as the father of Thai modern history and wrote extensively. He is the first of the Disakul family.

Dararasami, Chao (1873-1933). A daughter of *Chao* Inthawichayanon, Prince of Chiangmai. By King Chulalongkorn she had one daughter, who died at the age of four.

Khaekhaiduang, Princess (1863-1929). Daughter of King Mongkut and Lady Thiang.

Malini-Nophadara, Princess (1885-1924). Third child of King Chulalongkorn and Princess Saisawali-Phirom.

Mankhian, Princess (1823-1913). Seventy-second child of Rama II, King Phra Buddha Lertla. She helped raise many of King Mongkut's children when they were young.

Mongkut, King (1804-1868). A son of King Nanglao and Queen Sisuriyen; had been a monk for twenty-seven years during the reign of his half-brother who ascended the throne after the death of their father. He became king in 1851. Recognizing the danger of Western encroachments, he opened Thailand to modernization. He was the first Thai king to speak, read, and write English.

Narid-Saranuwatiwongse, Prince (1863-1947). Son of King Mongkut. He was a famous artist and designed Benčhamabqphit Temple. He acted as a regent while King Prachadhipok went abroad until the King's abdication. He was the founder of the Čhitraphongse family.

Nipha-Nopphadon of U-thong, Princess also known as *Somdej Ying Nqi* (1886-1935). Fourth child of King Chulalongkorn and Princess Saisawali-Phirom.

Phetcharat, Princess (1925-). The only daughter of King Vajiravudh, was born one day before he died.

Prachadhipok, King or Thunkramqm Iad-Nqi (1893-1941). Youngest son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi; studied military science in England and became king after his brother, King Vajiravudh, in 1925. In 1932 gave up absolute power, abdicated in 1934, giving the throne to his nephew Ananda, a son of his half-brother Prince Mahidol of Songkhla; he died in England in 1941. His wife, Queen Ramphai-Phanni brought his ashes back to Thailand in 1949. He was the first king to have only one wife.

Ramphai-Phanni, Queen (1904-). A granddaughter of King Mongkut. Her father, Prince Sawat was the youngest brother of Queen Sawang-Wattana and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi. She became queen when her husband, Prince Prachadhipok, became king in 1925. She lives in Thailand, after returning with King Prachadhipok's ashes in 1949.

Rangsit of Chainat-Narenthon, Prince (1885-1951). A son of King Chulalongkorn; appointed regent while King Bhumibol was in Switzerland; founder of the Rangsit family.

Saisawali-Phirom, Princess (1863-1929). Born *Mqm Chao Sai*, a granddaughter of Rama III, King Nangklao. She started an orphanage after the death of her daughter, Princess Naphachon-Charatsi.

Saowapha-Phongsi, Queen, known as the "Upstairs Queen" (1863-1919). A daughter of King Mongkut. She was a younger sister of Queen Sawang-Wattana; had nine children; of five sons surviving to maturity, two became kings, Vajiravudh and Prachadhipok.

Sawang-Wattana, Queen, known as the "Palace Queen" (1862-1955). A daughter of King Mongkut and an older sister of Queen Saowapha-Phongsi; had eight children of whom two survived to maturity, Princess Walai-Alongkon and Prince Mahidol of Songkhla, the present king's father.

Sawat, Prince (1865-1935). A son of King Mongkut, born *Phra-Ong Chao Sawatti-Sophon*; the youngest brother of Queen Sawang-Wattana and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi; father of Queen Ramphai-Phanni and founder of the Sawattiwat family.

Siraphon-Sophon, Princess (1888-1898). The sixth daughter of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawang-Wattana.

Sirikit, Queen (1932-). Great granddaughter of King Chulalongkorn and a daughter of *Mqm Chao Nakkhat-Mongkol Kitiyakon* (later created *Kromamien* Chandhaburi-Suranat; married King Bhumibol in 1950 and has four children by him, one son and three daughters.

Siwilai of Suphanburi, Princess (1868-1904). Second daughter of King Chulalongkorn, born before he became king.

Sommotiwongse Warothai, Prince (1882-1899). Fourth son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawang-Wattana.

Sukhuman-Marasi, Queen, or "Phranang" (1861-1927). A daughter of King Mongkut; had two children, Princess Sutha-thipharat and Prince Boriphat.

Suriyong of Chaiya, Prince (1884-1919). A son of King Chulalongkorn, and a younger brother of the Prince of Chumphon; founder of the Suriyong family.

Vajiravudh, King (1880-1925). Eldest son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi; went to England and studied at Oxford and Sandhurst; ascended the throne after his father died in 1910. He had one daughter; at his death the throne went to his brother Prachadhipok.

Walai-Alongkorn, Princess (1884-1938). A daughter of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Sawang-Wattana; was adopted by Queen Saowapha-Phongsi, who had no daughter, and shared her living quarters.

Wongsadhiraj-Sanid, Prince (1808-1870). A son of Rama II, born *Phra-Ong Chao* Nuam. He headed the army sent by Rama III to suppress the rebels led by King Anu of Vientiane; founder of the Sanidwongse family.

Woraset-Suda, Princess (1828-1907). She was the fifty-first and last child of Rama III, born *Phra-Ong Chao* Butri. She helped take care of King Chulalongkorn when he was young.

Wuthichai of Singha, Prince (1883-1935). A son of King Chulalongkorn; founder of the Wuthichai family.

Yukhon-Thikhamphon of Hopburi-Ramet, Prince, also known as *Somdej Chai* (1882-1932). First child of King Chulalongkorn and Princess Saisawali-Phirom; founder of the Yukhon family.

The Autobiography
of
Lady Siphroma Kridakøn



Photograph of Lady Siphroma taken by King Chulalongkorn shortly before his death and kept on his night table.

I

NAN PROVINCE

I was one of the daughters of Prince Suriyaphong Pharitdej, Prince of Nan,¹ and Lady Sikham, who was a lesser wife. I do not know in detail about the life history of Lady Sikham. I only know that when *Chao Anu*² of Vientiane rebelled against the Bangkok government, the Prince of Nan accompanied His Royal Highness Prince Wongsadhiraj Sanid³ to suppress the rebels. They took back with them several thousand prisoners-of-war. The Prince of Nan got one thousand as his share. Among these were Lady Sikham and her brother, whom I called Uncle Fu. Later the Prince of Nan elevated Lady Sikham to be a lesser wife.

I was born on March 19, 1889. My mother had five children, three boys and two girls. All my brothers died when they were young; I cannot remember them. My older sister is named Buakeo and I, Siphroma am the youngest.

I remember when I was about three years old, I called my father *Chao Luang*.⁴ When I talked to other people I called him Lord of Life. I was his favorite. When the Prince gave audiences, I always went along with him.

One time during an audience, the brother of the Prince, who was my uncle and had the rank of Crown Prince,⁵ and *Phra Phromsurindh*, governor of Nan,⁶ were also present. I was a rather mischievous child, could not stay still. I would go around sitting on my father's and my uncle's laps. My wandering eyes caught sight of the Crown Prince's shoes without shoelaces, but left open. I must have asked why his shoes had no shoelaces. I remember that the Prince, the Crown Prince, and *Chao*⁷ Rajawongse (the eldest son of the Prince), and *Phra Phromsurindh* burst out laughing. It must have been this incident that made *Phra Phromsurindh* interested in me.

In my childhood I was closer to *Chao Luang* than to my mother. At that time I had a sister who was about the same age named *Chao Thepmala*. She was the daughter of Lady Yodla. In terminology comparable to that used for Bangkok royalty, Lady Yodla was a queen. Thepmala and I had Father as a nursemaid, for he bathed and fed us. I remember, in winter, getting up in the morning. A maid bathed me in cold water; you could die from that cold. Then she took me to see *Chao Luang*, who was sitting on the big porch in front of his bedroom. There was a big firewood burner to keep him warm, and at the same time he toasted glutinous rice rolls on skewers for himself and us children. Called *khao ua pla*, it consists of steamed glutinous rice beat into thin sheets, sprinkled with salt, wiped over with lard, then wrapped around one kind of fish that is cooked and deboned. The roll is skewered through and toasted over the burner. As it cooked he basted it with shredded banana leaves soaked with lard. It was toasted until it was crispy. It was very delicious when eaten hot. But before we could eat, *Chao Luang* would ask me and my sister Thepmala to perform something in exchange for

this rice roll; for instance, sing and dance. We had to dance around the burner several times before we could eat.

I have a nickname, *Chqd*, which *Chao Luang* gave me. The servants called me *E Nai*⁸ *Chqd*. I often followed *Chao Luang* when he received guests, listened to them talk, and was able to catch some clues that at the time France and our country had a dispute over the border. *Phra Phromsurindh*, who was the governor of Nan, had the duty of negotiating with the French. *Khun Nai*⁹ Un, his wife, acted as an interpreter, because she knew French well. At this time *Phra Phromsurindh* and *Khun Nai* saw me often. When they came to the Prince's house, they usually brought candy and Thai perfume for me. I had a taste for pretty things and liked perfume, so I was attached to *Khun Nai*. When I wanted to go to see *Khun Nai* at the governor's mansion and found nobody to take me, I would throw a tantrum or make a scene. I liked to watch *yeekay* [a Thai folk play] whenever I heard the "tum-tum," "tom-tom" of the *yeekay* drums. I was only three years old and was already interested in the actors. The owner of the theater was named Mr. *Phrom*. Even though I was a northern girl, I didn't like glutinous rice except the rice roll. I liked to eat plain rice with ripe mangoes.¹⁰ I was a naughty child and liked to bother people when they had work to do, for instance, at *Kuasi Salak* [a religious ceremony]. A lot of people usually came to help, so my mother put me in an old-fashioned room with a threshold about eighteen inches high. For a three-year-old child it comes up to the chest. To get out of the room, one had to climb over the threshold, so mother laid fermented tea leaves on the threshold because I hated tea leaves, refused even to touch them. I therefore was afraid to climb out, only cried loudly. It was like a premonition that I would not stay in the north, but had to be with others who were from the south.¹¹ Indeed, that is the way it turned out, because *Phra Phromsurindh* and *Khun Nai* Un asked for me from *Chao Luang* to be their adopted child.

One evening I overheard Lady *Yqdl*a, Lady *Sikham*, and my older siblings saying, "Tonight they are going to come to take *E Nai* away." I felt disheartened and subconsciously knew that it must be *Phra Phromsurindh* and *Khun Nai* who would come to get me. I did not show anyone that I knew, but I ducked into the mosquito net, pretended to be asleep and did not run around as usual. I lay down on my stomach, held tight to the corner of the mattress, but did not cry for fear that people would think me weak.

Finally, *Khun Nai*'s two maids named *Sqn* and *Mora* came and removed my grip from the mattress. *Mora* carried me on her shoulder and ran out of the Prince's house to the governor's mansion. I cried at the top of my lungs all the way. When we reached the mansion, Mr. *Phrom*'s *yeekay* was playing. *Khun Nai* had hired the *yeekay* to perform for me, but I refused to watch, just opened my mouth and yelled, "Mommy, please come and get me," from dusk to dawn. I collapsed and fell asleep on *Mora*'s shoulder.

Chao Luang was a far-sighted father. He wanted his child to have an education and to see the world. He was religious. Therefore, he decided to give his favorite child to *Phra Phromsurindh* and *Khun Nai*. Lady *Sikham* was sad and missed me so much that she became crazy and

ran away to the woods. *Chao Luang* had to console her: "Don't be so sad. Those who are religious can give away their children and gain merit like Phra Wetsandon when he gave Kanha and Chali to Chuchok",¹² *Chao Luang* took Lady Sikham around different districts on elephant back until she felt better.

I woke up, at the governor's mansion, at about 2 p.m.. When I opened my eyes, I noticed that I was lying on a wooden bed, with rails all around. I felt refreshed. There were grown-ups sitting around. They were *Khun Nai Un*'s sister, named Auntie Ngek, and Auntie Chid who was Auntie Ngek's friend. When I got out of bed, I saw lots of toys. I cannot remember them all. What I do remember well was a small Chinese theater with three characters; one carrying a spear, one carrying a lance, and another in a Chinese dancing position. I played with them and skipped my meal. I ate only Dutchmaid milk with crackers.

I called *Khun Nai Un* Mother and *Phra Phromsurindh Khun Pa* [or Ah], meaning *Khun Phra*, but I could not say it clearly and called him by this name until I was fourteen years old.

Mother tempted me to stay by giving me a body chain and a pendant made of diamond chips. I liked that and decided to stay and we became mother and daughter. Mother made clay pots and a stove for me to play at cooking rice and curry. I saw her mold the pots and I tried my hand, but they came out lopsided, which made Father laugh. Then we baked them in the kiln where we heated rocks to make powder.

While Father was in office in Nan, Mother made talcum powder from rocks, fragrant powder, and Thai perfume for sale. To make rock powder we had to fetch marble in an ox-cart from a mountain the name of which I cannot remember. Then it was baked in an earthen kiln which had the shape of an upside down bowl. The rocks and firewood were arranged in layers and were burned for three or four days. Then a piece of rock was cracked and dropped into water in a dragon-design earthen jar. When a very hot rock was dropped in the water, it bubbled like soda water. After it stopped bubbling we touched the rock to see how it was. If it was soft and crumbly and had become powder, it was ready. If it was still grainy like sand, we had to bake it longer and try it again in the water until it was soft. We filtered out the powder by suspending it in a fine white cloth and letting the water drip out. Then we put the powder in a ceramic jar, covered it with water and closed the jar. Whenever the maids were free, they scooped out some of the powder paste and sprinkled it on a flat basket lined with banana leaves. It was then set out to dry. At that time I was between three and four years old. I also did some sprinkling and tried hard until I could do it as well as the grown-ups. Everybody praised me, saying that I could do it beautifully; the drops were of equal size, not too large nor too small, and well-arranged in rows. If fragrant powder was needed, the children had to wake up really early to go pick flowers from a big *saraphi* tree in front of the Prince's house. Only the pollen was taken and ground fine in a mortar. It was then mixed with the powder, sprinkled in droplets, and set to dry. It was sold by the

small measuring cup. I was still little, so I don't know how much Mother sold it for per cup.

There was a baby elephant at the governor's mansion. It was so young it could not eat by itself. Grandpa Yam was its keeper. This baby elephant was motherless. I don't know how or when it came to the mansion. I remember only that when I woke up in the morning, I would go to help Grandpa Yam take care of the baby elephant. Grandpa Yam pounded banana trunks and cooked rice, sprinkled it with salt, shaped it into round balls and let me feed them to the elephant. I had to put the rice ball deep into the elephant's mouth, to the end of my arm. The elephant's throat was very soft. Father gave us a whiskey bottle filled with milk every morning. I don't know what kind of milk it was. I had to feed the elephant by sticking the bottle in its mouth, then pouring the milk down its throat. It made a gurgling sound, until the bottle was empty. Some days after it had eaten I got on its back and rode around the mansion grounds. The mansion's floor was low, just about the height of the elephant's back.¹³ One day the elephant got frisky and ran under the mansion. I bent down just in the nick of time, hugging its neck so I would not fall off. My nursemaid named Čhai and the grown-ups who witnessed the incident were very frightened, thinking I would be knocked from the elephant's back. When the elephant emerged on the other side, I was still hanging on. Everyone was relieved. Čhai cried.

Not long after, this baby elephant was taken down the river on *Luang Čhitčamnong's* raft to be offered to His Royal Highness Prince Iad Nqi (later King Prachadhipok, Rama VII) in Bangkok. I don't remember who presented it to him because I was too young. I remember only that Mother and I went down to Bangkok, too. We travelled by a covered boat with two oarsmen alongside the raft. In the boat there were Mother, myself, the nursemaid named Čhai, and two oarsmen. We ate with *Luang Čhitčamnong* in a shed on the raft where he slept as well. The baby elephant was also on this raft. Grandpa Yam came, too. From a child's point of view, the raft was extremely large.

In olden days while travelling one had to watch for "jungle fever" (malaria). Mother therefore gave me liquid quinine every day. I usually threw a tantrum because the medicine is very bitter. Before they could pour the medicine down my throat, I cried and struggled until the medicine was spilled. They had to lure me with candied bel fruit. If I did not get this bel fruit, I refused to take the medicine. We separated from *Luang Čhitčamnong* at Paknampho. Mother and I went on to Bangkok by boat by ourselves. The baby elephant came after on the raft with *Luang Čhitčamnong*.

I can remember when Mother took me to the Grand Palace to wait for the elephant at Yamkham Gate near Amarin-tharawinitchai Palace. I saw Queen Saowapha-Phongsri and His Royal Highness Iad Nqi coming out to receive the elephant inside the Yamkham Gate. An astrologer chose 8:00 a.m. as the auspicious time to present the gift. A red and white cloth and a string of bells were tied around the elephant's neck. Grandpa Yam had to take it to the elephant's shed at Wisetchaisi Gate, and I understand that he had to stay until the baby elephant was familiar with

its new keeper. I don't know what royal name was later given to this elephant.

Mother took me to stay with Grandfather *Phraya* Kraikosa¹⁴ at Thatian House, which is now His Royal Highness Prince Chula-Chakraphongse's¹⁵ palace. We stayed there about two months, then travelled back to Nan by boat.

When we got back to Nan that time, Mother packed away everything in order to move back to Bangkok, because Father was named Governor of Choburi.¹⁶ Before we moved, Father had to go to Chiang Khong, in Chiangrai Province¹⁷ on official business. He took Mother and me along. We went in a government boat that had a lion crest at the stern. At the time, there were many robbers, therefore His Royal Highness Prince Damrong Dejanuphab¹⁸ let Father use the government boat because robbers feared the lion crest.

I overheard Mother talk about digging for sapphires in Chiang Khong. I thought I'd be going along to dig some, too. I imagined that there would be plenty of gemstones. Father dressed himself in a *chongkaben* and a *rajapatan* jacket.¹⁹ He beckoned to a village headman who lived across the river to come and pick him up in a small rowboat because the river was shallow. Father had business on the other side of the river. I wanted to go dig for sapphires and begged him to take me along. He would not because he had work to do. I refused to understand--started to cry and make a fuss. I hung on to his jacket. Father was so angry at my obstinacy that he slapped me twice. Father had never hit me before so I was upset and sobbed hard. Mother watched without saying a word. After Father left in the boat, Mother said: "Now stop crying. We two will go together. 'Ah' went on business. We can't go with him." So I stopped crying. In the end we never did go digging for sapphires, but the villagers brought Mother some rocks. After we returned to Nan, Mother attached the rocks to sticklac and ground them on a whetstone until the outsides wore off. The gemstones could then be seen. Some were not good, but others were, with very pretty colors--blue, red, purple, and pink. Mother and I went downriver to Bangkok before Father, who still had business and would come later.

One day a Frenchman named M. Pavi came to see Father at the mansion in Nan. They talked business in the office, then came out to the porch. I was walking around there, thinking that the *farang*²⁰ had a very long nose. I had not seen anyone with such a long nose. M. Pavi asked me my age. I did not know the answer. I turned to Father, but Father told me to answer for myself. I hesitated for a long while because I had lost courage. Father urged me to answer. I finally blurted out that I was eleven years old. Father and M. Pavi burst out laughing.

M. Pavi handed me a toy. I was filled with joy. It was a big cabbage, green in color. When it was wound up, its leaves opened out and music played. Then suddenly a white rabbit with red eyes popped out. When the music stopped, there was a sound, "kraek," the rabbit

disappeared, and the cabbage leaves closed. If wound up anew, the music started and the rabbit appeared again. I loved this toy very much.

The French consul in Nan was named M. De Fontulis. He could speak Thai a little. M. Pavi was the French representative in the negotiations of the border along the Mekhong River.

Notes for Chapter I

1. Nan is a province in the north of Thailand. At the time it was ruled by a provincial prince, but was governed under the Bangkok King.
2. Prince or ruler of Laos.
3. Prince Wongsadhiraj Sanid was the son of Rama II. He was the first of the Sanidwongse line.
4. A name used by the people for the prince of the northern provinces.
5. The position of Crown Prince here is more like a deputy king because he is not in the line of succession.
6. He was sent to Nan by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V).
7. Title for northern royalty.
8. Title for those northern royalty whose mothers were lesser wives or concubines.
9. Title for the wife of a nobleman with the rank of *Phra*.
10. The Thai in the north eat glutinous rice, whereas central and southern Thai eat regular or non-glutinous rice.
11. The leaves were prepared for chewing. Only the Thai in the north chew fermented tea leaves.
12. In the last of Lord Buddha's incarnations, he was born Phra Wetsandon (Vessantara). In order to earn high merit, he gave away his two children, Kanhā and Chālī, to Chuchok who was a greedy, malicious Brahmin.
13. Thai houses are built on stilts high above the ground.
14. He was the father of *Phra* Phromsurindh and had the title of *Phraya*.
15. Prince Chula-Chakraphongse, who died in 1963, was the author of "Lords of Life" and many other books.
16. A province by the sea, near Bangkok.
17. A province in the north, near the Burmese border.
18. He was a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn and was Minister of the Interior at the time.
19. A *ŏhongkaben* is a sarong whose ends are threaded between the legs and tucked up in back. A *rajapatan* jacket is similar to the Nehru jacket.
20. White-skinned person. A Caucasian.

II

LIFE AT COURT

KING PRACHADHIPOK'S CHILDHOOD

Since the Thai people these days are hearing something about the history of His Majesty King Prachadhipok because of the return of his ashes to Thailand,¹ I, who got to know him when he was about four years old and had the opportunity to play with him when I was between nine and twelve years old, thought it would be a good idea to write about him. Perhaps this will be of some help to those who plan to write a biography of our King, providing them with views and understanding of additional aspects of his character. Therefore, these few incidents that I will now relate may be of some use.

At this writing I am already sixty years old. When I was about nine Mother entrusted me to Her Majesty Queen Saowapha-Phongsi, who was a queen of King Chulalongkorn, the fifth king of the Chakri Dynasty. The reason for this change was that Mother had to go abroad with her husband, *Phraya Mahiban Borirak* [*Phra Phromsurindh* before his promotion], who was to assume his duties as ambassador to Russia.

So one afternoon, Mother, bringing with her incense sticks, candles, and flowers in a pedestal bowl,² took me to the Royal Palace. We waited on the outside staircase of Suddhasi Palace in order to see the Queen. About 5 p.m., Her Majesty the Queen appeared at the top stair to receive those who had come to see her. If it were an ordinary house, we could say that it was the front steps. But the palace stairs are wide, made of beautiful black and white marble. When the Queen learned that Mother had come to entrust her daughter to her, she most graciously received us. Even though I was young, I could feel her generosity when I saw her face and her sweet, sharp eyes. She accepted the incense sticks, candles, and flowers and told one of the maids: "Go get Iad Noi." In a little while, a small fair and slight boy who was in a white Western-style one-piece suit appeared. He had a topknot³ with a flower garland around it and a hair pin made of colored gemstones surrounded by diamonds. He sat down next to the Queen. I assumed that he was her son--King Prachadhipok in his childhood, about three or four years old. The court ladies called him Prince Iad Noi. The Queen said "I have a new girl. Do you want to take her and go to play?" Prince Iad Noi smiled sweetly but did not answer. He was a little bashful, and sat quietly next to his mother. He blinked whenever the Queen talked to him. Then the Queen went to the Blue Room, which is next to Suddhasi Palace. This room was used as a den and a room to receive "inner court"⁴ royal persons. I was taken to the big play room on the first floor of the palace and was entrusted to the care of *Khum Chom*, who later was to become a nursemaid of His Royal Highness, Prince Chula-Chakraphongse. Mother bid goodbye and left.

I was taken to sleep in a huge bedroom, which was on the ground floor of Thepdanai Palace. It was called the *Mom Chao* Room because many male and female *Mom Chao*⁵ who were under the Queen's patronage

slept there. It was her responsibility to take care of children presented to her, orphans, and those, like myself, whose parents had to go far away on official business or to different provinces far from Bangkok. In those days it sometimes took months to reach certain places. The Queen took care of the children, giving them food, clothing, education, and also monthly stipends. I received, at the beginning, one *baht* per month. The Queen was like a great Bo tree⁶ in the middle of the city, providing everyone the right to sit and enjoy the cool shade. Besides members of the royal family, children of government officials were there in good numbers. The *Mqm Chao* Room therefore was full of both royal and common children of both sexes. To give all the names here would be irrelevant, so I will list only a few. The males of *Mqm Chao* rank included Prince Wisetsak Chayangkul, Prince Phunsikasem Kasemsi, Prince Damratdamrong Dewakul, Prince Wongnirachon Dewakul, Prince Piyabut Chakraphan, Prince Phongphuwanat Dawiwongse. The female *Mqm Chao* included Princess Phani-Anong (called Chat), Princess Keng Dawiwongse, and Princess Tasani-Anonglak Sawatdiwat, who was the older half-sister of Her Majesty Queen Ramphai-Phanni⁷ and the oldest daughter of His Royal Highness Prince Sawat [Queen Saowapha-Phongsai's brother]. Besides the *Mqm Chao* there were, among the females, M.R.⁸ Chan Chayangkul, Lady Khačhon Pharataraja, *Khun* Wad, who was a daughter of *Phraya* Chodúk-Rajasethi (Fak), and Lady Inkhamontri⁹. We had to sleep in various places because there was not enough space in that one room. I was told by the nursemaid Chom that I had to see the Queen every day after she awoke. And if their Royal Highnesses, the Queen's children, wanted me to play with them, I had to do so.

I don't remember how many days I was in the palace. I did not try to remember, because I didn't know that I would be writing about all this when I was sixty. I was told by someone to go and play with *Thunkramqm*¹⁰ at Thepdanai Palace, which is opposite to Suddhasi Palace and connected to it on the upper level by a terrace connected to the Blue Room. We played the usual things: building houses with wood blocks that were sold in boxes, playing with boxfuls of toy soldiers, cooking with imported utensils and stove, making music with drums and horn. We played according to the *Thunkramqm*'s desires, but the most enjoyable activity was "pretending to be king" because we got to play with *Thunkramqm* Iad, His Royal Highness Prince Asadang-Dechawud (Prince of Nakhon Rajasima), the older brother of King Prachadhipok [Iad Nqi]. Ordinarily, the older brother played only with male *Mqm Chao*. They played soldiers and policemen. He did not play with his younger brother because of his female companions. The older brother called them "cackling group." The girls were irritated and did not want to have anything to do with the boys.

