

AN OBITUARY

M.C. Pilailekha Diskul

(8 August 1907 - 11 December 1985)



H.S.H. Princess Pilai Diskul, daughter of HRH Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, was one of the three favourite ones who accompanied her father almost everywhere. The other two being M.C. Poonpismai and M.C. Padhanayu, while M.C. Chongchit-Thanom, the eldest daughter, usually remained at home, in charge of the affairs of the palace, while the others were abroad or in exile.

All of Prince Damrong's daughters were talented and more well-known than his sons. Princess Chongchit, for instance, was acknowledged especially for her cooking, Princess Poon was a popular writer and leader in many Buddhist circles, and Princess Padhanayu was a humourous character and a good conversationalist as well as an amateur astrologer.

All of them served their father dutifully and contributed meaningfully to Thai culture, especially in the field of literature and performing arts. The three princesses were once asked by Phya Anuman Rajadhon to help the Fine Arts Department after the Second World War to resurrect traditional dance dramas and they did their best for the national theater for many years.

Comparing with these sisters, Princess Pilai was less of a character. Healthwise she was not strong, but she was beautiful physically as well as spiritually. She was also a noted artist.

Princess Pilai was brought up by Queen Saovabha in the Grand Palace as well as at Phya Thai Palace. Had she been ambitious, she would have become a queen herself. But she was so modest and unaggressive, that she usually remained in the background.

She was mentioned in most of Prince Damrong's Travelogues, especially his trips to Angkor, Burma, Indonesia and Europe. She remained with him all through his years of exile in Penang. After their return to Bangkok, Mr. Pridi Banomyong, the then Regent of Siam, paid a visit to Varadis Palace to pay his respect to Prince Damrong. She was the only one her father allowed to be present at this audience. He said other daughters might not be polite to the man who was instrumental in ending the era of the absolute monarchy, which in part contributed to their exile. In fact both Prince Damrong and Princess Pilai were impressed by Pridi's sincerity and ability and the Regent was responsible for the establishment of the Damrong Rajanubhab Library after the Prince's passing away in 1943.

Princess Pilai was much attached to her uncle, Prince Naris, whom she regarded as her mentor in the field of Thai arts. She also took lessons in drawing and painting from Professor C. Feroci (Silpa Birasri).

She remained unmarried and lived with one of her nieces until the age of 88. The cremation volume in her memory was a collection of her correspondence with Prince Naris and Professor Feroci, both in Thai and English. The volume also contains some of her own paintings. Unfortunately it was not for sale.