

OBITUARY

Major Erik Seidenfaden

President of the Society (1938-40), Honorary Member



It is with great regret that the Society has to record, through the medium of its *Journal*, the death of one of its most active members for many decades, Major Erik Seidenfaden. The deceased was elected to membership in 1917. Three years later he was elected to fill a seat on the Council of the Society, becoming one of the Vice-Presidents in 1924; and he succeeded Phya Indra Montri as President in 1938. He was successively elected President for three years, after which he decided not to accept a further election. His services on the executive side of the Council was, however, retained in the capacity of a member of that body for another period of ten years, at the end of which,

returning to settle down in his motherland, he was made an honorary member, in which capacity he remained till his death.

His work on the executive side of the Society continued from 1920 to 1940, but his support of the Society was by no means limited to this alone, for he was an even more active contributor to the *Journal* all through that period and to the very last days of his life. He found time, moreover, to make Siamese culture and ethnology known to the world by contributing to publications of learned institutions such as the *École française d'extrême-Orient* and several other ethnological groups. Among his valuable contributions to the *Journal of the Siam Society* were *Notes about the Chaubun* (XII, 3, 1), an additional *Note on the Lawa* (XVII, 2, 101), *The White Meo* (XVII, 3, 153), supplementary note to Lemay's *The Lü* (XIX, 3, 185), *The Khā Tong L'uang* (XX, 1, 41), *Translation of a Siamese Account of the Construction of the Temple on Khao Phanom Rung* (XXV, 1, 83), *The Hill Tribes of Northern Siam* (XXV, 2, 215), *Anthropological and Ethnological Research Work in Siam* (XXVIII, 1, 15), *The Races of Indochina* (XXX, 1, 57), *The Rice Grains from Klau Muang* (XXX, 1, 61), *Early Trade Relations between Denmark and Siam* (with another author, XXXI, 1, 1), *Some Antiquities at Thā Rūa* (XXXI, 1, 29), *Antiquities on Doi Suthep* (XXXI, 1, 37), *Siam's Tribal Dresses* (XXXI, 2, 169), *The Peoples of the Menhirs and of the Jars* (XXXIV, 1, 49), *The S6 and the Phuthai* (XXXIV, 2, 145), *Giant Early Man from Java and South China* (XXXVIII, 1, 1), *The Kui People of Cambodia and Siam* (XXXIX, 2, 146), as well as innumerable notes and reviews. He was, in fact, the most prolific writer in the columns of our *Journal*. The range of his interest was generally ethnological and archeological, but it extended also to many other fields.

The best known of his contributions outside the Society's *Journal* are "Complément à l'Inventaire descriptif des Monuments du Cambodge pour les quatre provinces du Siam oriental," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tmoë

XXII, 1922 and a popular *Guide-book of Bangkok and Siam*, published some time ago but not yet surpassed in quality.

In the last years of his life the author was still writing for the *Journal of the Siam Society* and other scientific periodicals. His *chef d'oeuvre*, *The Thai Peoples*, has just been published under the sponsorship of the Siam Society as a special volume. In spite of his constant wish, the publication could not be completed within his lifetime, but it was completed only a short time after his death.

Besides his multifarious, self-imposed duties on behalf of the Society, Major Seidenfaden had a busy, active career which carried him to distant parts of the Kingdom, especially her northeastern parts, for he was an officer of the Gendarmerie almost from the time of its inauguration by the late Prince Damrong in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. He rose to be a major in the service. His duties gave him extensive opportunities for travelling and thereby acquiring knowledge of the land and her inhabitants. He applied his spirit of scientific enquiry to this wide field of knowledge. The Siam Society as well as other learned institutions of the West benefited greatly through his contributions.

Major Seidenfaden died from a protracted illness in Copenhagen on the 22nd of September 1958. The Siam Society's deep condolence is hereby extended with great sympathy to his widow and family.