One day--I don't remember what caused this sudden change--the older brother asked his brother to play father and mother. They agreed, after a few words, that the younger brother would be the king, taking the queen and the concubines by *Chakri Ship*¹¹ to different islands in the sea. Probably the boys wanted to play with the girls, so they thought up something that they could play together. They simulated the *Chakri Ship* by bringing out a big toy steam boat over a meter long and placing it in the middle of the room. The boat was surrounded with boxes, forming an enclosed area wide enough for everyone to sit

or stand inside. The older brother asked his brother to set up his family, selecting a queen and concubines. The older brother himself was to be captain, while all the male *Mqm Chao* had their duties, as in a real ship, based on what they could remember from the times they travelled with the King. Even though the young prince was still very little, he was able to choose Princess Tasani to be Queen Saowapha-Phongsi. She was already his favorite. She had to be with him all the time; only she was allowed to present his meals. King Chulalongkorn's favorite lesser wife at the time was Lady Chum, an older sister of Phraya Burudrat-Rajawanlop. I was chosen to be Lady Chum. The others got various roles. All the girls were under the control of the younger brother. The older brother controlled the boys. When we arrived at an island he liked, the "king" would take his "queen" and the entourage to visit, for instance, Pha-ngan Island, where they went swimming at the waterfall and gathered swallows' nests,¹² sea shells, and crabs. All these things were represented by cookies, candies, and chocolates. I was the one who got them from *Khun Chom*, the nursemaid, who also was the head caretaker of the Queen's stock room. At the end of the play, all the goodies were eaten immediately.

After that, on every Sunday, which was the day there was no school for the Princes and everyone else, we all played together. For instance we played at giving a sermon about *Mahachat*.¹³ The older brother and some male *Mqm Chao* who were not bashful became the preaching monks; the rest of us were male and female templegoers. Each had to give an offering to the monks. Each decorated his offering according to his ideas and abilities. The best one got a reward. Everybody went looking for lids of wood boxes or biscuit boxes to decorate with leaves and branches attached with wax, making believe that they were trees. They made pictures of Chuchok taking Kanha and Chali, Phra Wetsandon giving away his children, Matsi going to the woods, and so on. Candies and chocolate were also requested, but wax was the hardest to get because the keeper of the storeroom, who was an old woman, was stingy, believing that enough had already been given and refusing to give more. But she could not say no to *Thunkramqm*, so she locked herself in the storeroom, having someone lock the room on the outside, and pretended that she was not around. The male *Mqm Chao* were dispatched to get the wax. They went around the room trying to break in, but the windows were barred. They climbed up and saw the keeper named Yim, who had been wet-nurse to the late Prince Tripet, reading a religious book. The *Mqm Chao* pleaded for the wax, but were denied. They got angry and decided to burn wet-nurse Yim with a lighted candle that they attached to the end of a long stick and poked at her. It worked, for Yim had to get up and hand them the wax; she then called the servant to unlock the room before she was incinerated. The boys were glad to get the wax to decorate the offerings. They cheered loudly, heedless of the fact that Their Majesties the King and the Queen were sleeping on the upper floor nearby. They slept during midday and woke up in the afternoon.

This kind of play for four-, five-, seven-, eight-, and nine-year-old children (the oldest was not older than twelve) was conducted in an orderly manner and led by the two *Thunkramqm*, the older of whom was eight. They imitated what their royal parents did. They did not do

anything wild, although they could have if they chose to. They were very wise. As for King Prachadhipok, if he had been a village child, he probably would not have been weaned yet and would have still been innocent. But he did his job as a make-believe king well; whatever his father said to his mother, he remembered and imitated exactly. And because his chosen queen already was his favorite, they acted very lovey-dovey together.

I should mention that there was another brother; His Royal Highness Prince Chuthadhut-Dharadilok, Prince of Phetchabun (*Thunkramom* Tiw). Although he also resided in a part of this palace, I have not mentioned him before because he did not like to play as we did. He liked to be among grown-ups, molding wax into different kinds of animals, something he did very well. He did not care to join in the play with his older and younger brothers. Sometimes he watched us play--but only for a little while. Therefore, there were no male or female children to play with him because to him we were too naughty, could not be still, and needless to say could not make little animals.

Those who are interested in King Prachadhipok's character will see that he was open-minded. He did not hold grudges toward his brother who called him sissy for playing with girls. When he was asked to join in the play, he accepted as a good sport and did his best. Who at that time could have foreseen that in the future he would become king? He was a king so open-minded that he whole-heartedly gave up his power to the Thai people--for the progress and prosperity of the country. He gave the people their first constitution. Those who may wish to write his biography can quote from my writing that he was open-minded and generous. Those who really knew him could not refrain from sadness on the day that his ashes came back to Bangkok. May we all wish that his soul be in a happy place. And, if his soul can travel around, may it drift back to visit the Thai people. If it is possible, may things happen just the way he wished--that Thailand will be in peace forever.

Notes for Chapter II

1. King Prachadhipok went to live in England after the Revolution of 1932. He abdicated in 1935 and died in 1941. Her Majesty Queen Ramphai-Phanni brought his ashes back to Bangkok in 1949.
2. In the Thai custom of offering oneself or one's children to the king or the queen, the person has to bring incense sticks, candles, and flowers in a pedestal bowl.
3. Both boys and girls in those days wore their hair in a topknot, which was cut at age eleven for girls and thirteen for boys to mark their entry into adulthood.
4. Female members of the royal family.
5. *Mom Chao* is the third generation from the king and can be called prince or His Serene Highness or M.C. in abbreviation.
6. The Buddha received enlightenment under the Bo tree. It has a special significance in Buddhist countries.
7. King Prachadhipok's queen.
8. Abbreviated form for *Mom Rajawongse*. They are children of *Mom Chao*.
9. Both Khačhōn Pharataraja and Inkhamontri got their "Lady" title later, in consequence of their husbands becoming *Phraya*.
10. The term for addressing children of queens.
11. A royal ship in which King Chulalongkorn sailed to Europe and other countries.
12. The nest is made from the birds' saliva and can be eaten.
13. Lord Buddha's last incarnation. In the last incarnation of Lord Buddha, he was born Phra Wetsandōn (Vessantara). He was banished by his father, the king, because he had given away all his wealth. Along with him went his wife, Matsi, and his two children, Kanha and Chali. When Matsi went into the woods for food, Chuchok, a greedy, malicious Brahmin, came looking for Phra Wetsandōn and begged him for his children. Phra Wetsandōn gave Chuchok his two children in order to gain the highest merit.

THE DEATH OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS SIRAPHON-SOPHON (LEK)

Before I go on telling about life at court, I want to thank *Phraya* Udom-Phongphensawat for his good will toward the readers and me, especially in pointing out my mistakes in the names of the instructors of King Chulalongkorn's children. His corrections have inspired me with the hope that he will kindly sacrifice his time to point out any further mistakes I may make. Because I am in a remote area, I write only as my memory permits. I have no chance to investigate, and hardly have time that can be called free; therefore, please consider my writing a kind of narration.

One of many incidents during my bumpy childhood which I select to tell here is the death of Her Royal Highness Princess Siraphon-Sophon, who was called *Thunkramqm Fa Ying*¹ Lek. She was an aunt of the present King. When I went to live in the palace, she was already sick. I never saw her. I saw only her picture--she was very cute. I think we were about the same age. She still had her topknot.

That day, the whole day, it was gloomy. It was rumored that the Princess' condition was very grave and that she might pass away that day. As it turned out, she died that afternoon. The children in the *Mqm Chao* Room were most interested, probably because we were the same age as she. Everyone was sad at the news of her death. Toward evening, which was the time to take the body away, the children waited in front of her palace, which was simply called the "Palace." Even her mother was called the "Palace Queen."² Queen Saowapha-Phongsi was called the "Upstairs Queen." It started to drizzle. The children did not mind the rain, but were worried about their topknots, so they went under the eaves of Her Royal Highness Princess Chutharat's Palace, which was a little distance diagonally from the "Palace," and waited to see the funeral procession. A group of men who were to be in the procession, the urn,³ the inside urn, and the sedan chair, also the drummers, were waiting in front of the palace. The undertakers who were to take care of the corpse, with *Phra* Amphan as leader, had already gone into the palace. The members of royalty, wearing all black, gradually filed in in order to pour lustral water on the corpse.

As the afternoon wore on, the day got cloudier. It rained more heavily. The children, shivering with cold, stood waiting. They whispered to each other when they saw anyone they knew. Nobody spoke out loud. Exactly at dusk the flutes started their "u ae" and the drums were beaten. The flutes blew woefully. This meant that the body had been put into the urn. The children said to each other that they were disheartened and stopped talking to each other a while. After the ceremony, the urn was put on a sedan and moved from the palace. The urn was supported by two boys, one at the front and one at the back. They were dressed like angels.⁴ We knew them and recognized Prince Damratdamrong Dewakul and Prince Phunsikasem Kasemsi, who were also from the *Mqm Chao* Room, as those chosen to bear the urn.

The funeral procession moved toward Dewaphitak Gate. It was said that the urn would be kept at either Niphetphitthaya Tower or Dhammasangwet Tower. When the urn passed, the children started to cry. Tears mixed with rain. Perhaps it was the weather, for everywhere there were the loud crying of the people in the palace and the mournful sounds of the drums and flutes. We saw male royalty wipe their tears with handkerchiefs and walk after the urn in the midst of the rain in the dim glow of the electric light, making a hazy scene. We were chilled from the rain, chilled from the wind, and chilled at heart--all shivering. The court ladies who were her maids carried things that they were to use at the Tower and followed the procession, sobbing. The other members of the court and the children who lived in the *Mqm Chao* Room walked at the end of the procession, then departed to their quarters.

Later I learned that the Princess' mother cried so hard that she fainted, and from then on remained so heart-broken that her health deteriorated. Not long after, the younger [*sic*] *Thunkramqm* (His Royal Highness Prince Sommotiwongse Warothai, an uncle to the present king) became sick, they said, with dysentery. Both Thai and Western doctors took care of him, but he did not get better. We children used to walk past his residence, which was outside the Phimanchaisi Gate, on our way to Wang Nqk School, located I'm not sure where. When he became gravely ill, we used to tiptoe when we reached his place. He, also, died. Because he was a boy and not our age, we children were not that sad; we only felt sorry for the queen, his mother, who had lost two children in such a short time. It took her a long time to recover from her sorrow, which I learned about only after I had gone abroad. When the younger [*sic*] *Thunkramqm* passed away, the two *Mqm Chao* bearing the urn to the Tower were Prince Thongthikhayu Thongyai and Prince Sombunsak. It is strange that *Mqm Chao* were not used to bear His Majesty King Ananda's⁵ urn.

For children, any emotion is short-lived. They have fun again and are naughty anew. The girls in the *Mqm Chao* Room were as naughty as the boys. His Royal Highness Prince Chainat Narenthon,⁶ when he saw me in Russia and Germany, said that I was the naughtiest one. At the time I did not object, but in fact some were naughtier than I. Talking about naughtiness, some may want to know how naughty. I will tell you only some incidents, because if I tell you all, it will be a waste of paper.

Whenever they wanted to play the children would put their heads together and pretend to be female members of royalty. When the King's sons or daughters, queens, brothers or sisters, or other members of his family went anywhere out of the palace, they had to have a maid, carrying a wind-up oil lamp, walking in front of them. This kind of lamp has a fan blowing in the bottom of the oil container. It has to be wound at the bottom; that is why it is called "wind-up oil lamp." If the person leaving the place were not royal, only a lesser wife, the wind-up oil lamp was carried behind them. Some children would have the servants carry them in their arms, as if they were senior royal children. Other children grabbed the lamps, already lit, and walked out in front. Some pretended to be servants and walked on behind, along the streets. You should understand that at regular intervals, on every street in the

palace grounds, there were female "police." They were called *khlon*. They were officers, from rank one to rank four, who supervised. The *khlon* in charge were called first-class, second-class, and third-class officers. The highest rank was *Luang Mae Chao*. As far as I know, the *Luang Mae Chao* rank has been eliminated--it no longer exists. The last *Luang Mae Chao* was named Khian. If royalty passed by one of the female police, she had to get up and bow like a man. They changed guard like soldiers. The children playing at being the King's children would go along the streets. New *khlon*, thinking they were real royalty, stood up and bowed. The children giggled. Whenever they encountered an experienced *khlon* and fooled her, she'd yell out: "You kids, you like to fool us. I'm going to take you right off to the precinct station." At that the children ran away in all directions, not from fear, but because the fun was over. They went back to bed. The precinct station was near Yamkham Gate. You must realize that the bold children were not afraid of anyone. The *khlon* were not anxious to scold them, for not even the Queen scolded them.

When it became a fad to ride bicycles, the Queen really pleased the children by buying each one a bicycle according to his size. We practiced riding by ourselves. Before we learned how, we got lots of scrapes and bumps on our faces, shins, and knees. In the end, everyone could ride. At that time, Dusit Palace had just been built and every queen,⁷ and some lesser wives who had children, received a piece of land there on which she built her own palace or house. Therefore, the Queen went to her new palace, I would say, almost every day. We children got to accompany her on Saturday on our bicycles. The Queen went in a carriage called a landau which was all closed, with a top that could be opened and closed. It was drawn by a pair of foreign-bred horses. Royal guards on horseback went along. There was a second royal carriage in which the ladies-in-waiting and one or two young maids rode, and another carriage for the officers of the Royal Household. There were two ways to go there. If the Queen chose to go by way of Siao Bridge, which is now demolished, we had to go to Banglamphu and cross Dewet Bridge. If we went by way of Phanphiphob Bridge, we had to go to Nang Loeng and cross Dewakam Bridge. Sometimes the Queen chose to go by a different route, which the children called a "special treat." The frail ones got tired. The strong and healthy had fun. If anyone did trail behind he would have to be picked up in the Royal Household carriage. Therefore, no matter how tired, no one dared tarry, for fear of losing face for not being able to keep up with his friends.

The King also went, like the Queen, in a horse-drawn carriage, with his sons and daughters. The second carriage was for his other daughters. Also coming along on occasion were members of the "inner court"⁸ who were his favorites at the time and were called the "chosen" ones, for instance, the secondary queen, Princess Saisawali-Phirom, Prince Phanu's⁹ grandmother. She came in a separate carriage, not in his. If the King wanted to talk to her on the way, he had her carriage come close to his. When he finished talking, her carriage slowed down to follow his carriage again. One time the horses of the King's carriage got excited and pulled the carriage

down into Lot Canal. *Chamden* Wai-Woranat, called *Phranai* Wai (who is now *Phraya* Dewet), was the coachman. We learned that the King was not injured, but the Queen was very upset when she learned about it. If this had happened in the old days the coachman would have shared Phanthai Nqrasing's fate.¹⁰ But the King was not angry at all, telling the Queen that the coachman had done his best. This shows us that the King was just and broad-minded and deserves to be called the "Beloved King" of the Thai people.

The children were excited to have their own bicycles. They dearly loved them. With these bicycles they could also accompany the Queen on long trips. But having the children along bothered some grown-ups; they sometimes hated us because of our mischievousness. This was true, for instance, of some royal guards who did not like children. I remember particularly *Phra* Ranron and *Phra* Rajawarin. These two gentlemen were "handsome" (to use a modern term)¹¹ in the eyes of the court girls. But from the children's point of view, they were not that handsome and were hard-hearted. They did not smile at us or tell us stories; therefore we had no friendly relationship with them at all. And this made us children maliciously try to hit the hind legs of their horses with our front wheels. Their startled horses almost jumped in front of the Queen's carriage. The Queen glanced at them with "green eyes,"¹² and the children got the relayed "green eyes" from the horsemen. We pretended not to know what it was all about. The horsemen thereafter had to be on the watch, continually looking backward with their backs erect, so they were carpingly called "turning deer" by the mischievous children. Thinking about the incident now, the name given was not really criticism but praise, for the gesture of a deer turning around is charming. While the name was suitable to the horsemen's postures, if the children had known the implications, they would have given them another name.

Among those who loved children was *Luang*¹³ Salayud-Yothahan, later to become *Phraya* Phakdi-Phuton, the father of Mr. Ekarin and Mr. Butsarin. I met him later in Russia, when he was guardian of *Thunkramqm* Chakraphongse-Phuwanat¹⁴ and had married Ekarin's mother.¹⁵ We were good friends there, too. *Luang* Salayud was a good storyteller. One of his stories is still not finished to this day. The story started with two birds, male and female, building a nest in a tree. After the nest was finished, the female bird laid three eggs. The eggs hatched and out came the baby birds. When morning came, the male bird went out to fetch food to feed his mate; then it was the female's turn to go. If *Luang* Salayud stopped at this point, the children who crowded all around him would cry out, "And then what happened?" He would say: "The male flew out." The children repeated, "And then what happened next?" He would add: "The female flew back." But it was just then that the Queen wanted the carriage to turn back to the Grand Palace. The fascinated children wanted to hear more. "Do continue the story, please," they begged. The following week, after everyone got their packed lunches and finished eating, they reminded him to go on with his story. He started off with "the male flew out, the female flew back." The children innocently listened with open mouths. After a while, they realized that the story did not

go any further. One of the brighter children in our group blurted out, just before *Luang* Salayud could speak, "The male flew out." The slow ones then caught on and all laughed and told the story among themselves. *Luang* Salayud sat, smiling and listening. Those who had paid no attention to the storytelling, Royal Household officers and other officials, turned to look because of the loud noise and joined in with the children's laughter. It turned out to be great fun.

Even when the Queen chatted with wives of officials at a palace not far from where the children were, she was not bothered by the noise of the children, for she was used to it. But when it was unusually loud, she sent someone to find out what was going on. For instance, one day there was a fight. One of the children was named Wad. She was of Chinese descent, the daughter of *Phraya* Chodúk-Rajasethi (Fak). She had gotten a new hat from the Queen. At that time, children wore hats. The Queen had ordered the new hats from Bad Man Store.¹⁶ When they were shown to the Queen on the balcony of the Blue Room, she told the children to choose one each from the different sizes and styles. Some liked this style, some liked that style; the children chose what they thought pretty, without thinking whether the hat was becoming or not. *Khun* Wad happened to like one that looked like the coolie's hat that rickshaw men wear. Some chose flat woven ones like those the *farang* boys wore. I had a topknot, so my hat floated high on my head. Because it tied under the chin, it could not blow away, but it was not at all secure. The children did not care, for each had a new hat. They happily wore them when they accompanied the Queen on their bicycles. The day this incident occurred, one of the royal guards found *Khun* Wad's coolie hat and asked whose it was; it looked like a rickshaw man's hat. Somebody told him it was Wad's. One playful child picked it up and put it on her head and teasingly uttered a Chinese word. Wad was quick-tempered; she chased and struck the child; they scuffled with each other. Everybody thought it was fun, so they all cheered in Chinese which made the hat's owner angrier. She refused to stop. The Queen sent someone to check; he returned and told her what had happened. The Queen only laughed.

Another time, there was an argument with a Chinese who had opened up a gambling casino. At that time, whenever there was a fair, there was apt to be gambling and betting. It seems to me that it was not prohibited at all. It was freely practiced. I remember the opening of a new marketplace named Yot. It must have been owned by a member of the "inner court," because His Majesty the King went. Of course, the children got to go, too, but we did not accompany the Queen. She had some grown-ups take us. One was Mr. Nak, a chief cook, and another was Mr. Thongchā Thongtham,¹⁷ who is now *Phraya* Phaichayon. The Queen gave us four or five *baht* each. At the market, we bought various toys and made bets at the casino. We crowded in, and after listening to the clues, we placed our coins on a green cloth which had different colored designs that meant, for instance, Phra Aphai [a king], Nang Matcha [mermaid], Sinsamut [a prince], Nang Phisā [a giantess]¹⁸ and many others. The Chinese called out the clue "thundering noise came with the waves, Phra Aphai wept for the

mermaid." These children had no head for gambling, so they did not catch the hint. They consulted with one another about where to put down their coins. Some did not know where to bet, some bet willy-nilly on the king, the mermaid, the prince, and the giantess. They just guessed, and did not think it out. After placing the coins, the Chinese revealed the answer; it was the giantess. The children were shocked; they did not understand why it was the giantess. The Chinese amassed all the coins that the children had lost in the bet. They asked why it was the giantess. She did not fit the clues at all. They accused the Chinese of cheating and were unwilling to let him have the money, but the money had already been swept away. The Chinese started to get angry and argued that it was the giantess who came noisily, making Phra Aphai miss the pretty mermaid.¹⁹ The children disagreed, still insisting that the Chinese had cheated them, because they did not understand this game of clues. In the end, still complaining, they left and went to watch a *yeekay* and a classical play and to buy toys. When they had had enough, they were taken back to the Royal Palace at dusk.

It is strange that these little things pop up in my mind from time to time. Even though at the time I did not agree with the Chinese, later on, thinking about it, I had to go along with him. If there is anybody from that group of children who can remember the incident, we should bring it up and discuss it. But the unfinished story of the two birds is no longer a problem; even though the teller has passed away, the two little birds still go on flying away and flying back. I see them almost every day on the trees near Bangbird Farm.²⁰ On the mulberry bushes at Bangbird Farm, there are small birds that make nests with the fiber from coconut husks. They are no bigger than a Chinese tea cup. They lay three eggs which will hatch into baby birds. The male bird then flies away to look for food, the female bird flies back. This kind of bird is tame. They don't start when looked at. They are called *kabuaad*. They are only about the size of a thumb. If human beings will only appreciate the value of nature and not totally destroy it, the story about the birds will go on forever.

Notes for Chapter III

1. A term of address for daughters of a queen.
2. She was an older sister of Queen Saowapha-Phongsi and also a queen, so all her children were called *Thunkramqm*.
3. Kings, queens, kings' children, royal members of *Phra-ong Chao* rank, high-rank nobility, and monks are entitled to use urns, which differ according to rank and position.
4. Dressed in white shirt and pants and a high, pointed hat, trimmed with gold.
5. Rama VIII, who was killed by a bullet in 1946. He was the older brother of the present King.
6. A son of King Chulalongkorn who was the regent of the present King when he was in Switzerland.
7. King Chulalongkorn had four queens.
8. Female members of royalty and lesser wives of the king, so-called because they lived in the inside part of the Grand Palace where males over fourteen years of age, except the king, were not allowed to go.
9. He is the grandfather of Her Royal Highness Princess Somsawali, consort of the present Crown Prince.
10. Phanthai Nqrasing was a helmsman for King Phra Chao Sda of the Ayudhaya Period. In a trip along the river, because of strong currents, the boat hit the bank. The law called automatically for his execution. The king wanted to pardon him, but the noble Nqrasing chose death in order to save the king from breaking the law.
11. The word used here is *lq*, which has the primary meaning of "to cast (metals in a form)." The additional meaning of handsome developed in recent decades. At the time of the events being described, the word probably used was *ngam*, meaning either handsome or beautiful. It was used for either sex but now is exclusively applied to women.
12. "Green eyes" means to be angry or to show anger.
13. *Luang* is a noble rank, one step below *Phra*.
14. Second son of King Chulalongkorn and Queen Saowapha-Phongsi. He went to Russia for his education and married a Russian woman named Catherine. He was the father of His Royal Highness Prince Chula-Chakraphongse, the author of "Lords of Life."

15. *Luang* Salayud (*Phraya* Phakdi-Phuton) also married a Russian woman.
16. A fashionable British store in Bangkok at that time.
17. The family name in here is misquoted. His last name is Thongchǎa. He is the first of the Thongchǎa family.
18. These characters are from a poetic romance named "Phra Aphaimani". It was written by Sunthon Phu, a famous poet of the early Bangkok Period.
19. Phra Aphai was captured by Nang Phisǎa, a giantess of the sea who had fallen in love with him. They had one son, Sinsamut. Phra Aphai managed to get away with the help of a family of mermaids; a father, a mother, and a beautiful daughter, who later became Phra Aphai's wife.
20. The farm in Prachuab-Kirikhan Province in the South of Thailand owned by the author and her husband.

THE WELCOMING OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

I have the same hope for the progress and stability of my country that all Thais have. There is cause for more hope now because His Majesty the King has returned to Bangkok and brought with him his fiancée,¹ who shortly will be bestowed with the rank of queen. Now the Thais, who have been disappointed for three reigns, have begun to hope that everyone who wants to see the country solid and stable will have his wish fulfilled. I, who live on a farm in the country, am no exception in feeling this way. Since there is no other way to express this gladness, except to relate my thoughts, therefore I will write stories about the old times for people of the new generation. Imagine, at least, that you are listening to tales, but tales that are really true and happened half a century ago.

I wrote about the reason that I was presented to Her Majesty the Queen in *Khao Ban Muang*,² and also something about King Prachadhipok during his childhood. I am afraid that it will be repetitious if I write about it again, so I will talk about the time after I had already settled into a normal life.

All children between the ages of nine and ten years old, when they leave home to live any place where there are many friends of the same age to play with, and get to live comfortably and eat well, will immediately stop being homesick. If they are homesick, it is only intermittently. When they see things that they have not seen before--that is, a palace with enormously large rooms, with various things covered with silver and gold, beautifully dressed members of the court, the King--it is a sure thing that they will be excited and periodically forget their homes. I lived together with many male and female *Mom Chao* and noblemen's children. I got special treatment because my parents had gone abroad. The Queen arranged to have an adult look out for my welfare, and I was treated very well. That person was *Khun Chom*, who later became a nursemaid of His Royal Highness Prince Chula-Chakraphongse. *Khun Chom* used to be a nursemaid of His Majesty King Vajiravudh³ when he was young, and of His Royal Highness Prince of Phitsanulok-Prachanat.⁴ When I was presented to the Queen, both princes already had gone abroad, and my adopted parents, *Phraya* and Lady Mahiban Bqrirak, had left to head the Thai Embassy in Russia, where the Prince of Phitsanulok was studying.

