

**DRAMATIC ACHIEVEMENT  
OF  
KING RAMA VI\***

by

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*Mr. Vice-President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I am greatly honoured, having been asked to give a lecture at the Siam Society once again, and especially today being the 49th anniversary of the death of His Majesty King Rama VI, I am pleased to find this opportunity to pay my humble tribute to the great monarch.

His Majesty King Rama VI had done so much for this country—for example:— He gave birth to the Boy Scout Movement of Siam; He promulgated the Compulsory Education Act; He joined the allies in World War I, sent an expeditionary force to France. He also tried to teach “Democracy”. But my talk is limited to “His Dramatic Achievement”, which may be said to be “His hobby”, a most beautiful hobby, and very entertaining.

I believe you all know very well that this great monarch had written so much—so much that we all wonder how He found the time to write. From His pen we get books and articles on military matters, Politics, Law, Archaeology, Plays, articles short and long for newspapers and magazines. His Majesty once said that had He not been a king, He might have been a newspaper columnist.

As regards his plays, His Majesty King Rama VI wrote all matters connected with the plays, such as “The Origin of the Ramayana”, as well as the plays themselves. In certain cases, He narrated stories in poems first, then proceeded to write plays, or vice versa: พระนลคำหลวง and พระนล are good examples.

Having mentioned พระนล which was the first play from His pen produced in Siam, that was on His 25th birthday in 1906 (2448), let me

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say further that since the Ayudhya period up to the end of the 19th century, the Siamese people knew only the Ramayana of Valmiki. It was His Majesty King Rama VI who introduced the longer epic of ancient India, the Mahabharata, to this country. He picked up episodes in the Mahabharata to write his plays, พระนาคะ, สกุนตลา and สาวีตรี, one after the other. These were all masterpieces.

สกุนตลา, in particular, is very beautiful, very popular and very often performed, while สาวีตรี, a play consisting of some ninety songs and no dialogue, was never put on the stage during His reign. His Majesty had selected the cast, but was still waiting for an opportunity to put it on the stage when His death came in November 1925 (2468).

I believe you all know that His Majesty began turning his play มัทนะพาธา into English verses and left it unfinished at the beginning of Act IV, becoming an Unfinished Symphony as many people like to say. Here I would like to say that His Majesty had beaten Schubert to the ground, for I have found more unfinished symphonies from his pen, though some might have been left unfinished intentionally. They are:—

1. อรชุน and ทศกรรฐ์ คำกาพย์ from the Ramayana.
  2. ตักแตน the Siamese version of a French play "Les Sauterelles" by Emile Fabre.
  3. เกียรติยศญี่ปุ่น the Siamese version of another French play "L'Honneur japonais" by Paul Bourde Anthelme.
- and 4. An English play without a title, about which I shall go into details later.

Talking about Unfinished Symphony or Symphonies, I would like to recall a certain event at the end of His Majesty's reign. As every one knew, His Majesty's one wish was to have a son, a Royal Prince who would become Heir to the Throne. In 1925 (2468) พระนางเจ้าสุวัทนา became pregnant. She would give Him what He wanted, a Royal Prince. That was what He thought. Consequently His Majesty composed a new version of his play พระเกียรติยศ. In the play there was a young prince newly born. So His Majesty wrote a lullaby which went:—

พระเอยพระหนอนา  
งามพลาคดงดวงมณีใส  
พระเสด็จจากฟ้าสวาลัย  
มาเพื่อให้ผู้ชนกมลปรีดิ์ ๑ ฯลฯ

My poor translation goes like this:—

Oh young Prince, Heir to the Throne  
You are just like a beautiful gem  
That descends from heaven above  
To give delight to people below.

Having finished this play, which was a musical, His Majesty began to rehearse the orchestra in preparation for a performance to be staged at the traditional ceremony when the young prince becomes one month old.

It is sad to say that this is yet another Unfinished Symphony. Before the rehearsal of the play itself His Majesty King Rama VI fell ill and soon passed away. And the new born was not a Royal Prince but a Royal Princess—Princess Bejratna.

Allow me now to go back to *ศกุนตลา* which, I said, was so beautiful and so popular. There are many versions of the play. I would like to enumerate as follows:—

*The 1st Version* (classical type): The Sage Duravas appears in person on the stage to deliver a curse on the heroine, in the same way as the Bonze in Puccini's opera, *Madam Butterfly*, came to deliver a curse upon the young Japanese lady.

*The 2nd Version* (also of the classical type): The Sage Duravas does not appear on the stage. This might be because His Majesty thought that, according to tradition in this country, it was bad taste to put anything so unpleasant on the stage. Killing or Cursing were considered improper.

*The 3rd Version* (musical type): An adaptation for the stage. The dialogues were of the *ทำนองร่าม*.

