

XVIIth Century Map of Lopburi by a French Priest.

- T. Phaulkon's House and Garden outside City Wall.
- D. Site of ruins now known as Phaulkon's House, described as the residence of the French Ambassador.
- C. Buddhist Temples.
- H. P'ra Klang's House—a site recently excavated east of "D".
- G. Royal Garden—site now occupied by Co-operative Department buildings.
- K. Royal stables.
- A. Palace enclosure.
- S. Market, as at present.
- E. Persian Ambassador's House. Tük Khorasan.
- P. Jesuit Astronomer's observation Tower. Ruins now known as San Pólo.

PHAULKON'S HOUSE AT LOPBURI

by

E. W. HUTCHINSON, M. A.

No study of Franco-Siamese relations during the xviii<sup>th</sup> century is complete that ignores the imposing brick ruins at Lopburi in which a large part of the negotiations between the French Envoys and Phaulkon, P'ra Narai's Greek Adviser, took place.

The Palace has been described elsewhere. The ruins known as Phaulkon's house, which lie a short distance to the North of it, were carefully examined by the writer in 1932, and a ground plan was made of them, with the assistance of the Cadastral Survey, for purposes of comparison with the xviii<sup>th</sup> century French plan already published.

As a preface to the consideration of these plans a few observations are offered concerning the career of Phaulkon.

A manuscript in the Archives of the Missions Etrangères at Rue du Bac in Paris purports to give the truth concerning Phaulkon's antecedents.

According to this manuscript, which is confirmed by Dutch and English records, Phaulkon left his home at Argostoli in the island of Cephalonia at an early age, and became a seaman in the service of the English East India Company<sup>(1)</sup>. In the year 1678, when he was about thirty years of age, he first came to Siam with the Company's Agent, Burnaby, when the latter was despatched from Bantam in Java to revive English trade in Siam.

Phaulkon was employed by Burnaby on this business for two years. In 1680, with Burnaby's approval, he was engaged by the P'ra K'lang, (Siamese Minister of the Treasury) who controlled the activities of foreign traders in the country. At about the same time Constantine Phaulkon, commonly known as Constant or "Conse" by the English, and "Constance" by the French, was converted to Catholicism by a Portuguese Jesuit, and married a half-caste Japanese woman.

In less than two years, Phaulkon had made himself indispensable to the Minister, P'ya Kosa, and received the title of Luang Wichayen. On the Minister's death in 1682, he became virtual controller of

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<sup>(1)</sup> His family were *Gerakis*, which means "falcon" in Greek. Phaulkon is a hellenised version of this word used by him. The English styled him Faulcon.

Siam's foreign trade, and attracted the notice of King P'ra Narai, at the time, when the latter was seeking an alliance with France to counterbalance Dutch pretensions in the Far East.

For six years, from 1682 to 1688, Phaulkon enjoyed the King's confidence; he exercised almost unlimited power, and was rewarded with the highest title of Chao P'ya. He was nevertheless a foreigner, and was unpopular.

The question arises—can he have been the owner of the palatial buildings at Lopburi, whose ruins still perpetuate his name; especially since no other remains of private as opposed to royal or sacred buildings of equal antiquity are to be found in Siam.

Before answering this question it will be necessary to examine the ruins in detail with the aid of the modern plan and of a copy of the old French plan.

Some 200 yards beyond the northern wall of the Palace, and in a direct line with the Palace Gate, known as Pratu Wichayen, lies a pile of brick ruins enclosed within walls which on the south and west sides are well preserved and are some 8 feet high.

The area so enclosed is a rhomboid, measuring roughly 90 metres on the north side, 100 metres on the south, 67 on the west, and 75 on the east. The orientation of the main building is S. S. W.

The ground plan shows a general lack of symmetry in the whole lay-out, suggestive of hasty or patchy design: for instance, several granite slabs are found among the bricks of the stairways.