Every evening a nursemaid who was a general supervisor reminded us that the Queen had already awakened, and we had to shower, then go to see the Queen. The children ran in a group towards the back stairs (it still exists today) to the bathroom. We noisily competed for the shower, in accordance with children's mischievous nature. The nursemaid scrubbed, soaped, and rubbed us with turmeric, which was mixed with lime, until our bodies were bright red; then tamarind was applied, which made our bodies turn very yellow. Those with open wounds felt a stinging pain. Some will be surprised that we did not know how to take a shower by ourselves. Actually, we were able to

shower, but we did not scrub ourselves and that was why the nursemaid helped us. After this was over we were one by one allowed to go and get dressed in the *Mom Chao* Room, because that room, being a bedroom, a dining room, and a dressing room, was very big. There was one particular nursemaid who made topknots. Not everyone knew how. Those whose topknots had come loose had to have them redone. Nobody liked this because they had to sit still, otherwise the topknots were lopsided. If they did not keep still, they were held between the nursemaid's knees. If the topknots had not come undone, the loose hairs had to be rearranged. We could not be in the Queen's presence with messy topknots. Then we put on our clothes. The princes wore long pants, and a one-button, elbow-length shirt. The girls wore *Shongkaben* in the color of the day,⁵ contrasting with the colors of the ribbon that threaded around the scoop-necked blouses with short sleeves decorated with eyelets. The outfits were fastened with silver belts. These things were arranged for each one by a nursemaid. After we finished getting dressed, we were taken to the porch of the Blue Room, where the Queen would come out to eat and receive her royal guests, the King's lesser wives, and members of the "inner court."

About 4 or 5 p.m. the Queen came out of the door of Suddhasi Palace where her bedroom was located. This palace was divided in half and shared with Her Royal Highness Princess Walai-Alongkon, who was an aunt of His Majesty the present King. Every day there were guests from outside: wives of noblemen and wives of royalty. Everyone came with something to present to the Queen, some more, some less. There were many visitors each day. The guests sat on the big, wide palace stairway which was close to the door of the Queen's bedroom. Therefore, when the Queen came out, she saw everybody who was there. She sat down on the top step. She sat down politely, *phapphiap* style,⁶ on the floor, and greeted and conversed with her guests, until the appropriate time. She then went to the Blue Room, ate her first meal, breakfast, and that was almost 6 p.m.. She ate very slowly; sometimes the meal lasted two hours, sometimes longer. The children crouched on the porch in front of her, and could not be absent. If anyone was missing, she noticed and asked immediately. Exceptions were made for sickness; we were scolded if we were lazy. The bigger girls served food to the Queen. Children of my age could not serve yet, because each food tray was very big and heavy. There were three trays which were called the "big meal." The biggest tray contained various side dishes, except curry and sauce. The second tray had only curry, and the smallest one had different kinds of sauces and vegetables or savories. If the children stayed with her, though they were full of hors d'oeuvres when they went to see the Queen, they would be hungry again before she finished her meal, because she ate very slowly.

At 6 p.m., the children kow-towed goodbye and went to eat. That was the noisiest time in the *Mom Chao* Room; it was called a "monkeys' cage." The noise was tumultuous. Everyone talked at once. Outsiders were deafened by the noise. Sometimes the Queen had someone come to tell us to make less noise, but as soon as she left, it got noisy again. Later, the Queen got used to the noise and did not stop us, except when we had the best time and shrieked at the top of our lungs. If it was

that bad, Princess Sqi Sa-ang, who at that time lived in one part of the palace, in the Queen's bedroom--the same level as the *Mqm Chao*--had to come and scold us herself. But she did not punish us at all, and usually it was near bedtime, so everyone quietly went to bed. The grown-ups could enjoy the quietness.

In the morning those who lived there before I came, male and female *Mqm Chao*, went to school. The teenage children of the King by his lesser wives and those big enough to go to school would pass the "Upstairs Palace," the King's residence, going toward Amarin Palace. They studied with a male teacher named *Phraya* Suraphan (called royal instructor), and at Phaisan Thaksin Palace they studied with a female teacher, *Mqm*⁷ Chan Dewakul, who was the mother of Princess Achara Chawee Dewakul.⁸ Some female *Mqm Chao* studied there along with the King's children; for instance, Princess Tasani Sawatdiwat, the older sister of Her Majesty Queen Ramphai-Phanni. Some male *Mqm Chao* went to "Rajakuman School" which was outside Phimanchaisi Gate and was the school where all the queens' children studied. Some of the princes by lesser wives and some *Mqm Chao* went to "Rajawitthayalai," a military school. Daughters of noblemen went to different schools; "Wang Lang" and "Wang Nqk" where the Department of Fine Arts is located today. In the old days it was the palace of His Royal Highness Prab-Prapak, the father of *Chao Phraya* Phrasadet and *Chao Phraya*⁹ Dhanma, Lady Songkandan and Lady Somsak today.

At Wang Nqk School there was a special teacher. She was a half-*farang* named Mrs. Bella. We called her *Mam*¹⁰ Bella [pronounced so as to mean in Thai "to lie with legs spread out" or "to commit suicide"]. After being in the palace a little while, I went to Wang Nqk School. Many of us went there, including some of the *Mqm Chao*. We went out Wisetchaisi Gate and reached there in a short while, and returned, sometimes after 3 p.m., sometimes after 4 p.m.. We got to see the changing of the guard almost every day. It was one of the things that we liked. We heard the Mahachai Song that was played only during the changing of the guard or when a king or a queen or a crown prince was coming.

In olden days, every afternoon at four o'clock the children at the *Mqm Chao* Room would see those of the King's daughters who were adolescents, that is, those who already wore over-the-shoulder sashes [adolescent boys were excluded from the inner court]. They filed past the "Upstairs Palace," and turned into a service court between the *Mqm Chao* Room and the police women's headquarters. They walked up the backstairs to see His Majesty the King. The King's children who still had topknots did not walk, but were carried by the maids, and were accompanied by the lesser wives. The girls whose topknots were cut would walk by themselves, followed by the Yellow Room lesser wives.¹¹ The lesser wives who had lost their children also had to go, for instance, *Chao* Dararasami.¹² None of the Yellow Room lesser wives were *Phra-ong Chao*.¹³ Since I was only nine or ten, I felt that they were rather old.

Watching them going was not as much fun as watching their return. After His Majesty the King's audience, the royal daughters who wore over-the-shoulder sashes were led back by the Princess of Suphanburi, who at the time was Princess Siwilai, because she was most senior. They walked by, according to their ages, about nine or ten of them in all. Their over-the-shoulder sashes were made of pleated silk, and all wore by previous agreement polished, patterned *Chongkaben*. They were the first group to pass the *Mqm Chao* Room. Those of the *Phra-ong Chao* who could not walk yet were carried past next. Along with them in the second group came the King's lesser wives who had children. The third group consisted of the Yellow Room lesser wives.

The children liked to watch the lesser wives, too, and they did not just watch; they liked to comment. Those who had sharp tongues would criticize this one and that one, because there were many of these ladies. When I was young, I thought there were about a hundred of them, the group seemed so large. But now I think that there must have been about thirty. I admit this is a guess because I never counted. They had different figures: some were fat, some were skinny; some were fair, some were dark, some, in between; some were tall, some were short. They did not dress alike. It was impossible to count. All these lesser wives, I understand, really shared the King's bed. They must have been presented to the King by former government officials, so the King graciously took care of them, but at a lower standard, because they did not bear children; but they had to be in attendance on the King every day in the Yellow Room, where they only saw him passing by. He did not speak to them. The royal children saw the King in the Green Room, which was the room where he ate. There were lesser wives on duty, serving him--they were his favorites.

I did not know then what time the Queen saw the King because it was after my bedtime. Some days, I heard the grown-ups say that the Queen came back from the King's quarters at a certain hour. I understood that it was very late, but it was not my business, so I was not interested. His Majesty the King came to the Queen's quarters occasionally. If he came, he did not stay long. Usually he discussed something; then he would go back to his quarters, which were not far. The King's and Queen's quarters were next to each other with a door open to one another. Because each room was very large, it looked as though they were far apart. If it were an ordinary house, you could say that each occupied a room.

The children saw the King at close hand at the *Songkran* New Year.¹⁴ He came to toss coins. All the children were present. All of the members of royalty and some of the King's lesser wives came. Altogether, there was a large crowd. In the Queen's room, the Blue Room, there were some members of the court with most of the children. In addition to the Queen and her children, *Thunkramqm Dang*, the father of the present King, *Thunkramqm Fa Ying Walai*, the aunt of the present King, and the King's children who were young and did not wear over-the-shoulder sashes, came with the King. The King tossed the coins about in the Blue Room, then toward the porch where we children were. Some children shed their fear, went to grab the coins in the Queen's room, and some snatched

coins from the piles of coins that the royalty or the lesser wives amassed and were sitting on. When one of these adults moved to grab a coin, lifting up their rears, the children swept up the coins and each got a lot--many *baht*.¹⁵ Also they received some from those the Queen had picked up. Each coin was an *ah* or a copper *lot*¹⁶ which was bright red. The children then went down, and counted their coins. The generous male *Mqm Chao* together would toss the coins for the girls to pick up. Again there was much noise. After that they would play "flipping the coin" and toss the coins to each other for many more days. The people nearby would be deafened until the coins were gone, either by losing or buying sweets. Their disappearance was not due to stealing--there was no theft at all. The children either tossed the coins for fun or tossed them in the middle of the street to the police women who also had fun for many days.

On Saturday and Sunday we got to play with the *Thunkramqm*, as I already mentioned in *Khao Ban Muang*. Weekdays, we all had to go to school. We really had fun half a day on Saturday and a whole day on Sunday. Other days, the *Thunkramqm* had to be in attendance on the King and the Queen, according to a schedule.

During the rainy season, when it rained heavily, the Queen would invite the royal court and the King's lesser wives, especially the young ones who had children, to go swimming at Suan Tao (called Suan Siwalai). The two *Thunkramqm*, the "Palace Queen," the present King's grandmother, and the Queen herself went. It was fun. The children at the *Mqm Chao* Room were ordered to go, too, and each was given a black oilcloth hat to protect the topknot from becoming lopsided, but otherwise they were naked. The children ran around and noisily played tag. Royalty of high rank swam in the pond, cleansed their skins, chased each other. The children were not allowed in the pond if they did not know how to swim yet. They got to play in the water around the edge only. The young *Thunkramqm*, taken care of by the nursemaids, could not run as well as the other children. Sometimes they asked us to sing a rain song, "*Nang Maew Oey*," which every Thai knows. The children usually sang "May the rice be cheap, the fruit be expensive." The Queen objected, saying that the lyric should be "May it be not expensive." When the children understood this, they sang it right. When the rain subsided the Queen left. The children went in the water every day in the rainy season. Nobody could stop them, not even by force; but the Queen sometimes skipped a day. If the weather was good, in the afternoon, she invited the royal court to play croquet. Then they ate in the pavilion at the edge of the pond. The Queen returned to the palace at about 9 p.m.. The children came back from school, ate a snack and then went to the pond. The Queen always liked to see small children. If anyone was absent, she would ask the reason. If they were not sick, they had to see her every day; otherwise they would be scolded. She did not have to punish them, only ask why they did this or that, and that was enough of a reprimand.

Talking about gaiety at court, in the old days it was merrier inside the palace than it was outside. For instance, on the King's or the Queen's birthday, a lot of people came into the palace to watch,

from Wisetchaisi Gate to Yamkham Gate, but only those who were members of royalty, noblemen, and *Khun Ying* [their wives]. Only those who wore stockings and shoes could come in. Beyond the Yamkham Gate, only women could enter. The lights and lanterns on the arches in front of the administration buildings and Chakri Palace, in front of the Ministry of the Royal Household, were very pretty, as well as outside, at the Ministry of Defense, Pae Palace, and the Court of Justice. Every building in the "inner court" was decorated with lights. There were lots of people, and food stalls were all over. People from outside came in to buy. Apparently the Gate was open until 9 p.m. instead of 6 p.m.. Food cooked by the court ladies, like Thai crêpes, both the meat and the sweet kind, crispy noodle, hors d'oeuvres, *som fak* [fermented shredded fish mixed with rice and wrapped in banana leaves], *mu som* [the same as *som fak*, but made with pork], *pla nam* [made from fish], and sausages, sold best. In the palaces that had musical bands, there would be singing almost all night. In front of the police women's headquarters there was a song recital played by *Thunkramom* Asadang's band. The singing girls were all young. In the "outside court" [males' quarters] there was a navy trumpet band.

If the King had a grand dinner, the King's Guards' band came in to play at the open back-courtyard until 12 midnight when the King finished eating. Male members of royalty and high-ranking officials were present. The Queen was the only female, but she did not finish eating because she ate slowly. She ordered that her meal be ready at her palace. When she came back, she would eat some more.

Another exciting annual ceremony was the cutting of the topknots, because there were many *Thunkramom*, great numbers of *Phra-ong Chao* who had topknots, and also male and female *Mom Chao*. All the *Phra-ong Chao* had to have their topknots cut in the Grand Palace.

The New Year ceremony was also fun. The monks chanted all night, but the children slept with blankets over their heads because they were afraid of ghosts. Some covered their ears, for fear of the "Attana" gun.¹⁷

Telling you this much should be enough to fill the pages. If I have a chance, I will tell you more.

Notes for Chapter IV

1. His Majesty King Bhumibol, the present King, came back to Thailand with his fiancée, M.R. Sirikit Kitiyakon, to be married in 1950.
2. The name of a Thai daily newspaper at that time.
3. The sixth king of the Chakri Dynasty--Rama VI.
4. Second son of Queen Saowapha-Phongsri. Father of Prince Chula-Chakraphongse.
5. In the old days Thai women wore different colored clothes according to the days of the week: Sunday-red, Monday-yellow, Tuesday-pink, Wednesday-green, Thursday-orange, Friday-blue, and Saturday-purple.
6. To sit flat on the floor with both legs bent on one side and tucked in close to the body.
7. Wives of princes who themselves are not royal.
8. A principal of Rajini Girls' School.
9. *Chao Phraya* is a noble rank, one step higher than *Phraya*.
10. White-skinned Caucasian women.
11. All young girls who were presented to the King had to wait to be seen by the King in the Yellow Room and were called the Yellow Room lesser wives. There is some controversy about these lesser wives. Some believed that Yellow Room lesser wives had not yet been chosen to share the King's bed. Others believed they actually slept with the King.
12. She was the daughter of *Chao* Inthawichayanon, Prince of Chiangmai. She had one daughter with the King but lost her at the age of three.
13. Second generation from the King or the King's children by lesser wives.
14. Thai New Year falls on April 13. Today the Thais officially use the international calendar, but still celebrate Songkran too.
15. Thai money, an equivalent of one-twentieth of a dollar.
16. Coins that are no longer used today. Two *lot* (or *solot*) are one *ah*, which is worth one sixty-fourth part of a *baht*.
17. The name of a cannon which was fired on Thai New Year to scare away evil spirits.

THE TOPKNOT CUTTING AND "RECEIVING A PARCHMENT OF GOLD" CEREMONIES
FOR *THUNKRAMQOM* ASADANG-DECHAWUD

The story that I am about to tell, if today's language is used, should have a headline: "Puppies whose eyes haven't yet opened." It started when the Queen chose *Khun* Wad, the owner of the coolie's hat that I told you about, and me to be fanners at the royal ceremony of "receiving a parchment of gold"¹ for *Thunkramom* Iad (His Royal Highness Prince Asadang-Dechawud), appointing him Prince of Nakhon-Rajasima. The word "fanner" is probably unknown to people today. Let me explain that the fanner was nothing like a dancer. It was a girl who had to hold a peacock feather fan with a long handle. We had to fan the *Thunkramom* when he sat on a chair listening to the monks' chanting during the royal ceremony. Both of us had to stand behind him, and alternate fanning strokes. The fans served as regalia for his royal rank and at the same time cooled him, because the ceremony was performed in the fourth month [March], the same time as the royal ceremony of cutting the topknot, and it was very hot. The fanners were needed only for the rank of *Thunkramom*. I did not see any for the *Phra-ong Chao*. It was special for me because it was the receiving the parchment of gold for the *Thunkramom* who was his father's favorite.

I remember that that year *Thunkramom Ying Lek* (Princess of U-thong) had her topknot cut. She later was called *Somdej Ying Noi* and was the daughter that His Majesty the King wrote letters to about his second trip to Europe, which were collected in a book titled *Klai Barn*.² The word *sokan* is a royal word which means "to cut the topknot." Traditionally, girls had their topknots cut at eleven years of age and boys around thirteen.

The royal *sokan* was a big ceremony in the Royal Household. There were three days of monks' chanting. Everyone wore full dress. There also was a celebration to call back one's spirit.³ The Grand Palace was full of people and activity. Besides the Royal Highnesses of *Phra-ong Chao* rank, there were male and female *Mom Chao* who had come of age. They also joined in the ceremony. Each year there were many of them. Dressing them was a big job, because they were so adorned with jewelry that their whole bodies glittered. This dressing job was the duty of all the queens, because they had a lot of jewelry. Queen Saowapha-Phongsi accepted this job every year, both for *Thunkramom* and *Phra-ong Chao*. I remember that many days before the ceremony, the Queen had her jewelry brought in, so she could choose. *Khun* Pam Malakul (Thao Songkandan today) was the keeper of the Queen's jewelry. There were trays and trays of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other valuable gems, and the gems came in sets. The important piece to be decorated was the *nuam*. The *nuam* was circular in shape, made of thick cloth, stuffed and bound flat. Jewelry was attached to it to keep the jewelry in place. It was worn on the chest. This piece was very heavy because it was fully studded. I don't have to explain much

because you probably have seen some pictures, and I believe that it is displayed in museums.

Those who were *Mqm Chao* would stay at the palaces of their aunts. The royal relations came to spend the nights in the Grand Palace to help dress the *Mqm Chao*. They were pampered so they would not be sick and miss the ceremony, which took place at Chakri Palace. For their convenience, the *Thunkramqm* and *Phra-ong Chao* got dressed at Queen Saowapha-Phongsi's because she lived in one part of Chakri Palace and saved them the trouble of going to other palaces. The *Mqm Chao* had to be carried in sedans. There was a Brahmin carrying a *pong-pang* (a small drum used in Brahmin rites) preceding each sedan. I don't know whether the word *pong-pang* is its real name or if it is called that because of the sound it makes. Anyhow, the children called it *pong-pang*. If the Brahmin holding the *pong-pang* was experienced, it would sound "pong-pang, pong-pang." With one not experienced, it would sound "pong-pae." The naughty children waited to tease the inexperienced drummers in front of the palace, where every sedan had to pass. They teased mercilessly; "pong-pang, pong-pae, soka-soklae" which made the young, inexperienced Brahmins nervous, because the two sides of the path were crowded with court ladies who waited to watch the *Mqm Chao* gradually filing in. The ones who were teased probably wanted to sneak away through the cracks in the ground. The more nervous they felt, the more mistakes they made, making things worse. If it was the sedan of a male *Mqm Chao* that we knew, he would sit smiling. If a girl, she would be as nervous as the *pong-pang* holder. We had fun every year.

The fanners wore pleated sarongs, and covered the upper part of their bodies with gold shawls decorated like those who were in the topknot-cutting ceremony, only there was no *nuam*. After we finished dressing, we were taken to Chakri Palace, to await the King. Before that, we had to rehearse many times; where to stand and how to fan. When the day really came, before the appointed time, the King came in to check the fanners without any warning. *Khum* Wad and I were relaxing, and were startled by the confusing noise of footsteps because he was followed by his children. The King asked us to stand up and show him how we fanned. I stood up but *Khum* Wad did not; she was too stupefied. Instead, she crawled around. Because it was close to the appointed time for the King to appear at the ceremony, he could not wait and went back. But before he left, he said: "Mae Lek [the name he called Queen Saowapha-Phongsi], where did you get these puppies whose eyes are not yet open?" I felt myself blushing, I had not acted like a new-born puppy but was affected just the same, because he believed that today the puppies' eyes were not open and was doubtful that the eyes would be open the next day. So we were replaced by male servants. We thought that we would be scolded by the Queen, but there was no incident. She may have realized that if she insisted on having us do the job, it might be a flop because *Khum* Wad was about eight years old and I was nine or ten and slight. If we had to stand, heavily dressed, we might not be able to endure it; besides, we had to fan, too. Also, it was at night, and we would surely not last two hours. So our being fanners failed to come off.

In the palace, even though life there was confined, we had a good time, and were not denied our rights; we were no different from people outside court. For instance at the *Lqi Krathong* festival,⁴ everybody was allowed to go outside through the covered walk gate on the Pae Palace side to Rajawqradi Landing. I remember that they blocked off Thaiwang Road, so that people could not pass, by putting up red drapes with designs to make a walkway to Pae Palace. Thus, the people outside could not see the "inner court" members. There were police women at intervals along this covered walkway. Outside the covered walkway on both sides stood the palace guards. The naughty children went, too, without supervisors, because there was no way they could be lost. It was one straight passage, but they tried to peek through the drapes to see what was outside. They were scolded by the police women. In front of the Pae Palace it was bright with lanterns and candles from the floats. In the river, floats were everywhere. They had different shapes; some were created by their owners, others store-bought. It was very picturesque.

The King also went, with the males. The Queen went with the females, including the members of royalty and the King's lesser wives, through the covered walkway. The court people asked for forgiveness from the goddess of water and thanked her for providing rice and fish, for the water both to bathe in and to drink. And they begged pardon for their objectionable acts, like throwing dirty things in the water. This custom teaches gratitude. It is a very good teaching.

At this festival, fire rockets were sold. They were lit, both in water and on land. At Pae Palace beautiful fireworks were lit. I understand that they were made at the Engineering Department, Group 10, which *Kromamuen* Prab-Pqrapak⁵ headed. He was also an assistant to the minister of the Royal Household. Speaking of fireworks, I remember a frightful incident that happened to me. It was caused from sneaking two big firecrackers into the Royal Palace and dropping them on the marble floor. They exploded very loudly. But now I have to tell you a long story. I mentioned earlier that the Queen sent the children to study at the palace of *Kromamuen* Prab-Pqrapak, sometimes called the outside palace. At that time he was still living and helped the students a lot. The school building was close to his residence, connected to it with a long narrow bridge, a little longer than three meters. He often came to the school to visit and was intimately acquainted with the children. And whether because of good deeds done in my previous incarnation or whatever, he was really kind to me in this life. It seems that there was no reason for my being his favorite. I was naughty like the other children. If there was any difference, it was my face. He teased me by calling me "Silly Si." I must have looked blank and silly and stupid. My parents used to call me blank, but not silly. Anyhow, I will forever remember that he was kind to me, pleased me, and gave me everything I requested. Even though I had not asked, he gave it to me. Sometimes he asked the teacher's permission to take me with him shopping at the Indian stores, like Abdul Rahim in the Great Swing⁶ area. He acted toward me like a father to a child. Sometimes he called me daughter.

One day--it was almost the time of the *Lqi Krathong* festival--he took me to a small room which was at the far end of his residence. In that room there were two or three shelves around the room. The shelves were full of fireworks of different varieties both for land and water. There were also firecrackers. He said that he made them for the *Thunkramqm* and the small members of royalty. There were lots of small firecrackers, too. The big ones were about the size of a tea cup. They were wrapped in beautiful multicolored paper. He said to me that if I wanted, I could take some. I was glad and took them to share with my friends to play with in the palace. Arriving at the room, I took my schoolbooks from the servant, placing the firecrackers on top of the books. In the middle of the room, without my realizing it, the firecrackers fell down. They exploded noisily and startled people nearby, especially the police women who came to look through the windows. The Queen had someone come to check the incident. I was pale, shaky for fear of being scolded. I truthfully told her that I brought them from the outside palace. I was sure that I would be scolded and feared I might be heavily punished by having my fingers bent. To have one's fingers bent sounds cruel. In fact, if you don't stiffen your fingers, and let them be pliable, it does not hurt that much. But all was quiet, I was not punished. Oh, what a relief! If it were today, it is possible the newspapers might put out the headline that Communists exploded a big bomb in the palace.

Having mentioned the name of *Kromamlen* Prab-Porapak, I have to say a little more about him, otherwise the story of my life at court will lack something. When I turned eleven years old, which was time to have my topknot cut, Queen Saowapha-Phongsi arranged to have it done, asking *Kromamlen* Prab-Porapak to have the ceremony at his palace. That year he sponsored three children: *Khun* In, the son of *Phraya* Rajawalaphanusit (later to be *Chao Phraya* Rajasuphamit⁷) who was the guardian of the Crown Prince (King Vajiravudh); *Khun* Chalaw, a sister of Lady Nongyao Malakul; and myself. *Kromamlen* was glad to have a chance to cut Silly Si's topknot. He arranged to have a hand-drawn small cart come to pick me up at Phimanchaisi Gate, because I was dressed in the palace. I cannot forget this ceremony nor his kindness. It was our fate to be together only briefly, because on the day of the ceremony, I was sick with chicken pox. That night, according to the plan, there would be a play. Towards evening I had a very high fever, and my face and eyes were red. *Kromamlen* noticed that I was not normal. He touched my head and found it very hot, so he told me to go back to the palace. I wanted to watch the play and was reluctant to go. He then promised me three days of celebration after I got well. So, I agreed to return. While I was sick, not more than fifteen days, *Kromamlen* fell sick and died within about seven days. I was stricken with an unforgettable sorrow that he was gone; he had cared about me and had promised me a play after I got over my illness. The other two children who had their topknots cut did not have any celebration either. If I had been grown up, I would have thought that that was our karma, but children did not think that way. I felt that it was my misfortune to have to be away from home, away from my real parents, then my adopted parents. When I began to be happy, to have a new father, he

also left me. From time to time, sad children, seeing their friends getting visits from their relatives and mothers, felt hollow in their hearts because there was nothing to fill them.