*The 4th Version* (also of the musical type): Also an adaptation for the stage, but the dialogues were changed into *คำบอกสอน* with a passage of *คำบอกสั้น*. This version is somewhat shortened.

There may be yet a *5th Version*: The play recounted in prose with water colour illustrations by His Majesty Himself.

In bringing foreign plays to Siam, turning them into Thai, there are several ways. His Majesty King Rama VI used all methods mainly as follows:—

*First Method* Pure translation, with a view to keeping both the material and style of the original works, as in “The Merchant of Venice”, “As You Like It” and “Romeo and Juliet” of Shakespeare and “*ปริชยรรสีกา*” of Harsha. The verses would be translated line by line as far as possible. His Majesty excelled in this. His Royal Highness Prince Naris commented on the Thai version of “The Merchant of Venice” with the remark:

“I know the real Shakespeare now”.

*Second Method* An adaptation. Names of persons in the cast and scenes of the play would be changed into Thai. The material of the play would be kept as much as possible, while the details would be changed to fit Thai culture. A good example is *ชิงนาง* adapted from Sheridan’s “The Rivals”.

In the case of putting a Thai play into English, His Majesty used the same method. A good example is “The Earl of Claverhouse”, adapted from His play “*หมอบ อีนทอส*”.

*Third Method* Only the plot and the essence of the story would be brought for writing the play. New dialogues would be written with new details of movements, etc. But no new idea would be added. For this *ศกุนตลา* is a very good example.

Stories from ancient India naturally had several versions, because they were handed down verbally or copied by hand from one generation to another. In the *สกุนตลา* which the French staged in the Bois de Boulogne on the 6th July 1919, the Sage Duravas met both *สกุนตลา* and *ทนต์* at a place in the forest, a distance from the hermitage. Why the young maiden went there can be well understood. Duravas was tired, yet *สกุนตลา* refused flatly to conduct him to the hermitage. I think she deserved the curse. Her character was questionable. His Majesty King Rama VI painted a more beautiful *สกุนตลา* for us in this country.

I have mentioned several plays of His Majesty King Rama VI. You may ask "How many plays had He written?" a very good question.

Well, I have asked myself before and failed to get a definite answer, owing to the lack of definite agreement about what should be counted as a play or plays. *สกุนตลา* which I have just mentioned, for instance, has many versions. Should we register as *One* play, or *Four* or even *Five*? I once counted *Two*, – the classical drama and the musical version. Then, there were plays which His Majesty left half finished. We should not count them mathematically as "halves". There are plays which His Majesty re-wrote, some of which He kept the old title such as *หนานพศอกเขาหนาม*, while others received new names, such as the "Mikado" and "วังคีส์". One of His plays had two names, that is *เหลือนัก* and *บัวงาม*. Some of His plays were divided into two sections, with the intention of putting on the stage only one section in one evening, such as *จอทอง* for example, in the same way as Shakespeare's *Henry VI* Parts I, II and III.

How would you count now? However, I once made a list in my own way, and came up with "One Hundred and Twenty One" – more than Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw put together.

Let me now tell you what King Rama VI did with the *Ramayana* or our *รามเกียรติ์*, the most popular story throughout the kingdom. As you know, King Rama I wrote the whole story in 106 volumes; that was in 1797 (2340). The main purpose of His work was to tell the whole

story in Thai verses, which became the longest work in Thai literature, approximately twenty-five thousand Thai couplets, compared with Valmiki's twenty-four thousand Sanskrit couplets.

Some years later, His Son, King Rama II selected certain parts and re-wrote them for the โขน performances. As King Rama II was an all-round artist, His works contained very pretty lines and fit in well to classical dancing. But you must realize that the โขน in those days was performed in a large hall or even in the open air, rather than on the stage.

King Rama VI, while Crown Prince, first had his โขน performed in the big reception hall in the old building of the present Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

What King Rama VI did in later years was threefold:—

1. Through English, He studied Valmiki's Ramayana and found that the Uttaranikaya version was more reliable than others. Therefore He re-wrote certain episodes (roughly twenty) for the โขน performances, with slightly different materials according to his new discovery.
2. He limited or condensed the materials of an episode for a performance of approximately 2½ to 3 hours to be performed on the proper stage, instead of in a big hall as before.
3. He gave a new image to certain characters. The old Pipek seemed to be a coward, expelled from the Kingdom of Lanka. His new Pipek was different, a self-respecting *yaksha* who would rather go to serve Rama the Righteous than stay with his obstinate brother. His Majesty pointed out that ขุนพิเภก was a bear—not a monkey. He wrote:—

“Those in the audience will notice the movements of ขุนพิเภก when he inspects his troops. I have made his motions slow and somewhat clumsy—to resemble those of a bear.”