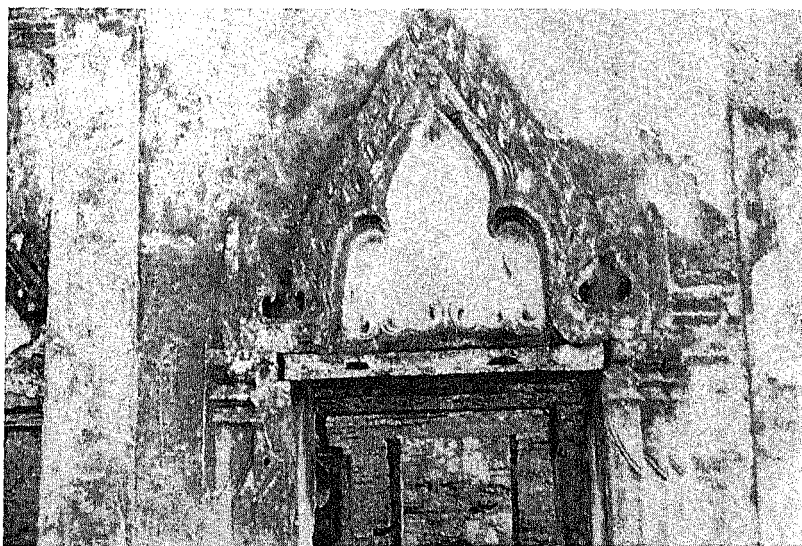
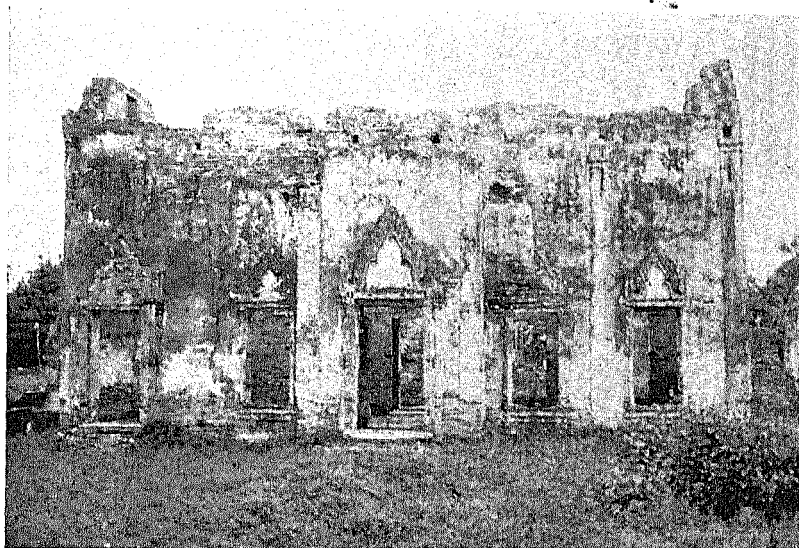
The front (southern) wall is pierced by three Gates, the centre one of which is surmounted by a pointed Gable, but the two lateral gates each by a rounded arch.

The three gates correspond with the three main sections of the Ruins, which are separated into three Courts by the walls (K. L.)<sup>(1)</sup>. There are signs that these walls were originally uniform in height with the outer walls. They divide the ground between the outer south wall and the ruins into a central, an eastern and a western court.

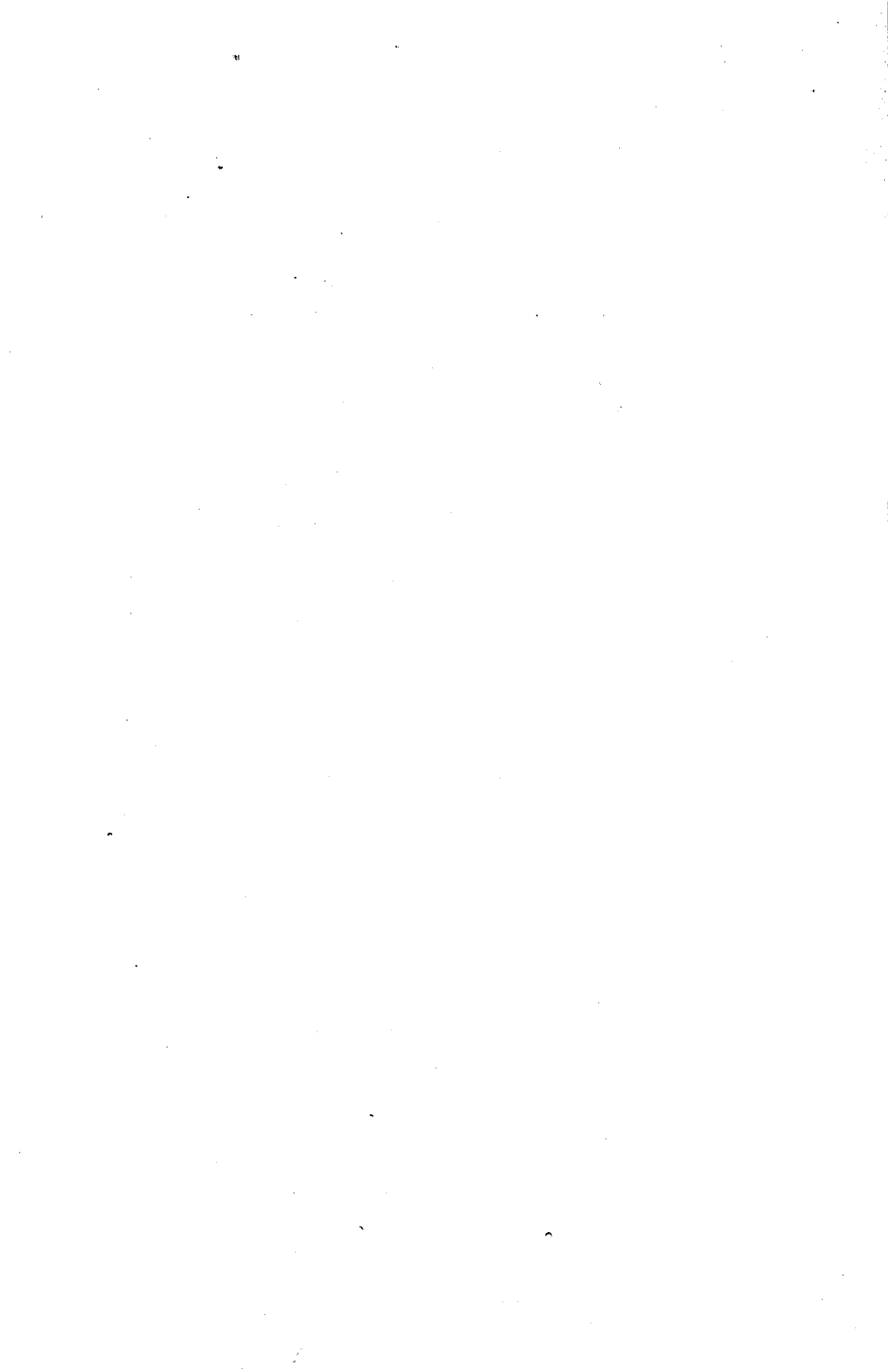
#### CENTRAL SECTION.