After I got well and went back to school, I went straight to his funeral urn, to pay respect and bid him goodbye. I did the same before returning from school to the palace. Everything changed: there were no more tea and cookies; people who used to be vigorous became quiet. Repair and mechanical work stopped. The students used to see them repairing urns, thrones, and palanquins. Merely seeing the urns made us afraid of ghosts. Now I went to his urn. Sometimes there was nobody there. Fear did not enter my mind. I longed only to see him. Sometimes I put my hands together and prayed for his apparition, but there was not a sign that I could see at all. If the human soul, after death, could travel around, he surely would not deny the sincere request of a child.

Not long after, the school was moved to the right side of the palace, near the place where the right-hand *Chamien*⁸ Chong-Phakdi (Poom Malakul) lived. The children simply called him *Khun* Chong (later he became *Chao Phraya* Dhanma). *Khun* Chong carried on the *Kromamien*'s duty like a good son. I was lucky that *Khun* Chong kindly allowed me to come and go freely to his place. Sometimes he came to visit the school and played piano for us. He gave the children a lot of happiness and pleasure, especially me.

Since then our friendship developed until I was over twelve years old, and had to go abroad. As for the Malakul family, I can say that almost every one of the *Kromamien*'s sons and daughters was very kind to me, including the grandchildren's generation; *Mom Luang*⁹ Pok (already deceased), and *Mom Luang* Pong, the son of *Chao Phraya* Phra-Sadet. We enjoyed one another's friendship. The one who was of most help all through my court life was Lady Wqrakhananan (*Chao Chom*¹⁰ Pam), who has passed away. Another one was, to use her present title, Lady Somsak. Also, Lady Songkandan (present title) has been kind to me until recently, although we have not met often. Now they are all dead.

When the school moved to a new site, the children also got a new teacher. He was a man who taught the Thai language. His name was Phuan. With this teacher the naughty children had fun once more. There are funny stories to tell you, but first I have to introduce the teacher to you. Mr. Phuan had real Thai features and was rather old-fashioned. Even at that time, if the Queen had seen him, she probably would not have let him teach. Every part of him was brown, including his complexion, hair, *phanung*,¹¹ shirts, hands, fingernails, even his teeth. The only differences were lighter or darker colors; for instance, his *rajapatan* jacket, which was not often washed, was light brown and his fingernails were dark brown because of the betel nut sap.

His teaching was typical of Thai teachers at that time; reading aloud, during which nobody listened to anybody--even the teacher, basic math (addition and subtraction), penmanship, dictation. In giving grades, the teacher used symbols that looked like shorthand that we

did not know. He told us that these were code. We wanted to learn, so we had to study and memorize the work ourselves; otherwise we did not know what grades we got. The children were not afraid of him and did not listen when he scolded. One day, one naughty child took a peek in his shabby old notebook. There were descriptions beside the students' names, like, Princess Kandapha "throwing a tantrum" (this princess was the younger sister of Prince Tritod Dewakul [*Kromamuen* Dewawongse], and was the smallest student); *Khun* Wad (the owner of the Chinese coolie's hat), "opening the umbrella"; *Khun* Khačhqn (Lady Pharataraja), "noisy and confused"; *Khun* Si, "lying." There were daily reports like this. The children were confused and did not understand what they meant, so they asked. The teacher then knew that the children had sneaked a look at his notebook, so he hid it. The teacher wanted to present these reports to the Queen. The description "throwing a tantrum" meant "quarreling"; "opening an umbrella" meant "stubborn"; "noisy and confused" meant "making loud noises" and "lying" meant "talking nonsense."

As soon as the students knew that the teacher would report to the Queen, they were scared. So they thought up a trick to make things look less bad. I don't remember how it started or who was the first to suggest a match between a woman at court and the teacher. They thought for a while and came up with a woman named Uam who was the nursemaid of Prince Wongnirachqn Dewakul, who was called Prince Tia. She lived in a room under the stairs which we passed on our way to school every day. Her age was about the same as the teacher's. Their skin color was similar. On top of that she liked the Balinese women's style of dress, which meant that she needed less clothing and was economical as well. The one who initiated the matchmaking was *Khun* Saiyud, a niece of Lady Nari (Cham Krairerk), *Thun* *kromom* Asadang's nursemaid. I don't know how she started the conversation, but I learned that the teacher was pleased. We waited to hear from *Khun* Saiyud, and laughed incessantly.

Carrying the news of this match was *Khun* Saiyud's duty. Other children were naughty as before. Whenever *Khun* Saiyud had news, we all listened. Nobody was very interested in what she did until one day *Khun* Saiyud told us that the match was close to success. Everyone was excited again. The teacher hardly paid attention to the children; some sat quietly, some disappeared during recess. The naughty children became naughtier. They took Princess Kandapha's bicycle, rode around the classroom, and zig-zagged between desks and chairs. One day there was an accident, a collision. I don't remember who the rider was, but Cham, a woman who brought lunch for the children, was walking into an eating room and was hit by a bicycle that came suddenly through the door. Both were off guard, the food tray fell down and shattered.

The reader surely thinks that we were really naughty and probably wonders what bicycle could go through narrow spaces. I have to tell you that the Princess' bicycle was the smallest one at that time, because she was small for her age. She was about six or seven, but she was very small. The Queen was clever to get a bicycle suitable for her size. The diameter of the wheel was thirteen inches, not

more than fourteen inches, and that was why it could be ridden in the classroom. The princess remained tiny until the time she died. As for Cham, after the tray of food was shattered, she could not say anything, but only complained about where we could get more food and that her boss might harshly scold her. Her boss was Mr. Nak, who was fat. He was the head of the Royal Kitchen at this palace. Cham picked up the shards and food, put them in the tray and left. The children were quiet. No one blamed or was blamed. After Cham had gone, we all laughed, not expecting that we would be deprived of lunch, because Mr. Nak was kind. A little while later Mr. Nak waddled in and asked why these young children were so naughty; the whole tray was broken and they should be left hungry, but he wore a smiling face. Nobody condemned anyone. We all remained silent. Mr. Nak continued to say that if it happened again, he would tell *Khun Yai, Chao Chqm Pam* (Lady Wqrakhananan), so she would report to the Queen and we would be reprimanded. The children knew for sure that they would not be left hungry. Later, Cham brought a new tray of food. After we finished eating, we studied and played as before. We still rode the bicycle in class.

Not two months later, another accident occurred at the same spot because there were no "traffic police" watching. This time everyone said we would surely be deprived of our lunch and would be scolded by the Queen, too. We calmed down. Mr. Nak did not come. There was no way to apologize. When we returned to the Palace, ate snacks, showered, and went to see the Queen, she came out to eat and immediately tried the case. She asked who initiated the idea. One of the children said that she could not remember because it was a long time ago. The Queen went on asking who rode. Everyone confessed, except one big student who told the Queen that she only touched the bicycle with her behind. When the Queen heard this, her eyes turned green immediately. She said angrily that it was a stupid answer, that it was an excuse which did not make sense, and she scolded us a little longer. But the children were saved; she excused us because we admitted our guilt. But if it happened again, we would be punished and no food would be served. Everyone was relieved. Come to think of it now, the one who told the Queen that her rear just touched the seat of the bicycle was telling the truth, because she was too big to ride; her legs were too long. Even the smaller ones had to spread out their knees. They could only push against the wooden floor, with their feet, to propel the bicycle--they couldn't pedal. If one reveres Sithanonchai's¹² principle, they had not really ridden the bicycle.

Returning now to the teacher's love story, *Khun Saiyud* told us that she got a letter to deliver to Uam. We secretly took a look; everyone hurried and crowded in to have a peek. Each read a little, so it did not make much sense. We were afraid that the teacher would catch us. We were flustered and put it away because we did not know when he might come or where he was. I would say the children thought the letter real old-fashioned and not romantic. It started with "May I send this letter to you, so you will know that I have my mind set to aim for you and to see you."¹³ The rest I cannot remember. There was a lot more. The children were laughing. They thought that it was funny and not to be compared with the love letter in *E-Now*.¹⁴ One

of the letters in *E-Now* starts with "The letter says I will inscribe this on the petals of the Panan flower." Another begins "The letter says Chqraga is ugly and low...." Almost every member of court could recite this, even the children.

I, by nature, could not keep up with my friends. I wondered about Uam being old, not pretty, dark, and with almost no clothing on the upper part of her body. Teacher Phuan might not be satisfied with her. I discussed this with *Khun Saiyud*. *Khun Saiyud* turned around and stared at me and probably wanted to say how stupid I was. She looked at me with her big, protruding eyes and said that we did not have to tell him that she was not pretty. We did not intend to have them meet each other. Then I understood and said, "Oh! Is that it? I didn't know. I thought that we would arrange a meeting. It would probably fail." *Khun Saiyud* went on saying that Uam knew nothing about this. The point was just to distract the teacher's attention, so he would not present a bad report to the Queen. At first I thought that it was for real, so I inwardly admired *Khun Saiyud* for her competence. In fact, we were only teasing the teacher and once again we all laughed for a long time. From then on I did not hear of the matter because I was sick. When I recovered the Queen told me that I did not have to go to school anymore. I had to have my clothes made, in preparation for going abroad, because my mother had asked to have me sent to her. I don't know how the matchmaking developed. I was gone for one and a half years. When I returned, things had changed.

I have a little more to tell you about bicycles and bicycle-riding. I almost died in the Grand Palace. And if I had, I would have been the first commoner to die in the Grand Palace who was not in the royal line or a member of the "inner court." It was during the height of a bicycle-riding fad. The royal members of the "inner court," starting from the Queen, including the sisters of the King, all the princesses who were big enough to ride, and all the lesser wives of the King, learned to ride. They practiced *en masse*. In the afternoon Suan Tao Garden (Siwalai Garden) was full of people. Bicycles were lined up in rows. The royal members of the court came to learn how to ride. The naughty children, of course, were there, too. They sat watching along the edge of the yard. They had to watch out for the ones who could not ride well or they might be hit by a bicycle. The royalty would have those of their maids who were able to run help hold the bicycles. There was one police woman named Pao who was able to teach people, in a short time and without their getting badly hurt, how to ride. Everyone waited to have Pao teach them. They took turns practicing.

I saw them, so I wanted to ride, too, to the point that I went to Pao and asked her whether she could teach me. Pao told me that she was not free, and was deadly tired because she had had to run for a long time. So I asked her to hold me just once. There were lots of royal bicycles around. It just happened that there was one that was a little smaller than the rest, but was still too high for me. It belonged to Princess Praphaphan-Philai, the older sister of Princess Wapibusakon.¹⁵ I took that bicycle. Pao could not resist

the pleading, so she held the bicycle for me to get up on it, then pushed back and forth enough to pacify me. I liked that very much. The following day, when Pao was free, I timidly asked her to put me on the bicycle again. Pao refused, saying that she was extremely tired because everyone wanted her. She wanted to rest a little. I asked her whether I could ride by myself. Pao did not answer. She probably did not think that I could get up on the bicycle. I assumed that she meant yes. I grabbed a bicycle that looked a little smaller, but as usual it was too big for my height. Bringing the bicycle alongside one long outdoor chair, I climbed up on the seat, then pushed hard with my foot. The bicycle shot out fast and went rather far and fell over. I, wanting to ride, was not scared; I tried again and fell again. One time the front wheel twisted after a fall. Pao had to straighten it. Sometimes Pao pitied me; then she would put me on the bicycle. In the end I could ride even though my feet could not reach the pedals.

It was at this time that I became so sick that I lost consciousness, causing the Queen to worry. She was concerned that another person's child might die while under her care. People should realize that she felt responsible towards those who asked for her protection. She arranged to have me stay at the palace of Princess Khaekhaiduang and entrusted her to take thorough care of me. She also arranged a place for the funeral. Someone told me afterwards that if I had died, my body would have been taken to the palace of His Royal Highness Prince Damrong, who at the time had the rank of *Kromamden* and was Minister of the Interior. The Queen knew that the prince was intimately acquainted with and liked both my parents. Also when I was young, I used to spend some nights at his palace. The prince used to take me places along with his sons and daughters. He probably would not mind. Royal doctors came to see me days and nights. Some did not have much hope. One doctor named *Phra* Prasit, tried to cure me with only three cups of medicine. If I did not respond to the medicine, he said, he could not take care of me. It happened that, after taking the first cup, I regained consciousness, but I was sick for three more months before I was back to normal.

The Queen absolutely forbade me to ride a bicycle for a month. If I disobeyed, she would not give me a bicycle, which I had been waiting for. But because I liked to ride and could not resist, I secretly rode my friend's bicycle. One day, I boldly went out on a big street and met Princess Khaekhaiduang, who was on her way to see the Queen. She pointed at my face and asked why I disobeyed the Queen, saying I would surely not get the bicycle. I felt bad. When I went to see the Queen, I waited for the bad news, but it seemed that the princess did not inform against me. The princess had the kindest heart. I lived with her for three months. She was kind in every way until I got well. I was most grateful. I was not sick again during the next month, so the Queen gave me a bicycle. I had a wonderful time. One could almost say that if it was possible I would be on the bicycle all the time. All my friends got to practice before I got well, but there were some who were still unable to ride. Our naughtiness was infinite; we would ride adventurously, getting up on the bicycles in various postures. We were able to get up men's

style which was called hopping style because one had to kick before getting on the bicycle.

One day *Khun Khačhqn* asked me to go with her at dusk--to have a good time. If it was to be by bicycle, I was ready to go immediately. So I took the bicycle out and asked her what the plan was. *Khun Khačhqn* said we would ride our bicycles over the legs of a police woman who slept while on duty at "under the low level." She had gone once before; she wanted to know whether the police woman was still sleeping on duty. If she was not awake, we both would ride over her. At that time I thought it was lots of fun. Above the area called "under the low level" was the King's bedroom, which was like a bridge. Underneath was a street that went through. The bridge was connected to a garden, next to the building of *Chao Čhqm Lúan* who had recently passed away. Police women stood guard to keep people away when the King was asleep. At night there was only one *khlon* on guard. When there was nothing to do, just sit there, she got sleepy, so she brought a mat to lie down on. She stretched out her legs to the middle of the street, made herself comfortable, and took a nap. We two went toward Phranang's (Queen Sukhuman Marasi, the mother of *Thunkramqm Chai*, Prince of Nakhqn Sawan) palace on our bicycles, turned in front of the "Palace" (palace of the present King's grandmother), got out at the palace of *Thunkramqm Keo* (the King called her "grandmother"), went straight in front of the right-hand garden and turned into "under the low level." We went the long way. In fact, "under the low level" is next to "the Upper Palace." We chose a roundabout way so that on our way back, if the *khlon* was asleep, we could run over her and quickly get away and return to our own place.

When we got there, we slowed down and saw the *khlon* lying stretched across the street, casting a black shadow like a big snake. We listened to find out whether she was sleeping. We heard her snoring. She was sound asleep. We started to pedal really fast. *Khun Khačhqn* went first and ran over the *khlon*'s shin making a "kraeg" sound. Her bicycle banged against the thick cobblestones that paved the entire royal palace. I came quickly after and ran over her one more time. We got away with it. If we had gone slowly, the bicycles would have fallen. Turning back to look, we saw the *khlon* sit up with her back bent, but we were far away. We sped up and returned to our place. We sat down and had a good laugh. We amused ourselves by imagining what that *khlon* would think; what creature had run over her... a big snake or a ghost?

Actually, in the palace there were big snakes. The children used to watch them. There was a palace regulation; if anyone saw a snake, he had to inform about it at the *khlon*'s precinct station, because it had to be taken out of the palace. Boys carrying tridents and pieces of rope were called in. They came noisily; preceded by one *khlon* with a torch, followed by another. They would then drag the snake past the *Mqm Čhao* Room. Some of the snakes were about the size of a small banana tree trunk. Some were about the size of an arm. Their skin designs were like those of linoleum. Some had big

eyes. One time we ran to look but saw nothing; we did not see anything for in fact they had caught a tiny snake about the size of a pinkie.

But there's more about bicycles. The new riders had the funniest postures; jerking their waists, shoulders twisting, stiffening their bodies. Even though it was not polite, we could not refrain from laughing. If you saw the Suan Tao grounds when they were practicing riding their bicycles, you would surely agree with me. One day Pao told me that the next morning she would have to teach *Khun* Erb how to ride a bicycle. *Khun* Erb was *Chao Chqm* Erb, the King's favorite lesser wife at that time. She was a daughter of *Chao Phraya* Suraphan (a former governor of Phetchaburi Province). In the palace the lesser wives with names beginning with the letter "๑" were usually called the "๑ family." There were many of them and *Chao Chqm* Erb was especially favored by the King until his death. Pao said that she had to be careful because *Khun* Erb was the favorite.

As soon as the children heard, they all went to watch, because they hardly knew this *Chao Chqm*. She did not go to ride at Suan Tao, but would practice in the open courtyard in front of Suan Khwa, near Dusit Palace, which was paved with thick stone slabs, like those in front of Chakri Palace. Very early in the morning we children woke up one another, washed our faces, put on powder,¹⁶ and ran quietly out under the King's bedroom. His Majesty the King was still in bed. We went straight to the front of Suan Khwa and stood together in a group waiting to see her. Not too long after, a group of many *Chao Chqm* came out, including *Khun* Erb. Pao held a bicycle for her and she got on. Pao was holding her, going back and forth. It looked like she knew how to ride a little; Pao could take her hand off every now and then, but she still could not ride straight. The children stood watching her from afar, because they did not know her well. The children did not hear what she told Pao, but saw Pao let go of the bicycle. Immediately after Pao let go, *Khun* Erb went right toward a big stone lion and collided with it. The children saw it first and cried out in alarm. Pao must have been surprised and shocked and did not run after her until after *Khun* Erb fell down and got up, feeling her face. The children believed that it would be either bruised or cut. They all ran away, being afraid that she would be embarrassed.

I myself got a bump on the head. One day the Queen ordered that the children be taken to a fair, I cannot remember which one. The guardians were the usual ones: Mr. Nak, *Khun* Thongchua and *Khun* Chid. This time everyone was on a bicycle, except Mr. Nak who did not know how to ride. Even if he wanted to ride one, there was no bicycle that could bear his weight, so he followed us in a horse-drawn carriage. It happened that because my bicycle was broken, Mr. Nak wanted me to go in the carriage. I was not willing, so I asked him to get me a man's bicycle, telling him that I knew how to ride a man's bicycle. Mr. Nak wanted to please me. He took the trouble of borrowing a bicycle from the "outside" palace for me. It was a man's bicycle with a sport handle suitable for a grown-up. I did not object because I was used to riding bigger-sized bicycles and could ride men's bicycles. I therefore rode in front of the horse carriage going toward Banglamphu. When I went up Phanfa Bridge, before I reached the highest part, my

feet slipped, and I fell down, immediately raising a black and blue bump on my face. Mr. Nak absolutely refused to let me ride further, and had me get in the carriage. He made a ball out of a piece of cloth and massaged the bruise for me. I had to go by carriage both ways and had no fun. As for the bicycle, Mr. Nak left it at a store nearby.

The children could always find a way to have fun. In the classroom there was someone that we liked--*Khun Chongkwa (Chao Phraya Dhanma)*. He was kind enough to leave a piano for the children to play. The ones who did not like to play probably complained about the noise. The songs that we played were little bits and pieces from here and there and were mixed up. Nobody could tell what songs they really were, but the playing didn't bother *Khun Chong*, even though he was close by. Sometimes he came up to play for us. The children with good ears remembered some of his songs. I remember one song that he liked to play often, I believe that its name is "Khamen Phothisat" or "Khamen Pao Baimai." I used to hear the soldiers play a marching song when changing the guard which had the words: "When will we get to fondle a court lady? Perhaps never." At that time people remembered a lot, not like today when no one remembers anything. One day, *Khun Chong* came to play the piano as usual. The children crowded around. I stood on the right. *Khun Wad* knelt on the left looking under the other children's arms at *Khun Chong's* fingers. *Khun Chong* had not yet married Lady Nongyao. I used to look at his key which was on a chain or a piece of thread, I don't remember which, hanging on his undershirt button, hidden on the inside. I could see because his shirt was thin and I was near him. I looked to see whether it was there, but saw instead a big bright red spot. I cried out asking what happened to him, why did his shirt have a red stain? He looked down, checked carefully, and saw that it was betel-nut juice. He jumped up and said "Why are you doing this! Why did you spray betel-nut juice on me!" Everyone looked at each other's mouth. When they saw *Khun Wad's* mouth, they cried out "This is the one." *Khun Wad*, who still had a mouthful of betel-nut, could not stop laughing, so more was spit out. Everyone saw and was on guard, so nobody got sprayed. *Khun Chong* was angry but also amused, and he could not hold back his laughter. Everyone was laughing loudly. *Khun Chong* had to go down to change his shirt and did not come back for many days. I had to go and plead with him to come again by reassuring him that we would be careful not to let *Khun Wad* go near him. Then he came, but he kept looking from the corner of his eyes, afraid that he would be sprayed again.

Notes for Chapter V

1. This refers to a ceremony in which a title was bestowed.
2. The name of the book means "Far away from Home." It is a collection of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn's letters to his daughter, the Princess of U-thong.
3. The Thais believe that there is a personal spirit or a soul that resides in the head. If the spirit wanders outside, the person will fall ill. The purpose of the ceremony is to call the wandering spirit back to the person's body.
4. An annual festival held in Thailand on a full-moon day in November, during which toy boats and candles are floated on the rivers and canals. It symbolizes, among other things, purification from one's sins.
5. He was a son of *Chao fa* Mahamala, a son of Rama II. He was the first of the Malakul family.
6. This swing is still standing. It was erected in the first reign of the Bangkok Period for a Brahmin ceremony.
7. *Chao Phraya* is one rank higher than *Phraya*. You will notice that when one is promoted to any higher rank, the whole name is changed too.
8. An official title.
9. *Mom Luang* are children of male *Mom Rajawongse*, who are the children of *Mom Chao*. The title can be abbreviated M.L. and it is the last title of the line.
10. An address for the Kings' lesser wife.
11. An article of dress for both Thai men and women, taking the form of a piece of cloth about three meters long and more than a meter wide, wrapped around the body and tied in a knot at the waist.
12. Sithanonchai was a legendary character who could get away with anything because of his trickery.
13. At the time love letters were written in verse.
14. E-Now is the main character in a story that originated in Indonesia. Like Don Juan or Casanova, E-Now was a great lover.
15. The last of King Chulalongkorn's children to be alive.
16. Thai females of all ages put white powder on their faces after washing for beauty purposes.

VI

A FEW ANECDOTES ABOUT COURT LIFE

Stealing Ice

Before ending the story of my childhood, there are a few more anecdotes.

Besides fighting with the wet nurse "Monster" Yim for beeswax, we also stole ice which was under her care. We filed down to her room, which was under the King's bedroom. The icebox was kept under the palace, beneath the King's bedroom and not far from the nursemaid's room, but there was a big post blocking it from view. We assumed that if the "monster" came, we could get away, for she probably would not see us. Three or four children were on the look-out. Prince Wiset was the one who did the stealing. Some ice blocks were big, some were small. The ice was covered with sawdust in a rather big wooden box lined with galvanized iron to keep in the cold. One person held the lid open. Prince Wiset bent down to get the ice. It was at that moment that someone yelled out that the "monster" was coming. The one who held the lid was surprised, let the lid down on Prince Wiset's neck, and ran away. Luckily, he did not drop it. Prince Wiset was big, almost a young man (but I don't know why he did not leave the palace¹). He let go of the ice, and pushed the lid, which was not too heavy, up with his shoulders. Then he closed it and ran away.

Women Boxers

Matching of boxers was quite easy. It was female boxing between *Khun Khačqon* (Lady Pharataraja) and *Khun Wad Chodūk-Rajasethi* (Miss Chinese Coolie's Hat). When *Khun Khačqon* was told that it might be good to fight a round, *Khun Khačqon*, who liked to tease her friends, agreed right away. The two girls were born in the same year--the year of the Tiger.² *Khun Khačqon* was skinny but agile. *Khun Wad* was stout and a little shorter. When the time came, one of us pushed *Khun Khačqon* toward *Khun Wad*, who stood there doing nothing and had not expected to be bumped. *Khun Khačqon*, who was pushed, banged into *Khun Wad*. It was not very hard; she just staggered against her. *Khun Wad* got really angry and dashed toward *Khun Khačqon*. *Khun Khačqon* moved backward to make her stand. Seeing her opponent ready for her, *Khun Wad* was afraid to charge. *Khun Khačqon*, seeing an opportunity, made a bold feint toward her. This part was interesting. Everyone probably knows how one provokes and baits one's opponent by lunging toward him and flailing one's arms. And that was it, for *Khun Wad* clenched her fists at *Khun Khačqon*. It was like when we played "Catfish striking with its spine."³ *Khun Wad* swung with her fists. You can say that they were punches, but they never once landed. The audience, both male and female, laughed uproariously and yelled "White, don't hit! Black, don't beat!" to make fun of them. *Khun Wad* went close to *Khun Khačqon* and was all red in the face. *Khun Khačqon* was

skinny and was faster. *Khun* Wad was very angry and took it seriously. The audience then had to come between them because there was no whistle. The boxing had to end.

Princess Wqraset⁴

I should mention that I was still young when I lived in the Royal Palace, and that Princess Wqraset, a very senior royal relation, was still alive. She must have been between eighty and ninety years old when she became sick and died. The Queen went to see her both during the day and at night; she hardly slept until her death. When the children found out that the Princess was dying, they began to be afraid. An owl cried. It was called Sak.⁵ When someone was dying, it would cry "sak" three times. It would fly past crying "sak," fly back crying "sak," and then fly away. The Princess was not dead yet, but almost. The naughty children were no longer naughty, but quiet because they were afraid of a ghost.⁶ They silently went to bed, pulling the blankets up to cover their heads because she still hung on and the fateful owl cried often. In the palace there were lots of these owls. There also was a "kook" owl. This kind is more frightful than "sak" owl because its cry is dreadful. Once it made a "kook" sound, the children were startled and had trouble falling asleep. Finally, Princess Wqraset passed away.

There was another princess, whose name was Mankhian.⁷ She was about the same age as Princess Wqraset. The Queen also went to tend her until she died. The children were again uneasy over the death of this second princess but they were not unused to these events. They did not tremble with fear. Many more princesses passed away one after the other. But the children were afraid of ghosts just the same. The members of royalty died, the Kings' lesser wives died, and as usual the children were afraid. Those that they did not know, they were less afraid of--according to children's nature.