His Majesty King Rama VI did his best to preserve our classical dance, the โขน. Apart from being a writer of new versions, he was also

a producer. He recited (พากษ์) Himself. (As you know the ไทย characters do not speak or sing themselves. There must be others to do it for them.) His Majesty even helped with the make-up. He once sent a note to *Chao Phya* Prasadej who was in the audience watching นางลอย ("The Floating Lady"):-

“Please look at <sup>4</sup>ศรีษดา’s face”, he wrote, “I have done the make-up myself; I want her to appear as in real life—not as a white-washed woman.”

His Majesty did much to preserve our national classical dances, our cultural heritage. But we all know that it was the straight play on the stage that He was so interested in. “Acting is an Art”, He thought, “and excellent for education and mental health.” He started promoting straight plays when he was still a young Crown Prince of Siam, when people knew very little and had seen very little of them. He tried very hard to put straight plays on a firm footing and He met with real success, as He Himself had experience in the field incomparable in Siam in those days. I would like to tell you now how He gained His experience.

When His Majesty King Rama VI was still a young Prince, His English Tutor, Robert Marrant, gave Him Gilbert’s *Mikado* for translation exercises. I think that was not fair, for Gilbert’s poetry was meant to be sung—not to be translated. After that we find that He acted the part of Queen Sobiday in นิทานชาลวิศ, King Chulalongkorn’s version of the *Arabian Nights*. That was in 1892 (2435). A year after that, prior to his departure for study in England, He appeared in a dance show to celebrate the birthday of His Royal Highness Prince Mahavajirunhit, the then Crown Prince of Siam.

His Majesty King Rama VI, while still a young prince, twelve and a half years of age, went to England for study purposes in 1893 (2436). He enjoyed theatre of all descriptions, beginning with the pantomimes. He knew what he liked and what he did not like. In fact, He began to be a critic even then.

As far as the theatre is concerned, His Majesty’s activities in England may be divided into three periods.

- One — Ascot Period.
- Two — Middle Period.
- Three — Westbury Court Period.

After his arrival in England His Majesty stayed at a house in Ascot, a little distance directly south of Windsor. From there He often went up to London to see plays and to open His eyes generally. He had with him, in the same house, Prince Boripat, Prince Burachatra and M.R. Siddhi, later *Phya Vijitwongse Vudhikrai*. His Majesty wrote his first play there.

It may be of interest to record two events during the Ascot Period, though not connected with the theatre.

*First* On April 4, 1896 (2439) His Majesty went up to London to see what was called the CINEMATOGRAPH at the Empire Theatre. He said that it was just like the magic lantern, only the things moved.

That was twelve years before we first saw the *หนังฉาย* in Bangkok.

and *Second* Exactly seven weeks later on May 23, 1896 (2439) His Majesty went up to London again to see an Exhibition of HORSELESS CARRIAGES at Crystal Palace.

It must have been some years before we saw anything of the kind in Bangkok.

But what His Majesty liked most was the plays. He began to write since 1895 (2438) and He was delighted when carpenters set up a stage for him in the house soon after the new year of 1896 (2438), in time for the first production of His own play, "Miss Honeybone". January 8th 1896 (2438) was the day. The Kridakorn brothers arrived in the morning and His Majesty called for a dress rehearsal at once.

When that was over and seats arranged for the audience, they all retired to the dining room. But before His Majesty had finished His luncheon, guests began to arrive. The King then sent Prince Boripat and Prince Burachatra to play flute and violin for an overture. The first performance of "Miss Honeybone", His Majesty's first play, took place



in the afternoon. After the guests had seen the play and departed, His Majesty had another performance staged for the servants. Photographs of the play were taken on the following day.

Twelve months later, His Majesty acted in His own play "Lines and Rudd". A certain Mr. Hamilton Aidé commended that He was a good actor—at the age of 16.

The Ascot Period ended when His Majesty King Chulalongkorn visited Europe in 1897 (2440). All the Royal Princes studying in Europe gathered to give Him a Royal Welcome in Geneva. His Majesty King Rama VI, at the age of 16½, organized an evening of entertainment for His August Father. He Himself acted in a play "My Friend Jarlet" or in Thai "มิตรแท้" and also in a Japanese dance. In the play He took the part of the young lady, Marie.

He also staged the Japanese dance in Paris either on the way to Geneva, or on the way back.

The so-called "Middle Period" was rather in the dark. It was a period when His Majesty had military training. He went to the Military College, Sandhurst—then joined the Durham Light Infantry and later the School of Musketry at Hythe. We know that He had a private residence at Frimley and that He had English friends who joined Him in theatrical activities. Once in 1899 (2441) He and his English friends went for a tour and had some plays staged privately at Castle Rigg in the Lake District.