The Central Court is traversed by a paved way running between low brick walls, intersecting a narrow lawn, and leading from the gabled entrance gate to the foot of an imposing flight of brick steps,

(1) The flanking walls of the Court contain well-preserved niches for lamps 15 inches apart and 4 feet from the ground.



Two photographs by P<sup>ra</sup> Prakas Sahakôn showing lotus  
decoration over chapel doors.



42 feet wide, which projects towards the path in an ellipse. At the top of the steps is another narrow grass plot, enclosed on the east and west side by the walls of buildings. In its centre is a rectangular Ruin (e), 12' x 18', consisting of two walls on north and south side, each about 15 feet high, which contain and overhang a saddle-shaped mass of bricks which rises in the centre and resembles the roof of a vault. The north wall shows traces of a window frame about 10 feet from the ground.

This ruin is commonly known as the Bell Tower, but there are no signs in the walls of holes for a Beam for suspending the Bells, which must have been hung, if at all, from the now vanished roof.

Behind stands the Chapel, approached by semi-circular steps up to the three main Doors in the North, South, and West walls. Above both North and South Doors is the remains of a low Tower, with traces of a winding stair in both towers.

The Chapel is a single apartment, narrow and massive, measuring about 50 feet x 18 feet. It is lit by three windows on the north wall and three on the south, each about 3½' x 7½' and by a square window above both north and south door, giving on to the towers.

The lighting on the East and West walls consists of a merlon-shaped opening in both gables near the top, and by a rose window in the centre of the West wall. The Eastern wall, below the gable, has no window.

The floor is still paved with about 50% of the original red hexagonal tiles. East of the Towers is a brick dais in which there are remains of marble. The dais spans the Nave to a depth of six feet, rising 1½ feet above the floor level. At its East end are the Brick foundations of an Altar, 5' x 2½'. Between the Altar and the East wall of the Chapel is a passage six feet wide connecting a narrow door in the north wall with a similar one in the south wall.

The Masonry of the outer Mouldings of the windows and doors is decorated with Lotus design such as is commonly seen on the doorways of Siamese Temples. Prince Damrong considers this design to be a proof that the Chapel was not erected by Phaulkon for his private use, since it is unlikely that a foreigner in Siam would have been permitted to apply this form of ornament to his own Christian Chapel. In any case, it is probably the only Christian Church in the world decorated in Buddhist style.

Photographs presented by P'ra Prakas Sahakôn illustrate the exterior decorations of the northern wall,

## WESTERN SECTION

In the western section of the ruins the path has been obliterated which once traversed the grassy Court, leading from the Western Arched Gateway to a flight of steps similar to those described in the central section, which give access to the Big House (a).