Falling Out and Making Up

It is amusing to remember how we used to get angry with one another and make up again.

It was like this: breaking up with someone was very easy, and it was of little consequence. Anybody who was angry with someone for any reason at all, stuck out her index finger and hooked it into her enemy's index finger. From then on the two did not speak to each other. When passing one another, each would pretend not to see the other. Time passed, and anger died down. For no reason, when they wanted to speak to each other or be friendly, they would walk past each other more often, and smile a little. The proud or stubborn one smilingly turned away. The one who wanted to be friends took the opportunity to hook the opponent's small finger with her own. That was the end of the "making up" ceremony. They did not waste paper in signing the contract. This was childhood.

The Queen Forbids Our Swimming Before 2 P.M.

In the summer His Majesty the King with his queens and the members of the royal family moved to the Summer Palace at Suan Dusit for two or three months starting in April. All the children from the *Mqm Chao* Room were taken, too. They went with the Queen. They had the most fun, because of the big garden with its trees and flowers.

The Mengseng Canal flowed past the front of the garden at the end of the palace grounds at the Nok-rqi Gate; this was the garden of Her Royal Highness the Princess Grandmother, the grandmother of the present King. At the north gate, named Kaifa, was the garden of the "Upstairs Queen," Queen Saowapha-Phongsi. The court ladies bathed in this canal with the children, who had the most fun. In the morning after breakfast, about eight o'clock, they would race to get into the canal. All were naked but they were not embarrassed, and they refused to get out until noon. The caretaker thought that this was too long; they were staying out in the sun for so many hours that they were getting very dark. Word of this reached the ears of the Queen, who issued an order that no one should go into the water until after 2 p.m.⁸ This meant that their time in the water was cut down by many hours. Thereafter they would sit disconsolately along the porch in front of the row of buildings. They had no clock to check the time. The nursemaid saw that they were quiet and felt sorry for them, so she freed them by telling them that it was time to go. The children then learned to watch the sun shining on the floor boards. They recognized that it was 2 p.m. when the sun reached the second board, so they went into the canal one after another. They had only a towel, they did not wear anything. They told each other that they could go when the sun reached the second board. They were elated and did not care about anything else.

The following day, after finishing lunch they neither napped nor played, but sat waiting for the sun to reach the second board. The building was about fifteen rooms in length. The children got into a line and sat waiting for the sun. They chatted and teased each other. Nobody left that important parallel line. As soon as the sun reached the line, the loud noise of footsteps racing down the stairs to the landing sounded "tang, tang, tang, tang, tang." The Queen was sleeping in the palace nearby, but the children were not afraid. They were warned but paid no attention. It was like a rhyme that says "An elephant running--who would pull it, would stop it, would catch it?" The elephant would not listen. They did not even want to carry a towel. When they reached the landing, they plummeted into the water. Those who could swim, swam. Those who did not know how, just splashed around. The timid ones would hang on to the landing steps and kick. This was their daily activity until the Queen returned to the Grand Palace.

Playing in a Maze

This queer game was copied from the fair at Benchamabqphit Temple.⁹ When the electricity was out, which happened quite often,

the naughty children could always find something mischievous to do. When there was a blackout, they had nothing to play, and since it was not time to go to bed, they would think up mischievous things to do. Each expressed his different opinion. They agreed to play in a maze. At the Benčhamabqphit Temple fair, cloth had been used to screen off a circular area, with the children entering one way and getting out another way and turning back and forth. When they bumped into each other, they shrieked. It was best when the light was out. Each one took out his or her bed blanket. They tied them together into one long piece. They did this in the dark, or in the half-light of a single wind-up oil lamp which shone from some distance away. They got hold of any string they could find and hung the blankets in front of the *Mqm Čhao* Room, so that they wound here and there. Some were tied tight, some loose.

At the time no adults were around. For instance, *Khun Prik*, a supervisor, was not there because she went out to the street to assemble with the grown-ups like Lady Pam and Lady Pum, as adults do. The children had children's ways. They filed into the maze one by one. Anyone who could not go in the first time had to wait for the second round. It was fun. They ran, trying to find an exit, hollering at the top of their lungs. When one ran into another, they screamed. If many pairs collided, reverberating screams were heard all over the palace. It was then necessary for a messenger to come down; the Queen wanted to know what the children were doing. But the messenger did not see anybody because the children were covered by the blankets. She shouted out, asking what was going on. Upon learning it was the Queen's command, they were quiet. She could not catch anybody because of the darkness. But after hearing the departing footsteps, the children once more started chasing each other in the blankets and again began shrieking without fear. This time the messenger who came down knew where the children were, and began to catch them. The children wanted to get away but could not find the way out because they were confused. At first the adult was confused, too. After realizing where they were, she pulled the blankets down over them. It was like being caught in a fishnet. The ones who managed to get out ran away in different directions. Some were not so lucky. The electricity was turned on and they were caught, but there were not many. Most of them got away. The messenger went back to inform the Queen of everything that had occurred. The Queen did not scold much, only threatened them with punishment if they did it again.

Kow-towing to a Foot

Many things happened in the *Mqm Čhao* Room. To continue to tell them one by one probably will not bore you. Now I want to tell you about making obeisance to a Buddha's footprint.

One day--on a holiday from school--Prince Wisetsak Chayangkul came in with a slate in his hand. On the slate there was a full picture of a foot. He told all the children to come and pay obeisance to the Buddha's footprint. The children crowded in to have a look. Prince

Wisetsak, who was the biggest male, was respected by the children; they all came to pay their respects to the picture of the foot on the slate. After everyone had done so, he burst out laughing and said: "It's my footprint." Now the children were boiling with anger. Exactly as if someone stirred up a hornets' nest, they chased him, trying to pinch, punch, and pound him. Prince Wisetsak tried to get away, but could not. He had to climb up high on a window where the children could not reach him.¹⁰

This is exactly why they say that children are innocent. They are taken in by tricks and are not embarrassed. The children were not patient enough to wait for Prince Wisetsak to come down because they missed playing, so they left to find something else to do. Only then did Prince Wisetsak climb down. All the children forgot about the incident. Such is children's nature.

Reciting Prayers

Every evening about 7 p.m., almost bedtime, everyone would have to say prayers led by Princess Phani-Anong Thawiwongse (her nickname was Chad). She was about as senior as Prince Wisetsak. She was religious and taught the children to say their prayers before going to bed. The children were quite good; at other times they could not keep still, but at praying time, they sat down *phapphiap* style, putting their hands together at their chests. They sat in a group, not in a row. Please understand that all these children still wore topknots; they were still young. The "reverend mother," Princess Chad started off with *Namo tadsa*¹¹ and we children recited after her until she had finished. We also promised to follow the precepts,¹² then recited *Itipiso Phakhawa* and went on to *Sawakhato* and also "*Yanthun Nimitang*." At this point, we children started to wiggle. At first we sat nice and neat, then we moved back and forth, smiled and looked at each other. Some of us whispered that "*sawa*" means to eat greedily, and "*khato*"--what leg? [They were making a pun: "*kha*" means "leg" and "*to*" means "big".] So they all whispered with their hands held together over their mouths, because they were afraid that the "reverend mother" would be angry.

In fact, it had to be said that the children were well behaved; when it was time to be serious they were. The "reverend mother" was not discouraged either. She taught us every night, though I don't remember for how many days. The smart children memorized fast. At night before going to bed they had to kow-tow to their pillows¹³ as the teacher had taught them. Nobody violated the religious rules, as befitted children of aristocratic families. There were no special incidents. We lived happily, and had fun every day. This was a really happy age, with no responsibilities. We only ate, studied, slept, and played.

A Fragment About Learning to Do Flower Craft

The Queen was kind to naughty children in another way: teaching the arrangement of both fresh and dried flowers, dyeing flowers into

different colors, making flower garlands, etc. The naughty female children were sent to a lady artist named M.R. Bang-Qn. (At that time no one had last names.) She was quite old, from the children's point of view. She must have been fifty years of age, or slightly younger. She was very skillful and was able to interpret every style and design that was invented in "the artists' room" (Department of Fine Art at that time.) This "artists' room" was in the women's section of the Grand Palace, but it was blocked off so as to form part of the men's section, so persons who had official duties could come and go conveniently. It was the workshop for goldsmiths and jewelry craftsmen, and also for repairing broken jewelry.

I understand that the chief artist was His Royal Highness Prince Narid-Saranuwadtiwongse.¹⁴ He was a designer, and his design [to be constructed out of flowers] was sent to the palace to have the colors matched to actual flowers. At this point it was *Khun* Bang-Qn's duty to choose the suitable flowers. Then she had *Chao Chom* Pam Malakul issue a circular, asking for flowers from the houses of noblemen and of other loyal citizens to be brought on such and such a time and day.

The practice day came. It was three days before the King's birthday. I think it was on November 12. (I am not sure. I am just guessing, as I can't remember.) [He was born on September 20, 1853.] The maid came to call the children to go see *Khun* Bang-Qn. Everyone who was there had to go. Some took leave to visit their families because there was no school. I did not have a family; no parents came to pick me up, so I had to stay behind with those who were in a similar situation.

Khun Bang-Qn told us to cut the stems off the gardenias that were piled there. Each of us got a pair of small scissors. We sat in a circle. The supervisor enjoined us to leave the same length of stem on each flower, so after they were strung up into a net-design, it would be pretty. When it was mealtime, we were allowed to go with instructions to come back and continue the work. In coming back, some took a short time, some longer, depending upon their habits. The honest ones returned in a reasonable time; the dishonest ones took a longer time. Some took a nap. Maybe they were tired from sitting still. Some people get tired because of being active, but these children were tired from being still. But nobody quarrelled or reproached each other for doing more or less. This showed that they had a generous nature.

The most important flower work was making drapes for a ceremonial throne.¹⁵ I recall that there were four drapes. The throne had four posts, with a canopy. A flower net was put up all around the base of the throne, gathered at the top of the posts, like a cremation platform, and tied with garlands. There were different-colored tassels made with amaranths. The alternating colors were very beautiful. The flower net was supposed to be lace, fruit of the loom, not fruit of the tree.¹⁶ Then it had to be decorated according to the colors in the artist's design. This was beyond the children's ability. For example, there is a dragon design which is for the year of the big snake. The colors had to be alternated on the dragon's scales. The adults did these; the children were not involved. They put these here,

those there, until a very beautiful picture came out. Imagine how they toiled. Just thinking about it makes me tired. Small things like clouds floating in the sky they had to do. It was picturesque and exciting. If the King praised it, after he left, people would crowd in to admire. If the King liked it, *Khun* Bang-On would get a reward of forty *baht*. She was truly tired. There were many helping hands, so there were mistakes that had to be corrected. The grown-ups were all bleary-eyed.

After cutting the gardenia stems, the children had to remove the lower part of the jasmine stems, from a big pile of jasmine flowers, to make garlands, but this was not much work. The lazy children complained that it was hard. There were other easy tasks to do: binding different-colored ixoras together into bunches, as well as amaranths and green ziziphus leaves. They all had to be tied up into bunches, to be arranged into pedestal bowls to be placed around the ceremonial seat. Some were tied too tight, but we were not criticized by our supervisors. Those that came loose were pushed back in place.

We may conclude that the children learned three things: cutting gardenia stems, removing jasmine stems and tying ziziphus leaves, amaranths, and ixoras. When the signal bell rang, all the children threw the scissors and the thread all over the place. Some were under the leaves. "Monster" Yim was a keeper, so she came to collect all her property. Even though she complained, she was not heard because all the children were gone.

The Story of Mr. Wq

Mr. Wq was an official who made saffron robes to be used in the royal merit-making ceremonies in the Royal Palace.¹⁷ These were not bought, but made. Mr. Wq's territory was a big hall in Chakrapad Palace, which was neglected and in very bad condition. But it was large enough to be used as a factory for dyeing the monks' robes for official ceremonies. One part of the hall was used as a passageway that led straight to Suan Tao (Siwalai Garden). In this hall there were ten antique cabinets. They were huge and could hold hundreds of yellow robes. When I first lived in the palace, my friends told me that the Queen used to have M.R. Chan Chayangkul locked up in a cabinet, because she was extremely mischievous; more than that, she did not admit her guilt, so the Queen was very angry. After that the children were afraid of Mr. Wq second only to Lady Wqraĉhan, because he had many cabinets. *Khun* Chan was chastened until she went back to her grandfather (Prince Rajasak). She was still cocky and boasted that she was not that afraid.

As for Mr. Wq, he was easier than Lady Wqraĉhan for the children to go past because he sat supervising far away. Also he was old and fat and probably could not catch up with us unless we were unlucky, in which case we would probably end up in a cabinet, because that was not a place to play. Sometimes we had to confront him. I like to read books about royal heroes--that was what they

were called--like *E-Now*, *Phra Aphai-Mani*, *Laksanawongse*, and *Chaiyached*. Mr. Wq had a lot of books for rent--dozens and dozens of stories. His fee was one *aht* per copy. When one was finished, more could be taken out. Each story consisted of more than forty volumes. Because we were addicted, we were willing to spend our allowances to rent the books, even giving up candies. We would be fined if the book were torn. His books were not new; they were old but we were too scared to protest that the books were falling apart. We agreed to pay; one rented but many read. We were at a disadvantage because we were children.

After we had decided to rent a book there was the problem of who would volunteer to go and face him. All were quiet. I went around sounding them out. Everyone was afraid. It was my job (like M.R. Seni¹⁸), but it was not easy. I had to go to see *Khun* Chan because she boasted that she was not scared of Mr. Wq. I told her that she was brave while all the rest were cowards. If she was not afraid she should go with me. *Khun* Chan was flattered, so she agreed to go. We counted the money. There were ten *aht*. I had to advance the money because everybody else spent all their money on Grandma Tan's ice cream. One *baht* a month did not go far.

When we were about to go, we wavered again. But we had already committed ourselves, so it had to be done. *Khun* Chan and I were to clear the way. There was a group of supporters, whose names are not important, following behind at a distance. They were chickens. We two hid behind the yellow robes, using them as shields. While we were inching closer along the front of the cabinets, Mr. Wq yelled to ask who was there. Our hearts almost stopped. We were motionless for a little while, then slowly emerged from the shelter of the yellow robes. When he saw it was us, he did not even look up, only asked why we came at this late hour. We told him politely that we wanted to rent the books. He did not scold us. We put down our ten *aht*, which were wet from being held so tightly, where he sat. Then we went to choose the books. We did not check carefully. Then we ran for our lives. We were tired. Actually the hall was near the *Mqm Chao* Room, but the way to go there was not straight. We ran till we were tired. This was the palace where Her Royal Highness Princess Phetcharat¹⁹ was born. It was renovated during Rama VI's reign and he died in this palace.

There were lots of problems (the same as in forming a government); who would be the first one to read aloud for everyone? We had books one to ten. Many were not keen to read aloud, but instead liked to listen. I agreed to read first--to save trouble. I finished reading two books before it was time to say bedtime prayers. It would be someone else's turn the following day. There were no disputes this time because it was interesting and they wanted to know the story. They compromised and did not take advantage of each other. They united nicely and did not argue. This showed that they had high ideals. Although they were extremely naughty, when it was time to unite for the common benefit, they managed to do it. Some did not read, just listened; no one said anything as long as someone was reading. One could listen or not listen as one pleased.

We finished the whole set of Mr. Wq's books. Some were missing, but he did not know against whom to take action. As a result, they were lost. At about that time I went abroad. When I returned, I was an adolescent and was able to read Chinese history. At first, I read brokenly for it was very hard. I had studied *munlabot* [basic Thai readers] and finished them when I was about seven years old. I could pronounce all by myself sounds like *kq*, *kq̌*, *kq̇*, *kq̈́*, *kq̈́̌*. After that, I practiced reading on my own. In reading the Chinese history, I read word by word until I knew what "*siyin Kiu*"²⁰ was about; a man who ate a lot. I liked it because he really could eat.

With *munlabot*, one could learn to help oneself to read, as I had, if one really tried. Most of the time I had to go places with my father and mother because he was an official of the Interior Ministry. They did not have time to teach their child. My schooling was itinerant, along the mountains, in the woods, on elephant back, in boats. Because I liked to read, I somehow managed to learn. Mother did not travel much. When I first started to study, my legs were black and blue every day. Grandma Am prayed that I would grow fast, then cried. When I bothered people, my legs were pinched, patches turning black and blue.

The Story of Lady Wqračhan

Anybody who had not heard about Lady Wqračhan was "inoperative"--children's slang for thick-headed. This lady was a lesser wife of Rama IV (King Mongkut). She was the mother of His Royal Highness Prince Phitayalap-Phrũethithada, the father of *Mqm Čhao* Dhani-Niwat (Prince Phitayalap-Phrũethiyakon). Lady Wqračhan had an important role in the play *E-Now*, playing the hero E-Now.

When I lived in the palace at the age of ten, she was already old. She had the reputation of being very fierce. The children were awed by her, just from hearing about her. It was rumored that she could put people in irons, so the children shivered with fear. The lady went to see the Queen sometimes. All the children had to admit that she was really frightening. Her walking posture, even in old age, showed that she had been pretty when young.

Any time the children saw her passing the *Mqm Čhao* Room, they would tell each other that Lady Wqračhan was coming. The *Mqm Čhao* Room would be dead silent. The busy noises would stop immediately. It was like baby chicks hearing a signal that a falcon was coming. All the children sat down, using the window shutters to hide from her view, as if she would reach in with her arm like Mrs. Nak Phrakhanong.²¹ After she passed by, the children were relieved. We often saw *Mqm Čhao* Dhani (her grandson) walking after her. They were together all the time. The children wondered why he was not afraid like us. We were scared almost to death.

Sometimes we would go to her territory, the "outside long buildings." This was a group of buildings built in long rows and subdivided into suites that went across the palace grounds from west to east. There were bedrooms upstairs, a room downstairs, a

kitchen, a bathroom, and a porch. It was there that the low-ranking officials lived. Now, to go to the "outside long buildings" we had to stop short; we had to go by Lady Wqračhan's building. Before we passed Lady Wqračhan's front door, we had to consult with each other. We sent a scout out to check whether she was in. If her door was closed, we were lucky. If it was open, that was a problem, especially when her face was turned to the front, since it was hard to pass by unseen. If she turned sideways, that was better. Her building was low. When the door was open, she could easily see people pass by. When the scout gave an all-clear signal, we children prepared to dash; that is, we got ready, bent down, lowered our heads, and ran fast, one by one. Everyone was safe, out of the land of death, and deadly tired.

I do not know why we were afraid of her. She never looked at us. She never looked at us with "green eyes" like the Queen did. If she ever looked, it would have been at the crown of our heads because she walked with her chin up, head straight. She would not bend. Some said that she buried people, so the children were more afraid of her. But Prince Dhaní was brave; he was not scared. He walked very close to her. We ran away in all directions.

Notes for Chapter VI

1. Boys who still had topknots or those up to thirteen years old were allowed in the "inner court"--the woman's section of the palace.
2. According to the Chinese calendar, there are twelve years in a cycle, each named for an animal: mouse, bull, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar.
3. An old Thai outdoor game. One person is a catfish, trying to strike his playmates with his elbows or fists. The one who is hit becomes the catfish.
4. She was the fifty-first and youngest child of King Rama III.
5. A barn owl. It is a Thai belief that someone in the household will die if this barn owl cries at night.
6. The Thais believe that when somebody dies the spirit of that dead person remains in the vicinity.
7. She was the seventy-second child of King Rama II.
8. Fair skin is preferable, for dark skin is identified with working class people.
9. The "Marble Temple" in Bangkok. It was built by King Chulalongkorn.
10. Feet are the lowest part of the body. It is impolite to stick the feet toward anyone or to point at someone or something with the feet.
11. Buddhist prayer, in the Pali language.
12. Five basic Buddhist precepts or commandments for laymen are:
 - 1) thou shalt not kill.
 - 2) thou shalt not steal.
 - 3) thou shalt not commit adultery.
 - 4) thou shalt not lie.
 - 5) thou shalt not consume intoxicating drinks.
13. This tradition probably derived from the belief that the Lord Buddha always lay down with his head pointing toward the direction where his mother was and kow-towed on the pillow.
14. He was King Chulalongkorn's half-brother and was the architect of Benčhamabqphit Temple (Marble Temple) in Bangkok.
15. It is used on the King's birthday for a ceremony of Brahmin origin.
16. The word for fruit and lace is the same, *lukmai*.

17. Each year great numbers of saffron robes are used in royal religious merit-making ceremonies, because the King patronizes all the royal temples in the country.
18. He was the Thai ambassador to the U.S. during World War II. He is admired by the Thais for refusing to deliver the Thai government's declaration of war against the U.S., and for founding the Free Thais, who cooperated with the U.S. in fighting against the Japanese.
19. The only daughter of King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, born one day before he died.
20. A Chinese story translated into Thai.
21. She and her baby died during childbirth at Phrakhanong, a suburb of Bangkok. It is believed that spirits of mothers who die in childbirth are dangerous.

VII

GOING ABROAD

Preparations

Two or three days after Queen Saowapha called me to tell me that my mother had asked to have me sent abroad, she graciously arranged for my clothing. She ordered her personal dressmaker from the "Bad Man Store" to take my measurements and to have everything made. After the clothes were finished the dressmaker presented them to the Queen in the palace. I did not get to see them until the day before my trip. There were no fittings or alterations at all. The Queen ordered them brought to the *Mom Chao* Room.

That night after supper everyone, including me, the owner, wanted to see what was in the big box. We children gathered around it. I grabbed the things on top first. What I got was a beautiful blouse in pink with black polka dots and a beige silk blouse. But I was not fast enough for the children looking on; they each helped themselves to one or two items. There were a dark blue skirt made of a rather heavy wool, four nightgowns, four white petticoats with tiny flowers in pink, blue, yellow, and green. They were very pretty. The under-pants were beautiful. There were two or three of them and four camisoles. They were piled outside the box. Other things were a comb, a hair brush, a bottle of eau de cologne, a towel, a handkerchief, but nobody paid any attention to them. Oh, there was another thing that the children did not recognize; it was a corset. Children do not wear them. I don't know why the dressmaker made it for me. After taking everything out, *Khun Khačhōn* wanted the pink blouse with small black polka dots, but I refused because I had only two of them. How could I give it to her? She remonstrated that it was a shame to be such good friends and refuse a request for just one thing. If the next day had not been the day that we would part, she probably would have been very angry. After everyone had had a good look, I put everything back in the box. All the "monkeys" went away. My packing was not neat, and the lid would not close, so I just left it wide open. I was not concerned. I went to *Khun Khačhōn* and got her to pick a fight with *Khun Wad*. That night everyone was a little excited. Probably no one paid any attention whom *Khun Ud* slept next to. At 9 p.m. everyone fell asleep.

Waking up the next morning, I saw that the box was neatly closed. I don't know who closed it. I don't remember to whom I said goodbye. A little after 10 a.m., *Khun Chom*, the chief nursemaid, came to tell me to get dressed. She would take me to *Phraya Wisut's* (*Suriyasak*), né M.R. Pia Malakul (later to become *Chao Phraya Phrasadet*). At that time he was a Minister of Education. The Queen asked him to arrange to have me taken to my parents. At *Phraya Wisut's* house, I met Mr. Johnson, who was under the Ministry of Education. He was a consultant to the Ministry and my caretaker on the steamer *Daily* to Singapore.

I felt a little sad when I went to see *Khun Chong-Khwa* (*Chao Phraya Dhanma*) before boarding the ship. I don't remember whether

I got to say goodbye to the Queen, because when *Khun Chom* took me to *Phraya Wisut's* house the Queen was still in bed. I think we boarded the ship at Thachang Wangna, but I am not sure; I don't quite remember.

Setting Out

The steamer was anchored in the middle of the river. Mr. Johnson was very kind, as was the captain. The captain could speak Thai well enough to be understood. Mr. Johnson was very handsome. He was young, around thirty years of age. The captain was elderly, with a belly, but it did not stick out. The captain talked to me on different topics; probably he was afraid that I would be lonesome. He gave me a toy mouse which looked real. He hung it on my blouse. I was startled, thinking that it was a real mouse. It had a hook at the stomach. When hung on my clothing it looked like a dead mouse. I was not very excited to be at sea because when I was eight we lived in Bang Plasqi.¹ My father was governor there for eight months before we returned. At the age of nine I went to live in the palace. I had a drawing book and coloring pencils that Prince Prab gave me, so I was not lonesome. I liked to watch the fish, and the sparrows flying in when the waves battered against the ship. The big porpoises looked frightening, but it was said that they were kindhearted and helped drowning people, so I was not very scared.

It took about five days for us to reach Singapore. The first sight that caught my eye when we arrived at the port was the countless number of sailboats. They were at the edge of the water, some with sails unfurled. But no steamers were to be seen. I am not sure about this; there should have been some. I remember sailboats but not steamers. Mr. Johnson told me that we had to spend one or two nights aboard the ship, waiting for the big liner to come. So we stayed on the ship that night.

In the morning after having breakfast, Mr. Johnson took me into town. I did not have even one fake penny. Mr. Johnson was generous. He told me to buy anything I wanted, he would pay for it. I agreed to that and bought two small Japanese fans. The stores were not different from small shops in our country. They were not grand. I am referring to the ones near the port. Even the government buildings were the size of our official buildings in the provinces. Mr. Johnson and I walked around and bought some things which Mr. Johnson paid for. We had carried the things back, almost to the ship, when I noticed that I forgot the two fans. Mr. Johnson was nice. We went back to look for them at the shops but could not find them. We agreed that they were lost. When we came to the bridge where I noticed that the fans had been lost, I found them. I had been holding them under my arm and I forgot. If Mr. Johnson had been quick-tempered, I surely would have gotten rapped on the head with his knuckles, because we had looked hard for them. Instead Mr. Johnson burst out in a big laugh, and patted my head, and told me that it was all right, that I did not have to be afraid. Then he took me to the ship. I was very fond of Mr. Johnson.