The Westbury Court Period was not so obscure. It was a period during which His Majesty went up to Oxford and covered the last months before He returned home. He had a private residence at Westbury Court, near Gloucester. The house was big with a beautiful garden where tourists in char-a-bancs often stopped to admire. At that place His Majesty produced plays of English authors and acted in them with His English friends.

On 21st August 1902 (2445) he staged Sydney Grundy's "In Honour Bound". He took the part of Philip Graham; and also in

another play, Carlton Erris's "The King's Command", he acted the part of François, Duc de Mobihan.

I shall show you the photographs of these plays at the end of this lecture.

We have already seen that His Majesty King Rama VI had some experience of the theatre in England. He also had the acquaintance of many authors and actors in those days. Therefore, when He returned to Siam, at the age of twenty two, He was a well-qualified person in the field.

One of the first steps he took when He came back to Siam in 1902 (2445) was to build a <sup>ทิว</sup>ทิว <sup>ชม</sup>ชม <sup>สวน</sup>สวน club-house with a small theatre attached. I think that was the first theatre for straight plays in the country. The <sup>ทิว</sup>ทิว <sup>ชม</sup>ชม <sup>สวน</sup>สวน magazine published these words on 4th May 1904 (2447).

"I have consulted with some committee members and we are of the same opinion that we can stage plays in the new theatre for members of the club and their relatives and friends. Tickets will be sold at a moderate price.

There will be approximately a hundred seats. Quite a number of club members have heard of my plan and they are quite enthusiastic.

We hope to give an entertainment better than the Likay."

That was, I believe, the beginning of a new era. And the <sup>สมาคม</sup>สมาคม <sup>ครู</sup>ครู, the Teacher's Association, followed suit.

Still, His Majesty was very careful at the beginning of his work in Siam.

1. He produced plays of other authors before His own.
2. He wrote for the traditional Classical Dance before the new straight plays.
3. He translated plays of well-known authors before writing a play of His own.

4. He acted in a play of other authors before acting in His own play.

We can safely say that He wished to promote the theatre, rather than to glorify Himself and His own works.

But when his own works did appear to the public, they were first-rate, such as the play “เห็นแก่ลูก”, or, in English “For His Child”. It brought tears from the actors on the stage, as well as from those in the audience.

The period from 1904 (2447) to 1910 (2453) when His Majesty King Rama VI was still Crown Prince, residing at the Saranrom Palace, may be called the first period of straight plays in this country. His Majesty had written several plays, trained His men and produced a number of plays both in Bangkok and in the provinces, such as นครศรีธรรมราช. People began to realize that this form of entertainment had come to stay. His early plays written in this period were

ชิงนาง	นิมิตาสโมสร
เกินค้องการ	เห็นแก่ลูก
ความคัมพูช	น้อยอินทเสน

and ทาโล่ที่.

The first three were translations. The last four were originals.

Before going further, I would like to give a brief review of the play “ทาโล่ที่”. It was the first full-length play which His Majesty tried to make a real Thai play, with Thai custom and Thai way of thinking. It was so Thai that He admitted that some passages could not be translated into English such as the “Calladium Craze” (เล่นบอน). ขมข้านั้น became “Horrid Cakes” in his translation.

His Majesty was industrious and so patient with the writing, checking, re-checking and rewriting of this play, with the result that there were four versions.

1. ทาโล่ที่ 4 acts by Pra Khan Bejra (His pen name).
2. “The Shield”, 4 acts, the English version, also by Pra Khan Bejra.

3. ชาติ 3 acts by Sri Ayudhya (another of His pen names).
4. ชาติ revised, 4 acts by His Majesty King Vajiravudh. (He used His real name here.)

It is curious that this play could either wind up at the end of the third act, or lengthened to the fourth act. "The Shield", the English version, had neither been published nor performed.

His Majesty King Rama VI ascended the throne in 1910 (2453). His dramatic activities stopped for a while, but only for a while. After approximately six months, he started again to write and to produce plays—with more vigour than ever before. We can sum up his whole activities in drama that within approximately twenty years, from 1905 to 1925 (2448-2468), His Majesty wrote, on the average, one play every two months—a record unequalled as far as my knowledge goes.

The prime duties of the King were to secure national unity and acquire national security. These were reflected in his plays. Consequently there came his plays—พระร่วง, หัวใจนักบวช and เพื่อนตาย, for examples. Lines from พระร่วง are often quoted up to the present time.

His Majesty's plays were useful to the education of young men both directly and indirectly. He wrote "ความดีมีชัย" for our Military Cadet School. He went to the school to choose the cast, rehearsed and directed the show himself. The essence of the play was discipline and the importance of keeping military secret. His Majesty also wrote two English plays for the Royal Pages College—"A Real Ghost" and "A Queer Burglary", with the view to making the students read and speak English more fluently. He also helped to rehearse the plays.