East of the path is a small Tank sunk in the grass; and beyond it, a long rectangular gabled building (b), which outflanks the main flight of brick steps, and which is joined by, but does not communicate with an outhouse at the back. Its doorways are approached by steep semi-circular steps.

The Big House (a) is composed of a lofty chamber 35 feet square, connected by two narrow doors in the north wall with a narrow northern chamber 35' x 12'. Above it, both north and south walls are pierced by four windows to light the upper floor now demolished. Above this first floor there are signs of a second storey.

This house is the biggest in the western quarter of the ruins. Behind it are various outhouses, the most remarkable of which is a block on the Eastern side (d) consisting of three small rooms, a small court, and a cistern. The most northerly room is a bricked-in vault: in the centre of the floor is a square sunken tank, flanked on either side by an oblong one. These three tanks are each supplied with earthenware pipes, and appear to be three baths. Next to the Bath Vault, on the South side is a small chamber, suggestive of a Latrine; and south of this another room,—possibly a dressing room. The enclosure between this room and the water cistern appears to have been a small courtyard.

The purpose served by outhouses (m. n. o.) is less obvious, but they were presumably kitchens, stables and servants quarters.

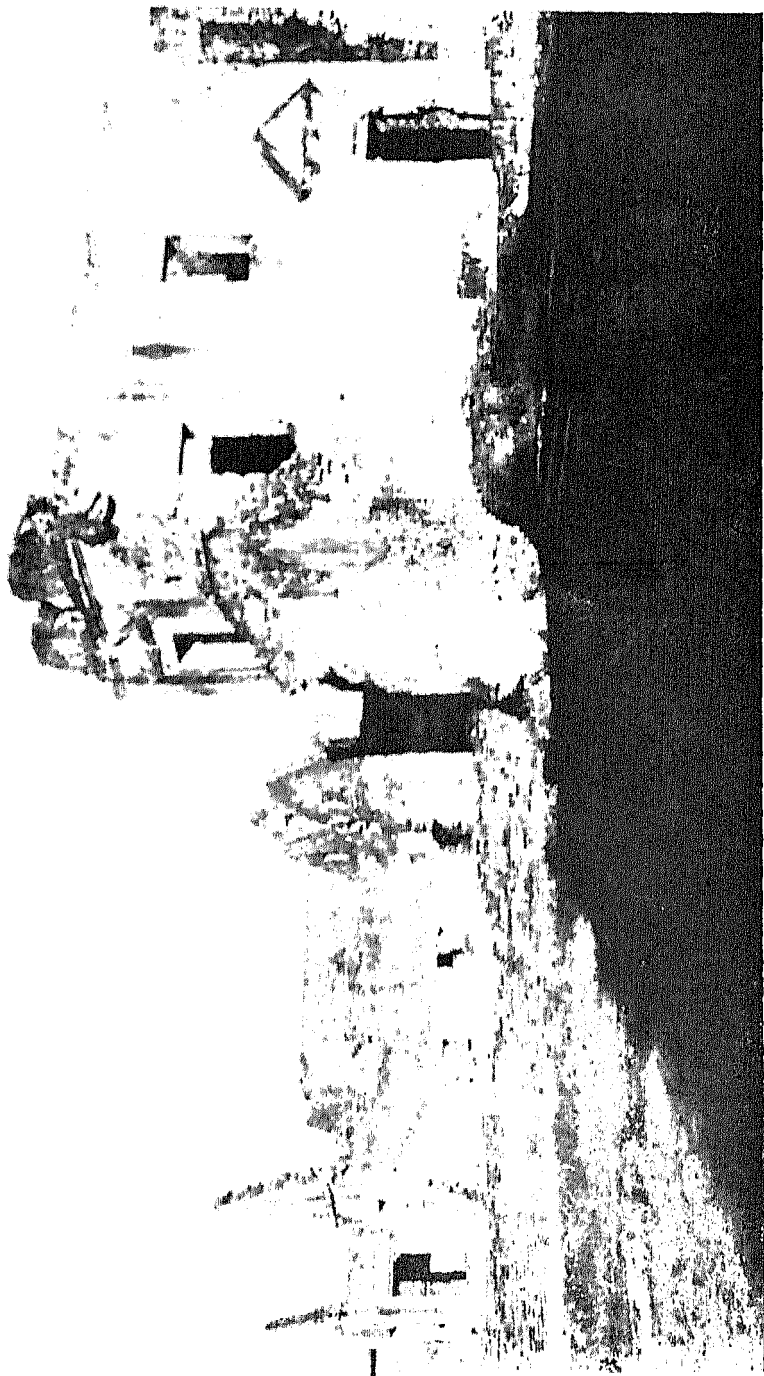
The narrow gabled building (c) parallel with the longer gabled building (b) connects on the north side with a room of fair size, behind which appears to have been a walled garden (p) leading to outhouses (d. m. n. o.).