After we finished our lunch, he invited me to go to a public park. On land again we first went to an administration building that was close to the port. When Mr. Johnson finished with his business, we looked around for a vehicle to take us outside of town. I saw Chinese rickshaws like those in Thailand, with two wheels and pulled by a man. Many were parked nearby. Seeing them I felt sad and shocked; the rickshaw men had no clothes on except a piece of cloth about a hand-span and a half wide [nine to ten inches] hanging in the front and nothing in the back. At the time I felt funny; I was embarrassed but also sorry for them. I thought that they must have been very poor and I did not like the look of it. I was afraid of offending Mr. Johnson by telling him I would not go. Trying not to look I climbed in the rickshaw with Mr. Johnson and told him to pull down the shade. Mr. Johnson understood. He laughed and pulled down the shade. I felt better and asked him whether they were so poor that they did not have any clothes to wear. I felt sorry for them the whole way. We went to the park, and saw hibiscus and rambutan trees with lots of fruit. The rest I cannot remember because our time was limited. We had to go back and it was a long way. The shade of the rickshaw had to be pulled down as before.

When we reached the port, we saw a big ship--like a house. It was twice as big as our ship. I was very excited. I was glad to be going on board that big ship. Getting to our own ship, we hurriedly carried our belongings to the big ship which had anchored next to ours. After the cargo had been loaded, I don't remember when it left; I must have fallen asleep. But my goodness, when we were out in the ocean, the Indian Ocean, the ship was tossing! I had a good time. It was like rocking on a swing; pushing high and letting go. Each wave was as big as a house. Some were even bigger. I was not scared. I liked it when the front of the ship went up high and dived straight down, rolling from side to side. Then the front rose up, dived again. It looked as if the ship were moving faster than it really was. The water splashed and made white foam.

We went on with our voyage which was bound for the Straits of Penang. I understood that it took four hours or perhaps more to reach Penang. They said that it was an island under the British flag. It did not look especially strange. It was like a rural area in our country. We did not go into town. I don't know how good or bad it was. Also, it seems like we were there for only a short time. I don't remember how long I was on the ship as big as a house. I was very content. I watched them load the cargo. It made thundering noises. Some was unloaded, but I was not too interested. I drew and painted. Three or four passengers boarded; one was a young, good-looking woman, one was a rather old man, and two were old women.

I forgot to tell about a British woman named Miss Daily. She was not young and was a spinster. She had been sick with a high fever and had lost all her hair. Although she was not pretty, she was kind-hearted. She liked to help Mr. Johnson take care of me, and saw to it that I was well. In the evening she would help me get dressed because if she did not, I would surely have put on strange clothes. For example, one day I was tired of my dark blue skirt,

which was the only one I had. I wore it every day. So on this day, I put on a petticoat, because it was pretty--it was white with small colored flowers, very cute--and went up on the deck. I did not know; nobody had told me about what to wear. I did as I pleased. The passengers both young and old smiled and looked at Mr. Johnson. At the time Mr. Johnson was young, handsome, and single. He started to blush, and he walked to Miss Daily and whispered something. Miss Daily had to take me to change my clothes. I did not care. I took it off at her request without knowing why. This probably worried Mr. Johnson quite a bit, but he was still kind. When we went ashore, he bought me things to eat and toys. Penang was like a rural area in our country.

I don't know when we left Penang. When I woke up the next morning we were already out at sea. My cabin was very small, so I was the only occupant. Our next stop was the port of Colombo, which also belonged to Britain. After not too long a time we reached Ceylon of which Colombo was the port. It was not far from India.

Colombo was different from other ports. There was a breakwater. It was like a fish corral sunk into the sea. There was an opening for ships to go in and be safe from the waves and wind. This breakwater was made of rocks and cement. It was like a citadel. Many big ocean liners like the one we were on could be moored inside. The breakwater had to be thick and durable so that it could resist the big waves. When an ocean liner passed, one would hear "pang, pang, pang, pang" sounds like the continuous firing of a big cannon. That was the noise of the waves beating against the breakwater. When we came closer we would see the water break and spring many feet up like a fountain all along a stretch of the wall. It was a beautiful sight. If there were no breakwater how could the ships conveniently moor? Some would have to drop their anchors. If the chains broke, they would collide. That was why they made the breakwater. Now it is seventy-two years later; I don't know whether that wall still stands. I saw it when I was twelve years old. Now I am eighty-four. I can remember sleeping in the ship while it was moored inside this breakwater. Because of the noise of the waves smashing against the wall I was never sound asleep. Those who were not used to it were bothered, even children, and wanted to get away from there fast.

There was another interesting thing. The inside of this breakwater was very spacious. I supposed it could hold about one hundred big ships; that was this naughty child's estimate. After the ship had cast its anchor, there appeared small boats about the size of the boats of the monks [in Thailand] who went out in the morning hours to beg for food. The shape of these boats was strange; they had outriggers. The outrigger was shaped something like the shuttle used in weaving in the old days. The outrigger was shorter than the hull. You could call it a sister boat, connected by two round wooden pieces about a meter long attached to the side of the hull. The outrigger prevented the boat from capsizing, they said. There was only one person sitting in each boat. They paddled out to our ship and cried "dai, dai, dai!" I asked Mr. Johnson what they were saying. He said they meant "dive." If we threw coins--a penny, English

money, or half a penny, the people in the boats would jump in the water and dive for it. They held it in their mouths and came back to beg "dai, dai" again. I did not have any money on my person. Mr. Johnson gave me a lot. I had much fun, tossing a penny at a time and watching the diver grabbing the money. It was fun. I stopped only when the money ran out. Mr. Johnson granted my wishes without limit. Surprisingly, the water was limpid; one could see everything clearly. If the sharks came to attack the divers, they could get away in time, but there were none.

There was another funny incident. Among the passengers there were a husband and wife. They had a small child of three. The child refused to board the big ship. He bawled and abused his parents, saying "Goddamn Papa" and "Goddamn Mama" the whole time. He squirmed until his father could not hold him, but the father did not give up. He managed to get him on board. Once aboard he cursed incessantly. The father consoled him, but he would not stop. Finally, the father spanked him once on his behind. Instead of lowering his voice, he yelled louder. The mother was young, the father somewhat older. The mother turned red. The father also got red. It was almost departure time. The father was not able to silence his son, so he ran off the ship to get a Chinese nursemaid, whom the child called "Aya." She was carrying the baggage, and came when she was done. The child stopped. I went over just at that moment, but the child started to curse again. I had to retreat and stay away and try to talk to him from a distance. Aya pacified him until he was in a good mood and allowed me to come near. I flattered him, wanting to gain his favor. I ran to get Mr. Johnson's gold pocket watch for him. The child listened to the tick, tick, tick sounds. Men at that time wore pocket watches. For *farang*, there was a gold chain attached to it with a clasp fixed to one side of the vest. The watch was in a pocket on the other side of the vest. The jacket was worn open a little in the front to show off the watch. The rich wore gold watches, the price depending upon the quality of the gold.

In the end little Charlie and I were friends. We ate together. Our meal was delicious. There was rice with fried filet mignon cut up and placed on the rice. It was soaked with gravy. We ate on the top deck; we did not have to go and eat in the dining room downstairs. Aya was comfortable; she could go and take care of her business. I could speak a few Indian words, enough to get by. Charlie liked the sound of the watch. We had to hang it under a long wicker chair. Charlie lay down under it, listened to its ticking until he fell asleep. I, an overgrown child, also slept on the floor with him.

Passing the Asian Continent

Travelling across the Indian Ocean to the port of Aden took about ten days. This ocean was very big. We could not see land at all, there were only water and sky. The waves were big. Some days things were thrown off the table and broken. But the two children were not worried. If the waves were strong, Aya took us to the cabin. Some waves rose as high as the top deck. It was frightening. If the ship

sank, all would die. There would be no escape. It was really frightening. The naughty children were not so scared when they had the grown-ups with them. The ship crossed the ocean from one side to the other, riding the waves for about ten days.

Aden is a port on the way to Egypt, a country in Africa. There was a shortcut, which is the Suez Canal. It really saves time. To go by a roundabout way would take much longer.

Aden is not attractive or worth seeing. There are cliffs all along the waterfront. There are no beaches. The administration building is on the clifftop. To get to it one has to climb. The banks are high--exactly like our rivers in the north. The workmen looked strange. If I saw them in an isolated place, I would run away. They were not as dark as the Ceylonese or Indians. They were in-between, fair and red with red hair and green eyes. They were strange and very ugly. The workmen carried some things on their shoulders, others with both hands. The boats that came to pick up the cargo were not as big as a lighter in our country, and floated in shallow water. The people in the boats were not afraid of the sharks that swam around and were as big as people. Some were bigger. Most were one-and-a-half meters to two-and-a-half meters in length. Although I watched from the deck, I was afraid of them. Mr. Johnson noticed that I was afraid, and he laughed at me saying that they would not come up to bite. They were both interesting and frightening when they were fighting for the leftover food that a cook threw off the stern. They fought and bit each other. Because they gathered around to get the food, the water near the ship bubbled thickly. It was frightening when they bared their teeth at each other. When they snapped at the food, they turned their bellies up, because their lower jaws were short. They opened their mouths wide, and we could see their teeth in rows. I did not have the nerve to count them--I was too scared. The teeth were white and pointed. I did not know how many rows. They were packed like the rasbora fish that were put in a pot or a can of water--with enough space for them to turn over. The water in the can would make "chq, chq, chae, chae" sounds. The sharks near the ship were as big as a person, some were bigger. When they fought for food, it caused "soo, sa" sounds in the water and churned up foam. The loading boats were not big and carried so much that they sank down almost to water level. If the sharks had stretched up, they could have bitten off the boatmen's legs. They must have been used to them; they were not scared.

I wanted to know whether they had "dai, dai" boys here. Mr. Johnson said they had and asked me if I wanted to watch. I was speechless and could not decide, imagining the sharks showing their teeth and chewing up the boys. I dared not tell him. Mr. Johnson asked again: if there were boys to "dai," would I want to see? I honestly told him that I did. Mr. Johnson really spoiled me. He told me that he had to settle the price with the boys first. I started to be fearful and asked him: if the boys agreed, would the sharks not eat them up? He laughed and told me that he guaranteed that the sharks would not eat them. Nobody would let the sharks swallow them. They must know about these things. Then he pulled

out the money from his pocket. It was a gold coin. He said he had to give them this much so they would "dai" for us. I objected to the amount and told him not to do it. I said that, but I walked after him to the other side of the ship. There was a youth sitting with his legs down on the rail of the ship ready to dive. Before I realized what was happening, he dived in at the same time that Mr. Johnson tossed in the gold coin. We could see clearly. He grabbed the coin, then hurriedly climbed up on the ship with a happy face. I probably stopped breathing while the boy dived. After I saw he was all right and not eaten by the sharks, I felt exhausted. If the adults at home knew, I would probably have been scolded, because Mr. Johnson spoiled me to excess. The child might have had a heart attack.

I went back to watch the sharks eat until the food was gone. They still swam around near the ship, waiting for food. They swam up and down, disinclined to go back into the open sea. When the loading was finished, we continued our voyage and entered the Red Sea.

The Red Sea and The Suez Canal

The name of this sea was appropriate because it looked red and was very hot. The waves were not big, but there was a strong swell; even the adults got seasick. You can be sure that the naughty child was no longer naughty; she did not eat but only lay down until the sea was calm. Then she got up. As for other people, I did not have the energy to pay attention to them. The ones who were seasick probably staggered about just as I did. If we had not been seasick, it would have been very picturesque. The waves were not big, the sea was smooth. I don't remember how many days we were on the Red Sea. Probably it was not long, two or three days, or not quite that long. This part I don't remember.

Now we had to pass the last outpost, the Suez Canal. We entered it and went through to the Mediterranean. This canal was man-made. The chief engineer was a Frenchman. The administration building was at the far end at a place named Port Said.

In the canal it was really annoying; the ship had to wait its turn because the canal was so narrow that only one ship could pass at a time. There were holding bays at intervals along the way. The ships were assigned to go into such and such a holding bay. Our ship would have to go into a certain bay to let other ships pass and others went into bays to let our ship pass. Our luck was bad; we had to wait a long time. It was hot. Along the sides of the canal there was only sand, as far as the eye could see. Once in a while we saw Muslims standing on the banks with their long-necked camels. The camels' faces looked human. There was no green to be seen anywhere. I don't know whether those who used to pass through the Suez Canal would remember it or not. Fortunately, it was not long before we went through it to the Mediterranean and entered Europe.

Europe

Entering the Mediterranean was like coming into paradise. Oh, it was so agreeably cool! The atmosphere was very soothing. Besides that the ship was cruising close to the land, passing small islands until reaching Italy. At night it was attractive. The volcano named Etna could be seen on the Island of Sicily. It was without light. There was another one called Vesuvius. It was in Genoa [*sic*]. It shot sparks high into the air. I had never seen a volcano, and I was excited. The light was visible from far away. The light could still be seen even though the ship passed far beyond it. Incidentally, if anyone fell into it, he would be cremated, not roasted. Flames many meters high shot up above the crater. Probably about 100 meters; I don't know, I am just guessing.

We stopped in Naples, though not for long. We went sightseeing in the vicinity, then returned to the ship. Mr. Johnson bought me a big bunch of grapes, which I shared with Charlie. Then I slept in my cabin. When I woke up, I saw something hanging right above my face. I did not know what it was until I was wide awake and saw that they were bunches of grapes, both dried and fresh. They were dangling right close to my mouth. It was easy to snatch them with my lips. Mr. Johnson came in, saw me chewing them. He laughed, pleased because I praised his generosity, in spite of the food in my mouth. He should not have spoiled me so much. He probably had mercy on me because I was so naive--not knowing the right clothes to wear and not even being embarrassed over it.

After leaving Naples we stopped in Genoa, another port in Italy. Mr. Johnson asked me to go sightseeing, so we went. We walked and looked at things leisurely. We ran into one place, looked in and saw that on the inside there was a beautiful flower garden and many big three-story buildings, which looked like the dormitories of a big university. Mr. Johnson asked me if I wanted to go in; it was a cemetery. When the word "cemetery" was mentioned, I started to be scared. In our country nobody wanted to go and walk in a cemetery. Even for money, no one entered it. Theirs was very pretty, and you had to pay to go in. I did not quite want to go in because of the word "cemetery." As always, I protested, but after he paid, I went along with him. We walked around looking at the flowers that were growing at the foot of every cross. They were really beautiful in August. The weather in the south of Europe was not cold yet, only cool. I was absorbed and walked far from Mr. Johnson. I had to run back, and I trampled some of the flowers. Mr. Johnson asked whether I wanted to go in the building and said that we should have a look and find out what they had in there. If I had known, I surely would not have gone in because only one pace inside one could see the designs on the floor. There were letters carved in the stone or cement. There were people's names at every step we took. Up on the wall there was a picture of a sick person lying on a bed surrounded by his family. It was a decorative picture. I walked on the carved stones while looking up at the picture, which was in itself a wall until we went up to the first floor, which was like the ground floor, only the names were different and the picture was different. I enjoyed

looking because I thought that they were wall decorations. When we reached the second floor, I learned that coffins were let into the wall where the pictures were. Mr. Johnson told me that only the rich could afford to be there because the rent was very high. As soon as I heard that, I had goose pimples and asked Mr. Johnson to leave and refused to go to the second floor. I was laughed at as usual. I was afraid to walk on the dead. There were corpses on the left, on the right, overhead, and underfoot. Oh no, I refused to go farther.

On the way back, I walked fast. I had planned to go see the flowers again but did not. It was frightful; in the garden must have been many corpses. This garden of crosses must have covered many acres of land. It would have taken more than three days to explore the whole cemetery ground. They said that it was the biggest one in the world. This must be true. But today there must be someplace else many hundred times bigger, because more people have died. I don't know whether that cemetery is still there. Anyone who wants to know has to find out for himself. This is just a story that a grandmother told to her grandchildren.

That morning before the ship left Genoa, Mr. Johnson handed me a bag. I could not guess what it was. When I opened it, I saw a kind of fruit that I did not recognize. It was red, round and smooth with a small stem attached like the otaheite gooseberry. Mr. Johnson told me to try them, so I picked out one from the bag to taste. Oh my, it was really so good that there are no words to describe it. It was a mixture of sweet and sour. When I bit it, it was so juicy that it dripped. I tried many before I stopped. I asked Mr. Johnson what they were; they were very delicious. I had not eaten them anyplace before. Mr. Johnson smiled with satisfaction to see me so excited. He told me not to finish them too quickly; I might be sick. But I wanted to finish the whole bag because I could not stop myself. The Thais do not use the expression "Thank you," but make the gesture of *wai* [by bringing the hands together before the face as in prayer] or kow-tow instead. I *wai*ed to Mr. Johnson, the kind man. These fruits were cherries. I got to eat them again in Russia.

When the ship left, I do not remember. We were heading toward Marseilles, France.

From Genoa to France

The voyage from Genoa to our destination, the port of Marseilles in France, was fast and not boring. After the ship docked the passengers carried their things onto land. Each went to his destination. Mr. Johnson and I waited for my father to come and pick me up. Those who would go on with the ship to England were Mr. Johnson and Miss Daily. There probably were other people. We waited until 3 or 4 p.m., when my father arrived. He talked with Mr. Johnson till 5 p.m., then they bade goodbye.

In Marseilles, the lights were on but they were not that bright. It was about the same as the light along the streets in the palace.

Mr. Johnson might have told my father that I needed clothes. I did not feel any need and wore what I had. I was not bothered but my father must have been. It was around six o'clock in the evening (in the old days it was called "dusk time") when my father and I landed. I remember that the first store that sold miscellaneous things, from clothing to odds and ends, was right next to the dock. When we got to it he took me in. People in the store looked at us with curiosity. A man taking a teenaged daughter to buy clothes was strange. Father did not care. He asked them to bring small-sized clothes and told them that he wanted a twelve-year-old size. When it was held next to me, it went above my head. Everyone laughed. Father chose the smallest outfit in the store. It reached beyond my feet. We were discouraged and settled on that one. We would have gone searching, but we were not familiar with the place. Father probably felt abashed, too, a man taking a child to buy clothes. Surely it was not normal. I therefore changed my clothes in that store. You could say "sloughing," because the old ones were extremely old. I don't remember where we slept that night. It might have been on board the ship. I don't remember going to a hotel.

In the morning we said goodbye to Mr. Johnson. It was quiet on board. They did not load the ship. I questioned father and was told that there was a workmen's strike. They did not work and asked for higher wages. I don't remember how we carried our belongings but remember when we went to the train station.

Actually, I don't remember when we went to the station. I remember only when we reached there. We sat waiting for the train to leave. The train had been brought against a platform, but I did not know that it was a train because the floor of the train was level with the platform so that it appeared to be a single structure. The doors were open. I almost walked into it. I was walking around when the train moved, so I knew that it was a train. And because it was parked under the roof, it looked like part of the building.

While we were waiting for the train to leave, Father got a basket of fruit. The basket was flat, with six or seven fruits in it. I asked him how much they cost. Father said it came to the equivalent of five *baht* in Thai money. I was shocked. I told him that it was dreadfully expensive--five *baht*! Father laughed and said that everything in front of the station was expensive. The fruits consisted of one apple, three plums, which were the size of sumac fruits, apricots about the same size of sapodillas, and, I think, three bunches of grapes, which were not very big. I felt bad and did not want to eat them. In the palace, Grandma Tan's ice cream cost one *lot* a cup. If one wanted roasted tamarind seeds and soft coconut meat with it, it was one *aht*. Her ice cream was very sweet. We bought it through a window. If we spilled a drop, the ants swarmed in, and the nursemaid scolded us. It did not cost one *baht*. And these four or five pieces of fruits cost five *baht*. I complained to Father. He was nice and remained silent.

When the train was ready to leave, the whistle blew and we got underway. I don't remember this period at all until we arrived in

Paris. After we got off the train, we caught a carriage. It was an ordinary carriage like an old-fashioned horse carriage. It was probably no different, which was why there was no comment from this naughty child. But the city was pretty and solidly constructed. I enjoyed looking and remember that there were cafés all over the place. We went to the embassy first. We met the ambassador, who was named *Phraya* Suriya-Nuwat. His wife was named Linchi. They both were elderly. They had five children, three girls and two boys. We talked for a while, then left to find a hotel to stay in. It was near the embassy. We waited for Mother. She had not arrived yet, so Father decided to take me to England.

England

The next day we boarded a ship at Calais to cross to a port named Dover in England. While crossing the English Channel, everybody was seasick. I got on board and as soon as the ship left port, I had to lie down for two or three hours and could not get up at all. What waves! I would not want to go through that again in my whole life. As soon as we landed I felt all right again. We caught the train to London. I don't remember anything until we arrived at Victoria Station. From there we rented a hansom cab to the embassy. This cab was different; only England had it. It was a carriage drawn by a single horse. The coachman, instead of sitting in the front, sat in the back but high enough to see what was in front and where the horse went. If one wished to talk to the coachman, there was an opening in the roof. When the passenger wanted to speak, he had to tap on the top; the opening above his head would open, and the coachman would poke his head down to talk to him. This was a little scary because he was on top of our heads. If he spit, we had no way to get out of the way. It was not long before we arrived at the embassy. It was at 23 Ashburn Place, S.W. We paid the fare and went inside.

The embassy was rather big. To a child's eyes it was quite big. There was a small garden, a little lawn next to the building. Today it may have changed. We went in to pay homage to the ambassador, *Phraya* Prasit-Salayakan (or *Phraya* Singhaseni). I remember him quite well. I had met him when my parents and I came down the river from Nan to Bangkok and stopped over in Phitsanulok. He was the governor there. I remember that we moored our boat with four oarsmen at the steps of his mansion, because it was situated at the edge of the river. At that time we met Aunt Hong, his wife, too. We arrived late in the evening. He left a wind-up oil lamp in the front room. I was told to call them Uncle and Aunt. Therefore when I saw him in London, we got to know each other quickly. There was no Aunt; she had not come with him. We talked for a while, and then we said goodbye and left for the hotel, which was near the embassy. It was dark by the time we took baths and got dressed. The lights were on, but they were not too bright. I don't remember where we ate.

There were two events that day. First, there was a farewell party for *Thunkramqm* Bqriphat (Prince of Nakhonsawan-Wqraphinit). He would be making a visit to Thailand. There were many people at the

embassy. The members of royalty, students, government officials were there in good numbers. Father took me to a meeting room. I still wore my old clothes, but Father had asked a housekeeper to hem them up to the right length. (I was not interested in clothing.) After a short time, His Royal Highness Prince Burachat (Prince of Kamphangphet; at the time he was *Phra-ong Chao*) came and took me by the hand to go to see the Crown Prince (King Vajiravudh), who was somewhere in the back of that room. I bowed by bending my knees a little; I did not know how to curtsy. He smiled but did not say anything and might have spoken to Father. Prince Burachat took me around the room, which was full of government officials and students. He introduced me to *Phraya Rajawalapha-Nusit* (*Chao Phraya Rajasuphamit*). He was known as *Chao Khun*² Rad. Next to him were *Luang Song-Suradet* (*Chao Phraya Phichayen-Yothin*), *Mqm Luang Sit Suthat* (*Phraya Wechit-Wongwuttikrai*), *Phra-ong Chao Wuttichai* (Prince of Singha), and many others. Also there was *Somdej Chai* (Prince of Yukhon-Thikhamporn, Prince of Lopburi-Ramet), but I did not see *Thunkramqm Chai*. They said he had already left and boarded the ship. Later, I learned that *Mqm Chao Sitthiphon*³ accompanied the prince back home, but we did not meet then because he was drunk and was not able to come to this gathering. Prince *Bqwaradet*⁴ was there but I did not see him, either. He probably was drunk like his brother. Prince Burachat shouted loudly: "Bobbie, Bobbie" (Prince *Bqwaradet*'s nickname), but he never showed up. So I did not get to know the two brothers until fifteen years later when we were in the same family.

The second thing that happened was that one of the diplomatic officials named *Luang Prakit* had been sick with tuberculosis and passed away the day before I arrived. The young princes were afraid of *Luang Prakit*'s ghost, because he was not yet buried, but was on the second floor of the embassy. So they stayed at the hotel where I stayed. Then they all went their several ways. I don't know where the Crown Prince went. There was no one at the embassy.

I stayed at the embassy and planned to eat there. Because I could not sit still, I followed Uncle all over the place. Incidentally, there was a clerk named Mr. Khram. He came in to report on *Luang Prakit*'s death. He saw me sitting with Uncle. Mr. Khram told him that he came in to give a report but a child was there; she might be scared. I butted in, saying that I was not afraid and begged him to tell. Uncle then told him to report, since the child was not afraid. Mr. Khram started to say that before *Luang Prakit* died, he stuck his tongue out as far as his chest. His eyes rolled back and forth, and even Mr. Khram was afraid. Now the naughty child had to nestle close to Uncle. I had promised not to be afraid, so I had to control myself. After Mr. Khram finished his report, I was not afraid but I felt sorry for *Luang Prakit*'s wife and his two children, a boy and a girl. They were on the fourth floor. I asked Uncle's permission to go visit Madam *Prakit*.⁵ When the door opened, I entered. The room was pitch dark. My eyes were not used to the dark, so I almost bumped into the coffin, which was in the room. There was a big candle burning dimly. Madam took me to sit and talk. She knew some Thai, enough to understand. I saw the strangely shaped coffin; the two ends were tapered. It was like a big clothing chest with handles, and it was painted shiny. I got over my fear, even though I was sitting in a dark room in front of a coffin, because I was sympathetic. After I had stayed an appropriate

length of time, I came downstairs. Madam told me that she would go and get the children. I told Father that I would go up to the fourth floor to see the two children. He did not object, so I clambered to the fourth floor. I met the *farang* children. They clearly looked half-*farang*. They were about two and three years old. They were cute. When they saw me, they were glad and responded to my call. I went in to see them, patting them and smiling at them. I stayed for a while before saying goodbye and came downstairs to have lunch.