During the First World War, before Siam joined the Allies, His Majesty wrote plays concerning military and naval matters, such as:—

โพงพาง  
ร.ต.ล. นนทรี

and the English play—"The Man in Khaki", and later, when we had joined the Allies, He wrote more plays of the same type. The end of the third act of the play นานทอง was very touching. How sad a major was

when his friends were departing for France, but circumstance prevented him from going with them!

The Great War did not only affect His Majesty's plays, it also affected our classical dances. The *ธรรมราชาธรรมะสงคราม* and *ธรรมะนันท* were written during this period. And on the 28th January 1918 (2460) before the war came to an end, Sir Edward Brockman, Deputy Governor-General of the Federated Malay States, paid an official visit to His Majesty. The King gave him a dinner, followed by a dance-drama written by His Majesty for the occasion. The piece was called "นิคมมิตร" or "The Triumph of Friendship," a Siamese Ballet, as that was called. At the end of the show there was a grand finale.

His Majesty wrote for the programme:

"The Gods and Goddesses then celebrate the Triumph of Mitra with a joyful dance, in which the dancers wave the flags of the allied nations now fighting against the Central Empires."

His Majesty King Rama VI also wrote plays with a view to teaching politics and democracy. That English play "A Statesman's Wife" was one such play. We saw a political undersecretary-of-state wrapped up with party politics, and his wife was neglected. The theme came from a novel "The Marriage of William Asch" by Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Many authors, especially in Europe, took the theme and made a play out of it. His Majesty's version was very well treated and ended beautifully.

It is to me a wonder why so few people have ventured to translate His Majesty's plays into other languages. Monsieur René Pradère-Niquet translated two into French. Professor Coedès translated one, also into French, of course. Mr. Thornley turned one musical, the *วิวาทพระสมุทร* into English. And very lately I myself had the permission of His Majesty the King to translate "A Statesman's Wife" into Thai. That was the first instance that an English play of His Majesty was translated into our language! The Amateur Theatrical Association put it on the T.V. in July last year.

There were more of His plays touching Politics. Strangely enough, one such was "The Dismissal of Pipek" which was a โขน. Ravana sent matters to be discussed in the Assembly which was called "สภาเสนาบดี". The debate was on the point about whether to return the beautiful สีดดา to her husband, Rama.

More serious was a play "ลอบชิงอำนาจ" which His Majesty put into English himself and called it "Coup d'état". A political party met secretly to plan the overthrow of a government. And there was the question of the monarchy. His Majesty King Rama VI wrote both versions a little more than fifty years ago. The public did not understand them then—they do now. In fact the Thai version was put on the T.V. channel 9 only last night, beginning at 11.30 p.m. and finishing at 1.00 o'clock this morning.

When I first read this play, I thought of Bernard Shaw's "The Applecart". The theme was very similar. "The Applecart" was written after "Coup d'état".

There is yet another play of politics which came from the pen of King Rama VI. It was a translation into English of the French play by Emile Fabre. The French original was called "Les Sauterelles" produced for the first time at the "Théâtre de Vaudeville" in Paris on 13 December 1911. His Majesty's translation was called "The Locusts". I believe this is His Majesty's longest play—not yet published—Five Acts, 185 large pages in manuscript.

The play dealt with the government of the Golden Dragon Land remotely controlled from Paris. The French tried to make this Golden Dragon Land "La Nouvelle France" with prosperity accompanied by the inevitable French gaiety—and that at the expense of the local Tmère (not Kmère). The play ended with an uprising, but the French sent for a regiment and managed to suppress the rebels. Nam Trieu, the second minister in the Tmère government, who was a friend but turned enemy of the French, said at the end of the play:—

“Monsieur Régial, and you other French devils, we are beaten this time, but the revolt will not be forgotten. It will serve as a warning to you and an example to our children.

Remember, Monsieur Régial, what I said to you. A time will come! Beware! Beware!”

That was in the play, and the author wrote that approximately thirty years before Dien-Bien-Phu.

His Majesty King Rama VI finished the translation into English and began the Siamese version. He called the Siamese version “ต๊กมตท” which meant the locusts—the locusts that came in thousands of thousands and ate all the crops until there was nothing left. But His Siamese version was evidently left unfinished—only fifteen pages of the manuscript could be found.

Neither the English version nor the unfinished Siamese version was published. It might be that the King would not wish to hurt the feelings of the French. But it was a Frenchman who originally wrote the play, and Paris had seen it on stage. The Siamese were more sensitive than the French?

His Majesty King Rama VI was well conversant in both English and French. Some twenty of his plays were translated from English and French including:—

4 of Shakespeare's	3 of Labiche's
2 of Sheridan's	2 of Robert Marshall's
2 of Tristan Bernard's	1 of Molière's.

Two of His plays are in Siamese and English.

One of His plays is in Siamese and French. His Majesty wrote 17 plays in English:—

- 8 of which have never been performed;
- 7 of which have never been published;
- 8 of which have no counterpart in the Thai language.

Early this year I discovered a manuscript in His Majesty's handwriting. It might possibly be the oldest manuscript of a play of His Majesty found up to the present time. It was Act I of probably a three or four acts full-length play. No title was given to the play, so I took upon myself to call it "Isabel" after the name of the heroine who was the centre of interest in the play.

The scene of the play was California in the United States. An English Earl of Bexford, a graduate of Oxton University, went there on an heiress-hunting trip. He found Isabel, daughter of a banker-millionaire. But Isabel was not interested in love—she was keen on her own project—to go to Egypt to train Egyptian ladies in social and cultural matters. Lord Bexford suggested that she should go to Oxton instead. She agreed saying:—

“English girls are so timid and so dull! Mothers  
carefully train their girls to resemble marble statues  
as much as possible.”

His Majesty King Rama VI wrote a play to serve his purpose—the *มหาสมุทร*. Even before World War I had started in Europe, a number of people thought that it was time to raise some money to enable the navy to acquire a new cruiser. The proposed project was kept idle until the war broke out. Then the project was launched. King Rama VI, therefore, wrote the play in support of the project. It was clearly shown in the play the necessity of having a new cruiser. The play was performed both in Bangkok and in the provinces. In the end other plays were brought in to help the raising of the Cruiser Fund until enough money was obtained.

I would like to make a remark here that the King's theatrical activities cost money. The production of each play cost thousands, tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands. All the money came from the Privy Purse—that is to say—His Majesty's own money—not from the treasury. But the proceeds always went to charity—the Red Cross, a school, a *wat*, or even to the navy as stated.



It is interesting to see how King Rama VI tried to bring music into his plays. He liked the Thai classical music already in existence. But to introduce it into his plays was a problem. Old tunes with new libretto was what he wanted. First he wrote new songs for Nai Bua's play "ปลื้มขก" with considerable success. Then there came one of his new plays—a play with music called "ผิดใจได้ปล้ม". I doubt very much of its success, had it been put on stage, for the London scene and Thai classical music seem incongruous. He next tried to put Gilbert's Mikado into Siamese verses and Siamese music. That play had two versions but had never been produced. Years passed before he produced two more plays with music "ทนมทอกเถาทมม่ง" and "วิวาหพระสมุท" with complete success, especially the latter.

What the King managed to do was to fit in Siamese classical music with European costumes and scenery. The island in วิวาหพระสมุท named "Alphabeta", might be somewhere in the Mediterranean, but definitely not Cyprus. Nobody objected to the alliance of Thai classical music to the Mediterranean atmosphere, so the play became very popular and its songs are sung even to-day. One of its, songs, the "สามเส้า", became the subject of a debate at the Meeting of Thai students in the city of Bath some twenty years ago—"To be a woman is more difficult than to be a man."

His Majesty called the play in English "The Marriage of Neptune", but when Mr. Thornley got His permission to translate it into English he called it "Neptune's Bride". Neptune's Bride was produced in 1920 (2463). The Bangkok Times quoted an old poem in its comment of the play:

When the Pie was ope'ed  
 The birds began to sing,  
 Wasn't that a dainty dish  
 to set before the king?

His Majesty King Rama VI wrote some 50 plays in Thai verses. He generally used the กวพู่ and กลอน metres. His accomplishments were excellent—I am of the opinion that ทิวแสนบุษ was His masterpiece, as far as poetry was concerned. Some lines reached the height of beauty incomparable anywhere. Towards the end of the reign, His Majesty went a step further. He used the ถิ่นที่ metres to write a new play—the มัทนะพาธา or the “Origin of the Rose”. His Majesty wrote:—

There is no need for anyone to look into old books in order to find the source of the play.

It is entirely my own.”

In May 1924 (2467) the Literature Society of Siam presented to His Majesty a certificate of excellence.

His Majesty did not stop at that. He translated the play into English and asked Prince Dhani for his comments. Thereby Prince Dhani informed His Majesty that the translation was excellent, but it would be better still if He would turn it into English verses. His Majesty then started a new version, but he left it unfinished as I have already stated.