That day I was lucky. I received a gold coin worth about five *baht* as a reward because I had accidentally learned that there was a workers' strike in Marseilles. They refused to load and unload the ships and demanded higher wages. Uncle was pleased, dug out a coin from his pocket and gave it to me in the middle of the meal. I was glad. Incidentally, Uncle had a young son eating with us. Uncle then hintingly said that his son probably was not interested in this type of thing. I was sorry for his son. Father did not save his face, praising me even more. Not long after we met at Bridgeport, a town where I studied. He went to school near where I went. He passed the teacher's house and stopped by to drop off a big bag of gingersnaps for me. His name was Tiam Singhaseni. Later he became *Luang*, that is, *Luang* Prakat. He was very generous. We met many times during the months that I studied there.

There is another amusing story. Uncle was not bothered by a child who was curious and walked after him asking questions. I followed him around and he did not mind. But when he went out for his exercise walk, he did not let me go along. I asked him why. He told me that he liked to walk fast. I pressed him further, asking if I went with him why he would have to walk slowly. He said he was afraid that I could not keep up with him. He was tired of answering, so he told me that I could try, because arguing in front of the embassy was a waste of time. When we agreed, we started to walk. I was walking. He was walking slowly enough for me to keep abreast. So I asked how he could think I was not able to keep up with him. Mr. Khram, his favorite clerk, was trailing after us. He said that he was sorry for me, so he walked slowly. I challenged him to walk at his normal pace and I would keep up with him. Now he walked fast, and I hurried along. After a while I could not keep up and started to run. I sometimes ran close to him, sometimes a distance away from him. He might have been testing me. I panted and admitted that I was tired. He turned back and talked to Mr. Khram, saying that he could not rely on a child. Mr. Khram laughed. He probably was told to trail behind; that was why he continued to walk after me. I was embarrassed.

That afternoon, *Luang* Prakit was buried. His wife fainted. She was still young and also pretty. Father and I bid goodbye to the ambassador and went back to Paris. Mother was waiting for us there.

Return to Paris

As usual I was seasick in the tumultuous channel. I am not sure whether it was from Hastings to Boulogne or from Dover to Calais.

There is another funny story. Mother was waiting to see us at the port. She saw her daughter wearing ancient clothes. She must have been startled, for she looked alarmed. We all went to Paris, to the embassy, where we were cordially welcomed by the ambassador, *Phraya Suriya*. We had lunch and made friends with his children. There were three girls named Lek, Noi, Putti (or Nit), and two boys named Kračhang (nicknamed Čhu) and Pračuab (nicknamed Pe). After we returned to Thailand we remained friends. Putti died abroad. Čhu became Dr. Kračhang or *Luang Suriyaphong-Phisutthiphat*.

We stayed in a hotel near the embassy. Mother did not complain about my clothes at all. In the morning she went shopping and bought a dress so I could change before we went out. Mother was used to Paris; she studied in a convent. She used to be a housekeeper at the embassy. She met Father there. They fell in love and got married. Therefore, to shop around and look for something was no problem. After I had my clothes and could go out without embarrassment, we went touring. We went up the Eiffel Tower. There was an escalator [*sic*]. I did not know how to get on it and I almost fell down. Father grabbed my arm. This tower is very tall. We could see all Paris. They said that it was the tallest tower in the world. I don't know whether it still is. On the way down we stopped to have lunch under the tower. There was Thai-type food; I don't remember whether it was fried rice or noodles. I enjoyed the fresh almonds, which were delicious. Mother said they were expensive.

Mother Takes Me to The Bon Marché

The Bon Marché was a department store that sold various things that housewives needed. One could shop the whole day without leaving the store. Mother took me to the largest one. At that time, to a child's eyes the building was gigantic. Now it may not be the largest. Mother took me into the store and told me to play there. The first room was the staircase room on the ground floor. There was a big staircase that led up four floors. People on the upper floors could look and see down. This was the room where children were left if their mothers could not take them along. There were small children and children of my size playing. There were toys for children of all ages. When I entered, a sitter handed me a big gas-filled balloon--much bigger than the ones in the palace. I loved balloons. When I was in the palace, I decided to buy a balloon each month. They were two *phai*⁶ apiece. I would play with them until they popped, then threw them away. I was pleased to get this big balloon. It was tied to a string for holding. I walked around with it until it slipped from my hand and floated up to the ceiling. I was not quick enough to grab it. I was sorry to lose it. The sitter saw this happen, so she grabbed it for me. I was very glad. There were other loose balloons that the owners did not want back; they turned to play with other things. Each one played with different things--cars, swings, etc. I was absorbed in the push-carts and pull-carts. Mother did not come back for a long time. At lunch time, when I was hungry, she came down. I don't know what she bought, but it was a

lot. I had asked for a doll, but she did not have it. When I asked, she told me that she had it sent to Russia and that I should not play while traveling. She took me shopping for three days in a row. I did not do anything else. I was twelve and still played with a foreign doll dressed like a Western woman. I played with it until I was fifteen years old. Mother had to part me from it by giving it away. After we finished shopping, we were ready to travel to Germany. We were in Paris about seven days. Mother took me to say goodbye to the Reverend Mother who used to teach her when she was young. All the nuns were old. The convent was in a suburb, but I cannot remember the place. I remember only that it was surrounded by a wall.

Berlin

When the time was right we started our journey. We took a train to the border and changed trains to go into Germany to Berlin. This part I don't remember, but it must have been good because if it had been bad we would have commented on it. The train was comfortable, so we had no complaints. When we arrived in Berlin, we went to find a hotel near the embassy. After putting our things away, we went to the embassy to pay our respects to the ambassador, *Phraya Nonthaburi*.

We arrived late in the evening. Therefore we went back to the embassy again the next day. At the embassy we got to see *Thunkramqm* Chai, Prince Bqriphat Sukhumphan, Prince of Nakhonsawan Wqraphinit; Prince Rangsit (Prince of Chainat-Narenthon); Mr. Tiam Surawongse who was a competitor of the *Thunkramqm* and his friend.⁷ I don't remember who else was there. I should tell you that this naughty child was branded by Prince Rangsit as the number one naughty child when I was in the palace. When he saw me, he pointed at my face and said that I was the naughtiest one, then he laughed. In the palace, I knew him quite well. I used to wait to play with him when we had to pass the staircase to go to see the King. He had not had his topknot cut yet. He liked small children and was not strict with them. He sometimes shook our heads, or rapped our heads with his knuckles if we were very naughty. Also there was Prince Suriyong (Prince San Wisainaruebqdi), a brother of Prince Chumphon, whom I had not met in England, France, or Germany. This prince I was not familiar with. Children did not like him.

We had lunch there. I got to be at the same table with *Thunkramqm* Chai and Prince Rangsit. I remember one strange thing about the embassy. The dining room was of a good size, but instead of being decorated with pictures, it was decorated with clocks, hanging all over the place. The clocks there were of all sorts and sizes, from big to small. They all were hung on the wall. The guests chatted-- but not me; a child had to sit quietly. The ambassador, unlike Uncle Prasit, did not like to talk to children. After we had been eating a while, I heard noises; "nong, neng, nang." I wondered what made those loud noises in the room. I looked back and forth. The noises came from the clocks on the wall. Before I knew what was going on I heard the ambassador call: "Hey, Bert! Bring me my pocket watch." Laughter came from the eating party at the table including *Thunkramqm*

Chai, Prince Rangsit (the Prince of Chainat), and the embassy officials, because they all knew that he said this every noontime. Bert had to wind every clock that needed winding. The ambassador pretended to be indifferent. It was his routine. We felt full or almost full, but all the clocks were not wound. Bert had to serve liqueurs and coffee. He was also the butler. The guests all laughed for a long time. I also laughed with them. It was funny; one clock had not finished chiming when another one started. They made "ngeng, ngang" sounds. I did not count how many clocks there were; there were too many. I don't know whether the ambassador brought them back to Thailand. If he did, according to my estimate, they would have filled one whole train. If I had been alone with Mr. Bert, I probably would have asked him if I could wind the clocks. This Mr. Albert had been in the ambassador's service for such a long time that they understood each other very well.

That night *Thunkramom* invited Mother to go to an opera that people were saying was good. Father declined with the excuse that he had to put me to bed at the hotel near the embassy. About 8 p.m. those who wanted to go to the opera went. They were Prince Rangsit, Mr. Tiam Surawongse, and the ambassador. Father and I still had something to talk about with Mr. Luftus, a secretary to the embassy. There was nobody present except the three of us. Father looked at his watch. It was almost the first quarter hour--our time in the old days, nowadays 21 hours [9 p.m.]. He started to get up but did not, and talked some more. They talked a little more about this and that, like those who have not met for a long time. I began to feel sleepy and sat quietly. Father said that the child was sleepy and had to go. We all got up. Mr. Luftus went to the window and shouted, "Your Honor, there is a fire in the basement of our building." He spoke clearly in Thai. Father hurried to the window and saw smoke gushing out. He held my hand and went down the stairs in a hurry. It was a good thing that we were on the first floor. We went to the ground quickly and ran into the wife of the chauffeur. She came out the gate carrying a huge mattress. She almost hit me with the mattress. We raced to get out of the gate. Father took me to watch the fire from across the street. While the old lady carried the mattress out, the old man led two horses out the gate. If the old man had come out first, I might have been stepped on by the horses. I stood watching the fire with Father. I could not restrain my laughter at the old lady. She cried loudly, yelled all the time, went in and out, carrying her belongings from the basement. The old man carried his riding gear quietly. Soon we heard bells ringing, "gareng gang, gareng gang," from afar. Father told me "The fire engine has arrived, in just five minutes!" He mentioned that it was quite fast. The cart was big. The horses drawing it were enormous. I enjoyed watching the cart and the horses, but did not notice the ladder. It was attached to the cart. In a wink it was as high as the fourth floor, up to the roof. I did not notice how they extended it. At that time four floors was probably quite high.

The fire was extinguished within ten minutes. They went up on the roof to spray water to prevent it from catching fire; in the basement they did the same. Mr. Luftus told us that Bert almost died. He had forgotten to turn off the gas lock and had run upstairs

to turn it off. The room was filled with smoke; he could not breathe and had to crawl, keeping his nose close to the floor, finding his way to the switch. He came back to tell about it, still panting. This kind of person was difficult to find. He was faithful. If the switch had not been turned off, who knows what would have happened. The building might have blown up, and the ambassador's clocks would have been ruined. The ambassador would probably have been so sad that he would have cried. It was a narrow escape.

After the fire was completely extinguished, Mr. Luftus tiptoed back to the room where we sat. He picked up a piece of paper to show us that the spot where we had been was so hot that the paper was scorched. I cannot say who saved us, but if I had not felt sleepy and they had chatted away, we might have fallen into the basement and been barbecued. Mr. Luftus said that he had had to grope his way through the building. His steps made sounds--"krøp, krap." There was a desk where many important papers were kept. He was worried about them and that was why he went to find out.

The next day Father took me to the zoo. Oh! it was really worth seeing. I got to see everything. It was very big, and we ran out of time and had to go back. The first cage was the lion's. The floor of the lion's cage was about my height. There were iron guard rails about a meter from the cage so that no one could reach it. There was a crowd around it, including me. I was excited because I had not seen a lion before. This one was really fearsome; when it was angry with the onlookers, its mane puffed up. Its back had short hair. It had a beautiful and graceful figure. When it roared, I asked Father if it was thunder. I was afraid it might rain. Father laughed and told me that it was the lion roaring. It was strange; it sounded exactly like thunder. As usual, I was afraid but I wanted to see. I was absorbed in watching because a female lion came out. At this point I don't know what happened. The onlookers dispersed in all directions and there was the sound of laughing. I saw some people wiping their faces, their heads. I did not know what happened. Finally I understood, because nobody went near the iron rail again. They stood laughing. I saw the lion lift up its leg like a dog urinating. I was short, that was why I did not get hit. I don't know where Father went.

I moved to the next cage. This animal I knew: it was a tiger. It was not so frightening, but its eyes were green, showing its ferocity. A pair came out. They walked back and forth looking for a way to get out. If they had, we probably would have been torn to pieces. But the cage was solid, reliable, and clean. They had a cave and their private woods. It was nice and comfortable. Oh! I forgot to say that the lions were frightening when they jumped out. They backed up to the end of the cage, exactly like a cat does when it prepares to pounce on a mouse. They lifted up their legs a few times, then leaped, their heads touching the ceiling. They did this two or three times, then stopped. They might have gotten hurt because they bumped their heads against the ceiling. Now I started to be afraid--in case they poked a hole and came out. I had goose pimples from fear. I saw Father walking back to get me.

This time we did not go far before we reached a hippopotamus house. Oh! this animal's house looked very nice. It was about five by seven meters. There was a pond so that it could swim back and forth. All the plants, such as grasses and reeds, were chosen from the forest that it once lived in. When I reached its cage, the hippo was swimming back to its house. It opened its mouth wide from afar. When it reached the house, it walked up the steps. There were stairs for it to climb up. They were low because its legs were short. My word, it was much bigger than a water buffalo! It was very fat. Its mouth was big, long, and wide. Half of its body was head and mouth. When it opened its mouth, I could have gone in and lain down easily. I could even have sat. I watched it swim. It looked comfortable. There was also a cave for it to sleep in.

We went on. Now we watched the monkeys. There were all kinds of them; the big apes were as large as a big tall man,⁸ the small ones were the size of a kitten. Their cages were in rows, enclosed with chicken wire. The orangutans were interesting. They looked like humans and stood up and walked like humans. Their faces looked like the faces of some people, too. There were many kinds of monkeys. They were put together in big or small cages according to their size. The orangutans were a family. They stood in a group like people. The male had a big full chest with muscles. It was not frightening. There were so many monkeys that we could not see them all in three days. We did not have many hours left and were too tired to walk. The gorillas were more fearsome. They looked ferocious.

The giraffes were in a wide enclosure. As far as I could tell it was open ground and there were no trees. They walked all over the place and had a big area in which to run. I don't know where they took them in the winter, but the zoo was spacious. I was sorry that we did not get to see other countries, but we had only a few days and did not see everything. It was time to go home. I did not talk about the fire; it was not a child's business, but the grown-ups probably talked about it.

I forgot to mention one of the most important streets in Berlin. While watching the fire from across the street, we stood on the main street. There were big, tall gas poles along the street. Also one kind of tree was planted for beauty and shade. I asked Father what the trees were. He told me that they were linden trees. In German it sounded like *Unter den Linden*--Under the Linden Trees. This street was very picturesque. I would like to say that it is like Rajadamnuen Avenue today, but that was seventy years ago.

Notes for Chapter VII

1. A district in Chonburi, a province on the Gulf of Siam.
2. Colloquial title for *Phraya*.
3. He later became the author's husband.
4. An elder brother of the author's husband who led the army troops to Bangkok, trying to recapture power for King Prachadhipok after the 1932 revolution.
5. The use of the title "Madam" in the Thai text indicates that the person referred to was a Western woman.
6. Thai coin no longer in use. One *phai* equals two *aht*.
7. An age-mate was sent abroad with a *Thunkramqm* to be his friend and schoolmate. This person also served as his competitor in school. The idea was that the *Thunkramqm* would study harder if he had such competition.
8. The Thai word *ling* includes both monkeys and apes.

VIII

ST. PETERSBURG

We stayed in Germany for three days. The first day we went to pay our respects to the ambassador, and stayed for dinner. The second day was the day of the fire. Mother accompanied *Thunkramom* Chai to the opera. They all went except Mr. Luftus, a secretary of the embassy and Father who excused himself to take me to bed. The next day, the third day, we said goodbye and set out on our way to Russia.

We did not visit anyplace, but passed through several streets in a horse-drawn carriage. The city was solidly built, with beer shops on every street. On any street there were tables laden with beer mugs, which were not the same as ordinary cups; the brims were wider and the bottoms were narrow. They were big and tall. In a child's opinion, they must have been about a span or more high. The beer in the mugs was dark as black coffee, and had about four inches of white foam on top. I noticed that most people who sat drinking beer along the streets had stomachs that stuck out and touched the tables. They all had beer bellies. They say that dark beer makes you fat. We did not go anywhere, so I have nothing to discuss.

When we arrived at the station, we got on the train that was waiting there. We had a little conversation and said goodbye. When it was time, the train left. Mr. Luftus was the only one who came down to see us off at the station. The train was big and quite clean. We said our last goodbye, then the train left, heading for Russia.

The German train was clean and big and ran very fast. I sat watching the scenery through the window. I knew that it was fast because the tall poles along the side of the tracks, that I understood to be telegraph poles or electricity poles (I was not sure which), passed so swiftly that I had no time to count them. Houses along the way were pretty. The fields were level to the horizon, like the fields in our country. I don't know whether they were fields for rice or other grains; I did not ask. The farmers' houses were pretty. They were brick. Some were built near the railroad, some were off in the distance. They were very picturesque. I sat looking at things, counting the electricity poles or sleeping. I don't remember when we arrived at the border. It must have been in three days or less, but we finally reached the border of Russia.

As soon as we entered Russia, even at the border station, everything was different. The station was old and ugly. There were no brick buildings, but instead huts and shacks with thatched roofs. The people were not very well dressed. Their clothes were old, which showed that they were poor. They covered their heads with different-colored kerchiefs, like red or green.

When we changed from the German train to the Russian one, the difference was obvious. It was old and not too clean. The Russian train was also smaller than the German. We called a porter to carry

our things. The porters lacked sophistication and were poorly dressed. Their clothes were old and unattractive. They probably knew nothing of cities and might be called country bumpkins. Just as in our country, those who live far away in the woods do not wear nice clothes, or else have none to wear. After our things were carried from the station to the Russian train, we set out again. I did not see a lounge for passengers at the station.

The train started to move, making the sound "iad." At first it went slowly, which was nice. But when it sped up, it started to run unevenly and jerk until my head rocked back and forth. The grown-ups were big and heavy, I was light. It was like riding on an ox cart. When it was bumpy, I had to hang on to something, otherwise I might have bumped my head and banged into things. The worst of all was when we ate. They brought us soup. I held onto the bowl. It splashed and spilled. When I was about to feed myself, it spilled on Father's lap. He was sitting next to me. When I tried again, it spilled on me. Not one spoonful of soup entered my mouth. You can imagine. Father thought that if he let me feed myself I would probably pour the soup on everyone's lap, so he volunteered to feed me. Even though it spilled, it went back in the bowl, which was better than on our laps. Mother sat laughing at the two of us. She herself had difficulty. To cut each piece of meat was difficult; the knife slipped. I don't know why the train shook so much. Now I suspect that it was because of the narrow rails and because the joints of the rails were not even. That was why it rocked all the way. The country was big but the people were very poor. It was pathetic. There must have been corruption in the remote areas and in the big cities. This disease has still not been remedied. Traveling by train, it took more than ten days before we reached St. Petersburg, the capital. The closer we came to it, the better the houses looked, but they were not the same as in the three countries that I had seen previously. Those countries were rich and so were their houses.

When we arrived in St. Petersburg station, as soon as the train stopped, there were officials from the embassy, and two or three *farang* came to meet us on the platform. I would like to tell you a little about the station. It was of good size but it was not so big as to be exciting. To my eyes, it was the same size as our Hua Lamphong Station.¹ When the train came to a full stop, Father took me by the hand and stood right in front of the steps to go down. There was a *farang* who was as big as one of the giants in front of the Temple of Dawn.² He came over, grabbed my hand and kissed it. I almost pulled my hand back. Since I was born nobody had kissed my hand. Father saw that I hesitated and said that this was Captain Krulov. Another one did the same thing and he was Mr. Lorell. Captain Krulov was *Thunkramqm* Chakraphongse's guardian. He must have been in his forties. I don't know what Mr. Lorell taught. I did not ask. He was younger, about thirty. The adults went on greeting each other. The Thai officials were *Luang* Aphirak (later to become *Phraya* Surin) and *Luang* Wisut, a secretary. These two men exchanged jobs: *Luang* Wisut stayed in Russia while *Luang* Aphirak went home. I don't remember seeing them again at the embassy. After an appropriate amount of greeting, we got in the ambassador's carriage, which was especially

grand. It was drawn by a big shiny black horse with a long tail that touched the ground. Everyone turned and looked. The coachman was as fat as an earthen water jar. On the back of his jacket there was a V-shaped gold stripe about an inch wide and on the carriage, three, one above the other; this meant it was an ambassador's carriage. Those who were not ambassadors could not ride in it. There was a carriage for the *chargé d'affaires* with only two silver V's, one above the other. They were as ceremonious as in our country. Only the ambassador, his wife, and his children could ride in the ambassador's carriage.

I went alone with a teacher to go to see a Thai performance there. I had to sit in a special box that was frightfully big. A small child sitting alone; the teacher had to stay out of sight. People often craned their necks to look at me. It was the imperial theater and was enormous. Mr. Bud Mahin led the Thai troupe, but lost money because they went in the wrong season. They almost died from the cold. Mr. Bud Mahin was the son of *Chao Phraya Mahin-Tqrasak-Thamrong*. Like his father, who was renowned in our country, he led a troupe of performers. *Chao Phraya Mahin-Tqrasak-Thamrong's* shows were very well known in those days. Everyone knew them. The performance was not one long story but separate scenes which were very beautiful. The costumes were magnificent--all gleaming and dazzling. If they had gone at the right time, they probably would have made money. The embassy had to arrange for their trip back home because they had no money.

The scenes that I remember quite well were a lantern dance and a fan dance. The others I don't remember--something like a hero and a heroine dance and probably a *chui-chai* dance,³ too. It was too much for a child to remember. I watched until the end and went back to the embassy.

Besides the dancers and teachers who were adults, and there were not fewer than twenty of them, there was also Mr. Bud Mahin's daughter named *Chamrat*. She was good-looking and could be called pretty. She was fifteen or sixteen years old. There was also his son who was eight. His name was John. The son was presented to *Thunkramqm* and he left him with my parents. The boy called them "father" and "mother" and called me "sister." We lived together until my parents had to go back. I don't know whom *Thunkramqm* left this boy with after that.

I had a woman teacher who came to teach by the hour. John also studied with me. We started with the alphabet. John was an intelligent boy; he learned fast and was mischievous like any child. Sometimes he locked the door of the study room and left me inside until tea time. I had to bang on the door until he opened it. He had a mischievous nature, but we got along well. His sister was in the play. She had a supporting part as a fairy. She wore a beautiful costume, and she bossed around the other performers, telling them to dance in various scenes.

I arrived in Russia in October of 1900. It was the beginning of winter. The coldest months were December and January. I felt sorry for the poor city dwellers and the Orientals. They were not used to the cold. They all complained that they would die.

Let me tell you one thing at a time, because if I don't pay attention it will be confusing. Let's start with our arrival at our house. We rented the whole floor. It was like a flat of today. The building had four stories. The embassy was on the first floor. The next floor above was rented by an admiral and above that I don't know.

On our floor, the rooms were as follows: (1) my parents' bedroom; (2) my room; (3) a guest room; (4) Father's study; (5) a dining room; and (6) Mother's reception room, which occupied the whole front. This was overlooking the Neva River, the most important river of the capital city. Next came (7) a big room which was called a "salon"; (8) a bedroom next to the salon for *Thunkramqm*; (9) a secretary's room next to *Thunkramqm*'s room; (10) a stairwell; and (11) a butler's room. There was a corridor in the middle, and on the opposite side was (12) the dining room; (13) a Thai housekeeper's room, which was opposite to my room; (14) a bathroom which was opposite to Mother's room; (15) a *farang* housekeeper's room, which was next to the bathroom; and (16) a kitchen at the back of the house. The servants had to sleep in the attic.

The persons who lived in the house regularly were Father, Mother, a Thai housekeeper, a *farang* housekeeper, a secretary, a servant, a cook's assistant, a butler, a butler's assistant, and a chauffeur, who lived on the ground floor. *Thunkramqm* Chakraphongse came only half a day on Saturday and a whole day on Sunday. He had lunch, tea, and dinner. He was accompanied by Mr. Phum, his competitor or rather his friend. On Sunday he had breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner at the embassy. He always had two or three guests. The regular ones were Captain Krulov, Mr. Lorell, and M.C. Thongthikhayu Thongyai (his nickname was Thongrod), who was a military cadet. He was fourteen or fifteen years old. I knew him well because he also had been in the palace. He had been presented to the Princess Grandmother ("the Palace Queen").

Thunkramqm liked Thai food. That was why he spent some nights at the embassy; there were all kinds of ingredients to make Thai food for him at the embassy. Her Majesty the Queen, his mother, sent everything needed to make Thai dishes, except for those that required fresh ingredients. There were dried ingredients to replace the fresh ones. Even though the taste was a little different without fresh ingredients, it was better than expected. Mother brought along her relative to cook for *Thunkramqm*. She was also mother's chambermaid. We were fully supplied with Thai things.

The members of the royal family who visited us got to eat our Thai meals. During my stay there, there were five members of royalty; the Crown Prince, *Thunkramqm* Bqriphat, Prince Yukhon-Thikhampnon, Prince Burachat (Prince of Khamphangphet), Prince Wuthichai (Prince of Singha) and their entourages, for example, *Phraya* Rajawanlop, who was the Crown Prince's guardian, and M.R. Sit Suthat. The Crown Prince came first, followed by *Thunkramqm* Bqriphat, who came a little before New Year. It was during the coldest time.

From now on I will tell you in parts, which will be better than telling everything at the same time. I will tell you about the first day in Russia, during which something happened.

It was 8 p.m. when I went to bed. The mattress was soft and comfortable. The quilted blanket was heavy and warm. I woke up early the next morning. I used to get up at 6 a.m.. Mother and Father were not up yet. I dressed myself by putting on the clothes I wore the day before and putting on the footwear that someone had placed in front of my bed. They were dark blue flannel with one button to hold the ankle straps. The soles were of thin shiny black rubber. They were to be worn in the bedroom. I had not seen them before and did not know.

After putting on my clothes and my shoes, I opened the door, went out, and stood in the corridor. I looked left and right, but saw no one. The others were not awake yet. I tiptoed to mother's assistant's room. She was getting dressed, covering her head with heavy cloth. I asked her where she was going. She said she was going to the market. I asked to go with her because Father and Mother were not up yet, and I did not want to be up alone. Mother's assistant was named Num. Later Mother told me to call her Aunty Num. So I called her Aunty. Aunty Num hesitated but finally agreed and let me go, for there was nobody awake yet. I was glad and ran to get my sailor's hat that matched my sailor's outfit, the one I wore on the train. I walked out with her, full of energy. We turned, then walked straight to the Nevsky Prospekt, which was the important street of the capital (like Unter den Linden, but inferior). It could not be compared with the big avenues in Germany. Everything made me feel sorry for Russia, even though I was only a child, because I had seen better things. I did not know where we were going, and just followed Aunty Num until we reached a market. I knew because I saw some big fish in a glass tank, swimming back and forth. I saw that the buyers killed them. I did not want to watch because I was sorry for the fish, so I went into a dry-goods store. The fish tank was on the side of the sidewalk. The water splashed all over like in the fish markets in our country. There were shops that sold various things hanging about. On the shelves were woven baskets containing onions, garlic, large dried chillies, and other things that I don't remember. There was one dried coconut. It was carved into a monkey's head with a mouth and eyes and painted red lips. The black eyes had eyebrows. It was in the shop. I enjoyed looking at the carved coconut, which I had not seen anywhere except in this far-away country.

After Aunty Num finished shopping, we headed home. On the way back, I noticed that almost all the passers-by looked at my face, then at my feet, but not at my body. I did not care; their eyes were their own. If they wanted to look, I could not stop them. But it was strange that they looked at my face and then at my feet. We arrived home. I went to check on Mother. She was up and dressed for breakfast. Mother asked where I had been. I told her that I had gone to the market with Aunty Num. At that, it was like the whole world came crumbling down. She asked me whether I had dressed like this to go to the market. I unemotionally told her yes, that I had gone that way. Mother called Aunty Num, the *farang* housekeeper (named Mlle. Anna), and the servant. She spoke French to the *farang* housekeeper and Thai to Aunty Num. I could not catch what it was all about. I knew only that everyone was scolded, and they ran about in all directions. I was not scolded. Even if I had been, I would not have

known why. I saw them carrying towels and a nightgown toward the bathroom. Water was boiled to be put in the bathtub. The doors were closed. It was very noisy. I stood there confused, turning this way and that, watching them. All of a sudden Mlle. Anna carried me to the bathroom. I don't know why I had to be carried; I could walk to the market. In the bathroom, I saw steam coming from the bathtub. I was alarmed, wondering whether they were going to scald me. Two or three persons were in the bathroom. The room was warm, the water was hot. They hurriedly undressed me, then dunked me in the water. I struggled to get out. How could one get into that steamy hot water? Mother came to order that I be kept in. I tried to get out. After a little while the water seemed to be less hot, so that I could bear it.

At first I thought I would be burned. They put me in the warm water and got me out after a reasonable time. They spread out a large towel, like a blanket, on a chair. When I was let out of the water, I was immediately put on the chair and hurriedly wrapped with the towel. When I was dry, the nightgown was put on. They carried me to my bedroom. It was as if I would die if I were exposed to the air. I had been walking outside for two hours, and I did not feel like I was going to die. To be scalded in hot water like that could cause death. Also it was hard to breathe. They took me into the bedroom, tucked me in bed, covered me from head to toes, except for my mouth and eyes. Now I sweated. No one believed me when I told them that I was warm. More than that, they gave me a hot drink. It was not tea. It was either leaves or flowers, brewed like tea, with a little sugar. They had me drink while it was hot. Everything was done in a hurry. I was both hot and tired because they hurried to put me in bed. I was tricky, knowing that if I moved about, there would be someone to watch me. It was better to be quiet and sweat in my bed. Mlle. Anna watched me for a while. Seeing that everything was all right, she left. All the windows and doors were closed. They turned on the heater. The room was warm. When they were all gone, I pushed off some of the blankets. It was a little more comfortable. I learned that Mother was afraid I would catch pneumonia because I was used to only a warm climate and they said that I had a history of lung trouble. They were alarmed that I went out in my thin clothes and light shoes in October when it was cold. It would be bad if I caught cold. That was the cause of all the confusion; hurrying to put me in a warm place--my bed. I had gone to market in my bedroom slippers. All the adults were scolded.

As to my daily life in Russia, my eating was very strange. There were many regulations: I (1) had to eat oatmeal with milk and sugar; (2) had to take cod liver oil, which was smelly and nauseating; (3) could not drink water at all; and (4) had to drink milk all the time instead of water. They were all unbearable. Let me tell you in detail why.

Anyone who has not tasted oatmeal should not feel sorry (our dog food probably tastes better). If you don't put any sugar on it, you surely cannot swallow it. I sometimes put salt on it instead of sugar, so it would not be boring. The cod liver oil had to be taken unmixed. If I did not squeeze my nose close, everything would be

thrown up, both new and old. I was not to drink water at all. I looked at the water on a sideboard as if looking at the stars--it could not be reached. It was difficult to steal because I had to step on a chair, climb up to the second shelf and then the third, and stand on my toes before I could reach the water bottle. Also, I had to risk breaking the bottle; but to taste water was refreshing. To do this again did not seem to pay. If someone saw me doing it, they might tell Mother and I would be scolded.

May I add more on the second item, the cod liver oil? It was worse than the oatmeal because it was extremely smelly. It was hard to swallow, even one tablespoon of it. After some thought, I found a way to facilitate swallowing. It dawned on me that in Father's study there were sweets on a silver tray. It was divided into six sections and was quite big; it must have been twelve inches in diameter. Every section was filled with sweets. There was a cover. The sweets were Turkish. They had been given to *Thunkramqm* Chakraphongse when he visited that country, which was not long before I arrived in Russia. Many of them looked good, like the Turkish Delights, which were soft like marshmallow. They were very sweet and came in various colors. I liked them best, and they could get rid of the stink of the cod liver oil. I put one tablespoon of cod liver oil in my mouth in the dining room. Pinching my nose with my fingers, I ran to Father's room, grabbed two pieces of candy and stuffed them in my mouth--enough to fill it. The smell was diminished. From then on I chose what I liked. They were for me alone. I did not see any grown-ups touch them. When they were low, someone filled the tray up again. By the time I left Russia, the sweets were almost gone.

I was also under supervision at the dining table, as was John. For those who like it, calf's brain with caper sauce looks tempting. It was made into a white lump like the soft bean curd that we use in soup. It was fried and browned on the outside and caper sauce was poured over it. There were capers floating in greenish-colored butter. The two children did not like it, but we had to eat because we were served before we had time to refuse. When we saw Mother's eyes, we had to swallow. Because it was soft, it went down easily. Up to the end, to the time I left, I still did not like calf's brains. I did not mind milk; after a while I became used to it and felt less thirsty for water. But that was not all; the sour milk (yogurt) was also bad. It was very sour. I poured in sugar, almost half-half. Mother stood over me. I ate and Mother ate, too. It was in her room and there was nowhere to throw it away. If it were in my bedroom, which had a sink, and if nobody were watching, I might have thrown away half. One strange thing is that I never drank water from the faucet, where I could have gotten it easily. I probably thought it was for washing hands and gargling, so I was afraid to drink. Drinking milk seemed to be better.

The one who was the most frequent guest at the dining table was Captain Krulov. He had to sit next to me. I don't know who arranged the seating. He liked to show off his strength by cracking walnuts with his fingers, so I would be excited and praise his skill. He demonstrated by holding a walnut between his big fingers and squeezing it. It made a "krak" sound. He cracked the walnut easily. He handed

it to me. He had a broad smile when he saw the surprised look on my face. Sitting next to him was like being near a giant at *Wat Bo*, only he was not fierce, but kind. Every time he came he had to demonstrate what strong fingers he had. He could easily crack small nuts like hazelnuts and chestnuts. I had a good time eating them.

Most of *Thunkramqm*'s dishes were as follows: he always had Western food, with beefsteak as the main dish. They would sear a very thick piece of meat for him. The inside was still red with blood. It looked delicious, but I thought it was raw. I did not like it, but the grown-ups did. There was either consommé or creamed soup. Both were delicious. I think there were three courses. All were good. They were followed by Thai dishes. There was always beef or chicken curry. The crispy noodles, fried dried fish, and *pla nam* (a fish dish) were exactly as in Thailand. Mother made sure that *Thunkramqm* had what he wanted, and so he liked her very much. As a child I was not allowed to eat spicy food. The beefsteak was permitted, but I did not like it. I liked to eat rice with sauce on it. We had Thai food on Saturday and Sunday, not every day. I missed beef curry and shrimp paste sauce; I was not allowed to eat them. It was tough to be a child. You could not drink water, either. It was unbearable. The grown-ups drank red wine, claret, instead of water. That was why they did not crave water. Wine really took the place of water at every meal.

As for dessert, there was fruit cooked in syrup with cream toppings, different kinds of pudding, and fresh fruit. The cook made delicious things; I liked all of them.

The fruits were the best. For instance, we had peaches, pears, plums, grapes, and apples. They were all the best to be had. I have tasted none as good. Other fruits were good, like greengages, though I was not too fond of these. The ones I liked best were the apples, which were from the Crimea. They were sweet, crisp, and juicy. My second preference was the pears, which were juicy, sweet, and smelled good. I also liked the cherries, the taste of which appeals to children. I did not see any of the adults eat them. There were none on the table. Auntie Num bought me a big bag. I had a good time eating them all by myself. They were as good as the ones Mr. Johnson had bought me in Genoa. Let me praise the fruits in Russia again. Those that I ate at the embassy might have been top quality. All that I mentioned were good. They varied only in that some were excellent while others were merely good. The Russian fruit was really good. I used to pick fruit in a greenhouse in England, but it was not as good.

As for my studies, we had not found a teacher yet. Father used to take me for rides in his carriage to show off his horses, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon. We had to go outside every day, without exception. It was a rule, like attending the Queen of Thailand. Whether we walked or rode, we had to go out. No matter if the weather were cold or hot, Father took me around. Mother did not go with us. Once in a while she would go out. She drove a car herself. I also practiced driving because the street along the river

was wide and straight. It was called "Admiralty Quay." There were not many cars. We would see one once in a long while; the street was empty. Even so, I think that they blew whistles when the Emperor and Empress went out for some fresh air. The Emperor never went out alone; the Empress was with him every time. Their car ran so fast that there was no time to catch a glimpse of them. Before I knew it, I could see only the back end of the car. The Empress usually had a veil over her face, with the long ends blowing in the wind. The guards, dressed as cossacks, rode on horseback. They had to go almost full speed because the imperial car was very fast. If they had had to stop short, they surely could not have done so.

For a long time, I did not have to study, as there was no teacher. But finally we got one. She was quite old and quite skinny, and she looked as if she did not have enough food to eat. Her face and clothes were pathetic. Her dress was worn and thin, which was not suitable for the cold weather. Her name was Mrs. Page, and she was British. Her husband had passed away. She had two daughters about my age. Her lessons were not difficult. I began to read only easy words. She taught without enthusiasm. One day, shortly after she arrived, she pulled out a piece of black bread--the kind that the poor ate. It was called black but actually it was not black. It was dark red in color and had a sour smell. After seeing this, I felt sorry for her, so I asked her whether she had eaten. She said not yet. There was nothing to eat at home. I could not help feeling sorry for her, so I ran to see Mlle. Anna and asked her to provide something for the teacher to eat, for she had no food. The housekeeper was kind. She gladly got up and made fried eggs, buttered toast, and a cup of coffee. After she finished eating, Mrs. Page started teaching. Every day after that I asked Mlle. Anna to prepare breakfast for her until the time not long after when she had to leave. Mother probably saw that it was not working out, so she hired a new teacher.

So I got a new teacher. She was also British, but she was the exact opposite of the other. She was huge and well-fed, with good clothes appropriate to her status. Her name was Miss Smith. She taught well. I felt that I learned more, could spell four-letter words, could read and understand. I could read easy stories. I liked to read fairy tales very much and liked to listen as well; I tried especially hard, so that I would not have to beg anyone to tell me stories. Most people declined when I asked. I felt hurt, so I tried to read by myself. I had finished *munlabot*, the Thai primer, when I was four or five years old, slowly learning by myself, even stories in Chinese history. Here, however, I hardly studied seriously because Father tended to interrupt. He would ask the teacher's permission to take me out for a ride. Mother was not feeling well, so she did not get to watch me closely. She usually asked Miss Smith about my progress. She probably gave a good report, otherwise I would have been called in for a lecture. John also was a good student. Later, Mother hardly went anywhere. She did not know what to do, so she hired a cute young teacher to teach watercolor painting. She made something like a panel and painted four panels of flowers. They were meant to be a divider screen for her room. I got to study French because this same young woman spoke French, and I also

learned to draw with charcoal. I liked both subjects. It was a shame we had to give it up after Mother fell ill; I only got to study for a short time. As for English, we were not serious, and it was Father's fault. It was because of my love of reading that my English got better.

I liked music. I could play many pieces on the piano. It was strange that the teacher did not know that I could not read the notes, but I could play with the teacher, play alone, or play duets. The teacher did not say anything, probably because I did not play it wrong. In the morning, I practiced by myself. Later in the morning, Miss Smith played with me. I myself did not understand how I could do it, and the teacher did not know. If I hit the wrong notes, the teacher would know because of the sounds. At the time I kept praying that the teacher would not find out, and that I would not make mistakes or my fingers would not slip.

Thunkramqm often went out, where I did not know. I heard people hinting something about a "white cat." I knew only that she was a ballerina. I was not interested. Some weeks *Thunkramqm* asked his student friends to go bicycling to the beach; I do not remember what the name of the peninsula was. Father and I also accompanied him. Father bought me a bicycle that fit my size so that I could accompany *Thunkramqm*. Before we reached the beach, we had to cross seven bridges between islands. Sometimes Mother went along in a carriage. She was not fit enough to ride a bicycle and also did not know how. I had been an expert since my days at the palace. I was not afraid at all. I could go everywhere *Thunkramqm* went. But it was tiring to go to the beach. We had a good time and stopped to buy things to eat. We could see the vast sea. They sold mostly drinks. The shops were small and unpretentious. All along the way, people would stop and stare at me. Here they looked me all over. I looked strange to them. In the whole city, there was no child of my size riding a bicycle in the street. Some people stopped to watch until I was out of sight. They smiled to each other, thinking I was cute. We arrived home in time for tea.

Russian tea was drunk without milk, but they did put lemon in it. The lemon was cut into thin slices. There would be a piece of delicious cake covered with chocolate cream icing and sprinkled with crushed almonds. To me, nothing could compare with it. It was really delicious. There would also be a plate of pretzels. *Thunkramqm* never tired of them. From the time I first arrived in Russia till the time I left, *Thunkramqm* never asked to have this dessert replaced by something else. Until I returned he still ate it, which was very strange. I went places with him until the time I bade goodbye to Russia with sorrow. After eighty-four years of life, I would say that I have not eaten any dessert as good. It was like mocha cake, but more delicious. I don't know how it was made, but the taste was just right.

I have to take the opportunity to praise their desserts and various of their sweets. They were surprisingly good. It was unimaginable that they could make them that good. I knew both good and bad sweets from the palace, because we used them wastefully;

some were eaten, some were wasted. We chose only the good ones, like the ones with fillings. The most delicious ones were named Melcato, which in Thai we called *mang-kha-to* [meaning "insect with big legs"], Nugatin, which we called *nu-kat-teen* [meaning "rat bites foot"], and there were also all kinds of candies filled with liqueur and different kinds of chocolate, which I cannot remember. But, in my opinion, the Russian sweets were different. I got them all as Christmas presents. Two of Mother's *farang* friends gave them to me. They were sisters, the daughters of a doctor who took care of the Queen Mother of Russia, the Czar's mother. Their names were Olga and Nastasia. The box was very pretty. The sweets inside were delicious. Many other people gave sweets to me. They were all good beyond description. The candies that decorated the show windows were good both in looks and taste. Mother bought one piece, and it was delicious. I still cannot figure out how they were made. The atmosphere, even on Christmas day, was shabby, but the sweets were marvelous.

On Christmas day, we went out to look at the shops on the Nevsky Prospekt. They were not luxurious. That night I got the opportunity to make merit. There was a hired carriage parked on the side of the street we were on. The driver sat there with his arms folded across his chest. He was shivering. His horse was skinny. The driver was also skinny. His clothes were thin. The horse was standing and shivering. I stopped to look and asked him how much he had earned that day. He said that he did not make anything yet. I felt sorry for him. I asked for some money from Father. He asked me what I wanted to buy. I told him that I wanted to give it to the driver. (In the Russian language I vaguely remember that it sounds something like "Isvoschik".) Father took out his wallet. As soon as he opened it, I grabbed the money fast. It was quite a lot and I handed it to the driver. Father had been tricked, but he did not say anything. The driver removed his old shabby hat to bow, then we walked farther on. There was nothing worth seeing. It was better to return home.

Notes for Chapter VIII

1. A railway station in Bangkok.
2. Big stone statues of giants or demons who guard the temple.
3. One kind of popular classical dance.

IX

THE DAY OF THE DEATH OF THE BELOVED KING, RAMA V

What do I remember of the night of the death of our Beloved King, Rama V? That was the day of total bereavement for all Thai people--October 23, 1910.

I, this writer, was a lady-in-waiting,¹ in the service of Her Majesty Queen Saowapha-Phongsi. My duties were to accompany the Queen when she visited the female members of the royal family or sometimes when she went outside the palace, and to set the dining table when it was my turn.

There were many of us ladies-in-waiting. We therefore divided up into two shifts. Each shift had two elder maids as leaders and three or four younger maids. We were there to minister to the wants of the Queen, to make sure that she was comfortable. We did our jobs conscientiously. When it was warm, we fanned her. When it was cold, we presented her with a warm coverlet. We felt that we lost face if we had to be reminded of our duty, because the Queen never scolded anyone at all.

On October 22, 1910, I knew that His Majesty was sick, but I did not know what he was sick from. The Queen went to see him at Amphon Palace, but I did not go because it was not my turn. It was *Chao Chqm* Thanqm's turn. My shift was at night. Later on, I sensed that the King must have been gravely ill because the Queen did not come back to her palace as she usually did. We whispered to one another. The Queen's palace was not far from Amphon Palace. There was a canal in between and a bridge connected them. The Amphon Palace side was the male side and the Queen's side was for females. No one could enter without permission.

The atmosphere that day was desolate. The palace was quiet. Ordinarily at noontime there would be many people walking around because the King would already be up, ready to have his lunch. There were *Chao Chqm* on duty; they set the table and waited on him. Some of the King's children ate with him, so there were many people around; but today there was no noise at all, not even the sound of people talking. I could only assume that he was gravely ill.

Let me go back and explain that at this period I had to sleep during the day in order to be on duty at night. That day I could not fall asleep because I was worried. Everybody else was sitting disconsolately and solemnly with their eyes fixed on the third floor of Amphon Palace, across the way from the Queen's palace. The Queen's palace was named "Four Seasons Garden." The palace of the present King's grandmother, named "Garden of the Swans," was a little farther away.

During the daytime break that day, I did not rest or nap. I only walked absentmindedly about and did not talk or chat noisily with my friends as usual. In the evening, I had to force myself to sleep because soon I would have to take up my duties. Finally, I fell asleep. I woke up suddenly because there was a creature biting my big toe, drawing blood. At the same time I heard the noise of rats. There must have been several score of them. They ran back and forth above the ceiling in the building where I lived. Besides running back and forth along the full length of the building, which was divided into twelve or fifteen rooms, the rats also uttered the sound "kook, kook" the whole time. I used to hear grown-ups say that when the rats cried "kook, kook" a bad thing would happen. I had not heard them cry before. This, in addition to the King's being sick, made me afraid. It was about 11 p.m. then, and there was no activity. I was the only person in the place. I did not know where the others had gone. They probably had gone to sit at the bridge over the canal that separated the inner and outer courts, the one that I have already mentioned. I hesitated; I was afraid that the rats would bite me if I fell asleep. I was too annoyed at the noise of the rats' running and making "kook, kook" sounds to wait until it was time for my turn, so I opened the room and stood at the door. I looked left and right and saw nobody about. It was like a sleeping city. But when I looked toward Amphqn Palace, where I could clearly see the windows of the third floor, suddenly I saw a star shining brightly. It was at the same level as His Majesty the King's bed. I knew because I often used to see the King as he ate. This star was really brighter than any star I had ever seen, and it had a long tail going toward Anantha-Samakhom Hall (on the east side of Amphqn Palace). It was similar to a big flashlight, so I knew that it was Halley's Comet, which was talked about at that time. I leaned against the door and could not move for a while until I realized that I had to go and relieve *Chao Chqm* Thanqm in a short while. She had gone with the Queen to watch the King on the third floor of Amphqn Palace.

I was all prepared and went to Amphqn Palace. Along the way I saw people with sad faces. The court ladies were sorrowful. Nobody greeted each other. When I reached the second floor, there were so many people sitting on the steps of the stairway that I had to ask them to make room so that I could go up.

The third floor was quiet as a tomb. I could hear a noise that sounded like snoring. It came from the King's bedroom. There were a few people in the vicinity, but I did not pay any attention to them because I was hurrying to go on duty. When I arrived I saw the Queen sleeping on the floor at the far end of the bedroom. Because I had never seen any serious sickness of this kind before (which nowadays is called "coma"), when I heard the snoring sound, I thought that the King was feeling better and was sound asleep. I was very glad and thought that I would get some sleep, so I lay down at the feet of the Queen. While I was crawling² past the King's bed to go where the Queen was sleeping, I craned my neck to look. I saw the King, who was heavy; his face was full. He was wearing only a red sarong and was snoring steadily.

Because of my gladness in seeing that the King was feeling better and the Queen was sleeping, I felt less tense. Also, I had been tired and discouraged the whole day, so when I lay down, putting my head on the Queen's mattress, I fell asleep right away.

I woke up when I heard loud sobbing, although at that time I could not possibly guess what the sound was. I glanced outside the King's bedroom and saw lots of people crouching on the floor in groups. I did not know who was who. I had my mind set on looking for the Queen by feeling with my hands on the mattress (the King's bedroom was very dark--there was only one red light), but I did not find her. As soon as I learned that the loud noise was the sound of many persons weeping, I knew that His Majesty the King was dead. Shocked, I was suddenly wide awake. I got up to look at the bed and saw the Queen. The royal doctor (his name was Dr. Reiter) was giving the Queen a shot. At the time she was unconscious. The officials put her in a chair to take her to her palace. I gathered all the things that I had brought with me, together with the Queen's betel box and her spittoon. I hurriedly followed the chair from Amphon Palace. On the way I passed groups of people who were crouching on the floor. I remember two persons; one was *Chao Chqm Chum*, with her two daughters. (*Chao Chqm Chum* was the sister of *Phraya Burudrat-Rajawanlop*, whose original name was *Nop Krairerk*.) The second was *Chao Chqm Erb*, the King's favorite, who was at the side of the bed, on the right side of the King's body. (*Chao Chqm Erb* was a daughter of *Phraya Suraphan* of the *Bunnak* family.) Another person who I think was there was a royal consort, the grandmother of Prince Phanuphan Yukhon. She was leaning on their Royal Highnesses, Princesses *Malini-Nopphadara* and *Nipha-Nopphadon*. Besides those there were many more. I had no time to see and remember them all because I was in a hurry to catch up with the Queen's chair. But I failed to do so until the chair arrived at the Four Seasons Palace. The Queen was not conscious yet. The doctor had to stay all night to watch over her. The whole day of the 23rd of October, she did not revive.

Later I received an order to be a mourner. I was asked to go at 8 a.m. that day and had to wear white. The Queen's maid-of-honor (*Lady Pam*) saw to it that everything was done on schedule. When I left the Queen's palace to be a mourner in the Royal Grand Palace, the Queen was not yet conscious. Later I learned from my friends who did not get to be mourners that when she regained consciousness she wept until she fainted again, time after time.

I got to sit and weep at Dusit Palace. The weeping actually was mournful singing. This was the first time in my life that I had heard it. At that time I was about nineteen or twenty years old and felt that this weeping song was really sad. Everyone's tears rolled down and they were really sobbing, especially when the sounds of whining flutes and victory drums (*perngphruad*) started.

There were many shifts of mourners. Each shift was three hours, morning, noon, evening, and midnight. When it was one's turn, one had to go to Dusit Palace. There were fourteen mourners in each shift, and they were divided into two groups: six sang the main part, and

the rest sang in response. Most of the song leaders were regular members of the King's band. The eight responsive singers were selected from the young *Chao Chqm*, including myself.³ Before starting to "weep" we had to wait for the music. Then we would sing a special piece by alternating the lead singing and the response until the music stopped. That was the end of the ceremony for that shift. If there was a big merit-making ceremony, which was performed every seven days, the mourners had to sing one more time between evening shift and midnight shift. Many members of the royal family, noblemen, and foreign dignitaries came on the merit-making days. The mourners had to perform especially well and had to work harder than usual. This went on for almost a year until the royal cremation.

The weeping ladies' verse:

1) The leaders sang together:

"Oh, you are the shade of the golden Bo tree, my lord.
You are the gem on the crown of my head, my lord."

Chorus:

"My lord, you are the gem on the crown of my head, my lord."

2) The leaders:

"Oh, you are the shade of the golden Bo tree.
Which level of heaven did you go to,
Leaving me behind, my lord?
You are the gem on the crown of my head, my lord."

Chorus:

"My lord, you are the gem on the crown of my head, my lord."

3) The leaders:

"Oh, you are the shade of the golden Bo tree,
Where did you go?
I beg to follow you, my lord
You are the gem on the crown of my head, my lord."

Chorus:

"My lord, you are the gem on the crown of my head, my lord."

Notes for Chapter IX

1. In Thailand, being the personal servant of a member of the royal family is an honor held only by persons of high status.
2. It is considered improper for anyone in the King's vicinity to allow his head to be higher than the King's head.
3. When the author returned from Russia, the King wanted her as a *Chao Chom*, but she declined (in English), saying that she respected the King as a monarch but did not love him in a romantic way. The King granted her request. She became a *Chao Chom* in name only. None of this part of her history is related in her autobiography.

About the Translator

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