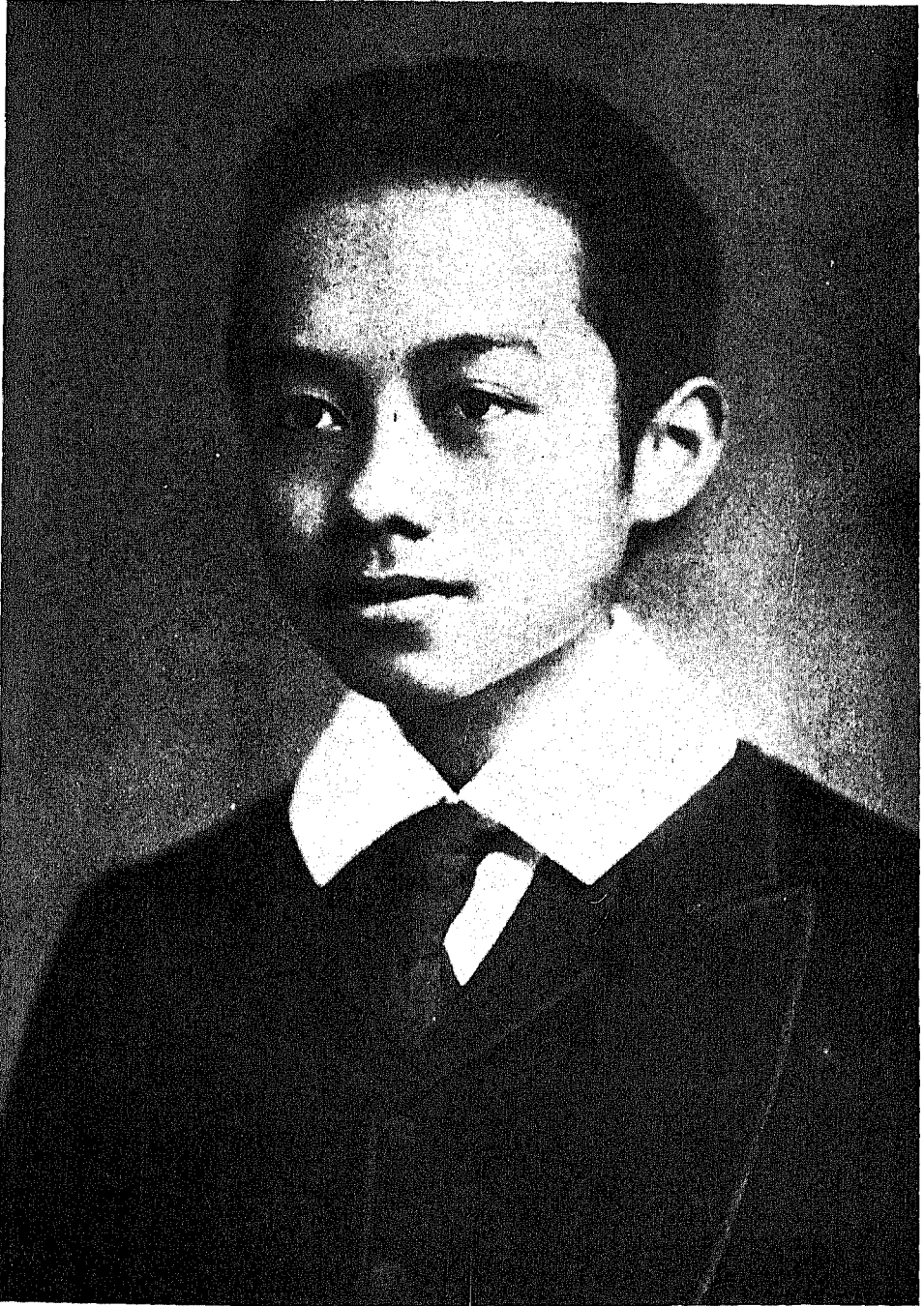
Let us consider just a few lines of this Unfinished Symphony—to see how His Majesty translated Thai verses into English verses. I shall read the Thai lines first—it is in Act I, a วสันตดิลก metre with fourteen syllables in a line and a break after the eighth syllable.

พั่งถ้อยคำวิเศษระวอน	คนหนีเออววย
จักเป็นมสาวะจะนะด้วย	มมีตรงกะความจริง
อันชายประกาศวระปะทาน	ประดีพิทระแต่หญิง
หญิงควรจะเปรมกะมะละขึ่ง	ผิวจิตตะตอบรัก

Now the English translation, also with fourteen syllables in each line, and with external and internal rhymes:—

“Lord, having *heard* your honey’d *word*, if I were to agree,  
‘Twould be *untruth*, and would, *for sooth*, to truth opposéd be.  
When man *declares* how much he *cares* and loves a maiden dear.  
That maiden *coy* should thríll with *joy*, if she too loves, that’s clear.

You may have noticed the rhythm and the break after the eighth syllable. I think this is wonderful !



H.M. King Rama VI as a student in England 1893-1902.

Phya Thai  
24 August, 2468

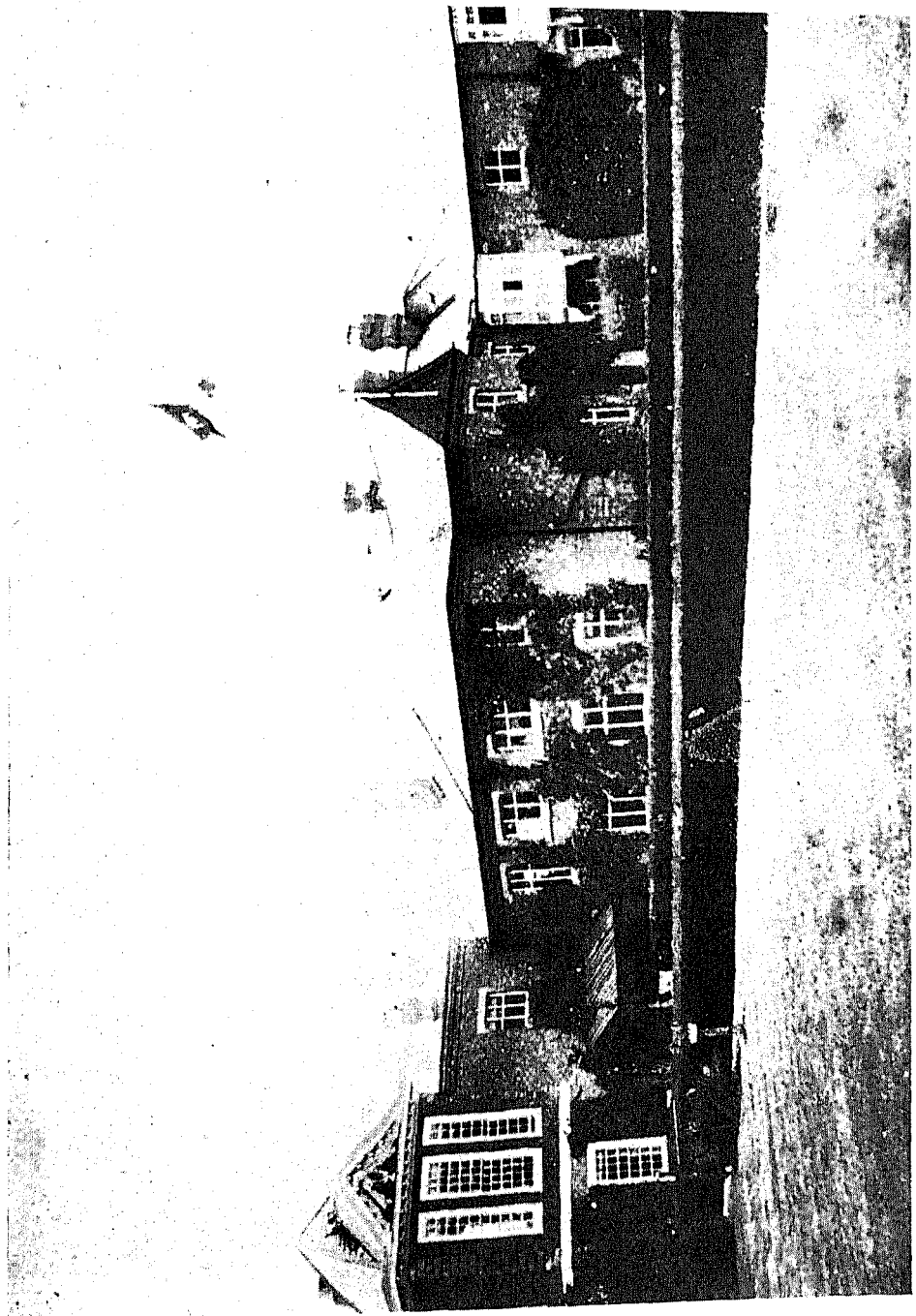
Dear Dharm,

Here is the Third Act of "Madana-  
badhā", which has been somewhat  
more difficult to write than the Second;  
but luckily I had already made trans-  
lations of the hymns and chant in  
my spare time, which therefore saved  
a lot of trouble.

As I have only finished the Third  
Act today, it may be some time before  
I can send you the Fourth which I  
shall begin tomorrow.

Yours &c  
Rama

the King's hope, as expressed in the last sentence also  
never fulfilled, for the pressure of state-business prevented  
the completion of his dramatic phantasy, and for the



Westbury Court, Gloucestershire. H.M. The King's residence in England, 1902.



His Majesty King Rama VI as Marie in "My Friend Jarlet" by Arnold Golsworthy and E.B. Norman Geneva, 30th May 1897.

*In the group :-*

*Standing from left to right—Prince Pen, Prince Chakrapongs and Prince Vudhichai.*

*Sitting from left to right—Prince Charoon, H.M. The King and Mr. R.E. Olivier.*



His Majesty King Rama VI as Philip Graham in Sydney Grundy's play "In Honour Bound", at Westbury Court, 21 August 1902.