## EASTERN SECTION

The eastern section is more symmetrically designed, more imposingly finished, and built with thicker walls than the Western section.

From the Arched Entrance Gate a brick path leads across the front Courtyard direct to a flight of five steps similar to those in the Central and Western Courts, but more spacious.

The Brick path is balanced on either side by rectangular plots, both of which contain a sunken Water Tank in the centre,

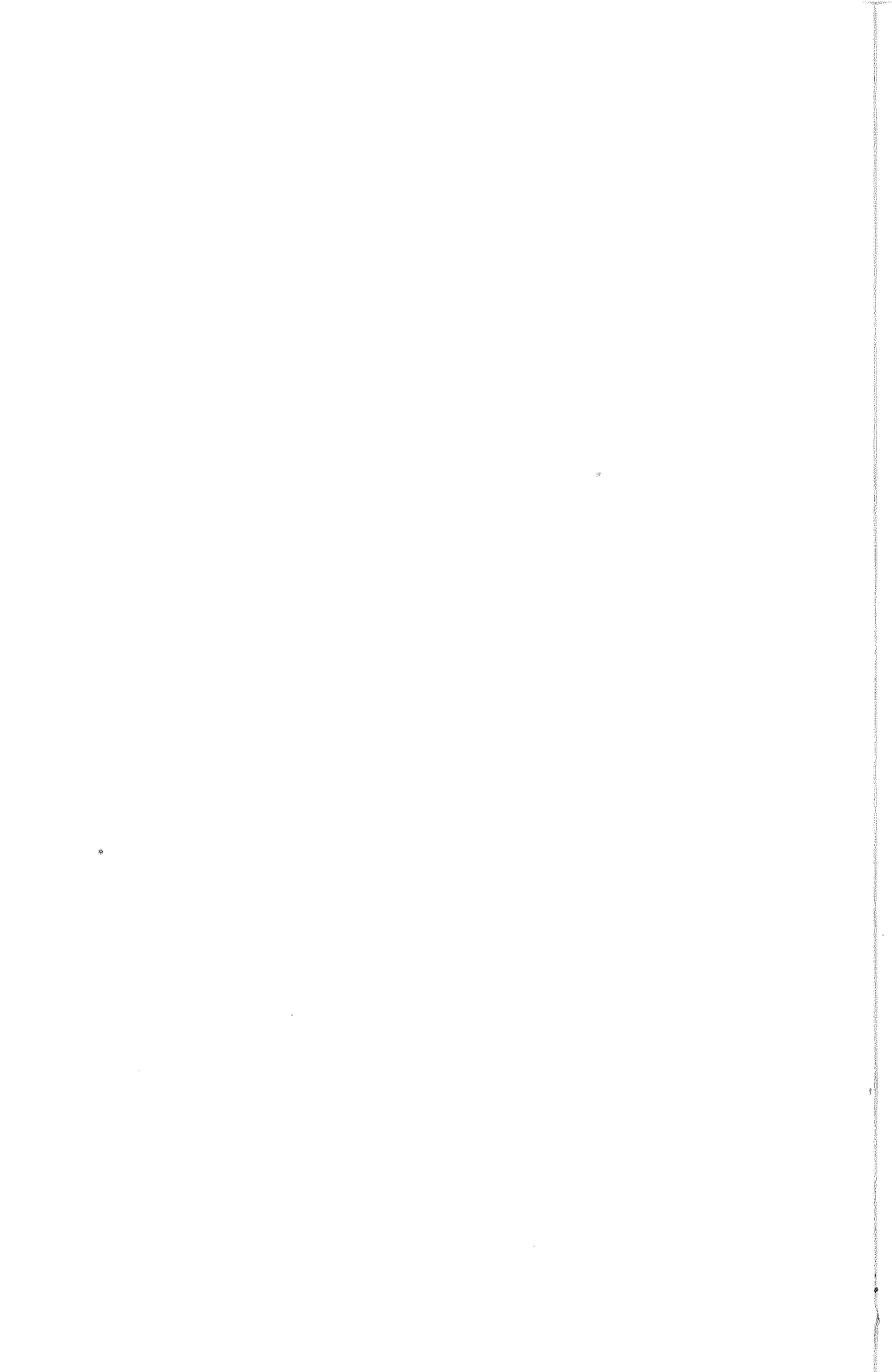


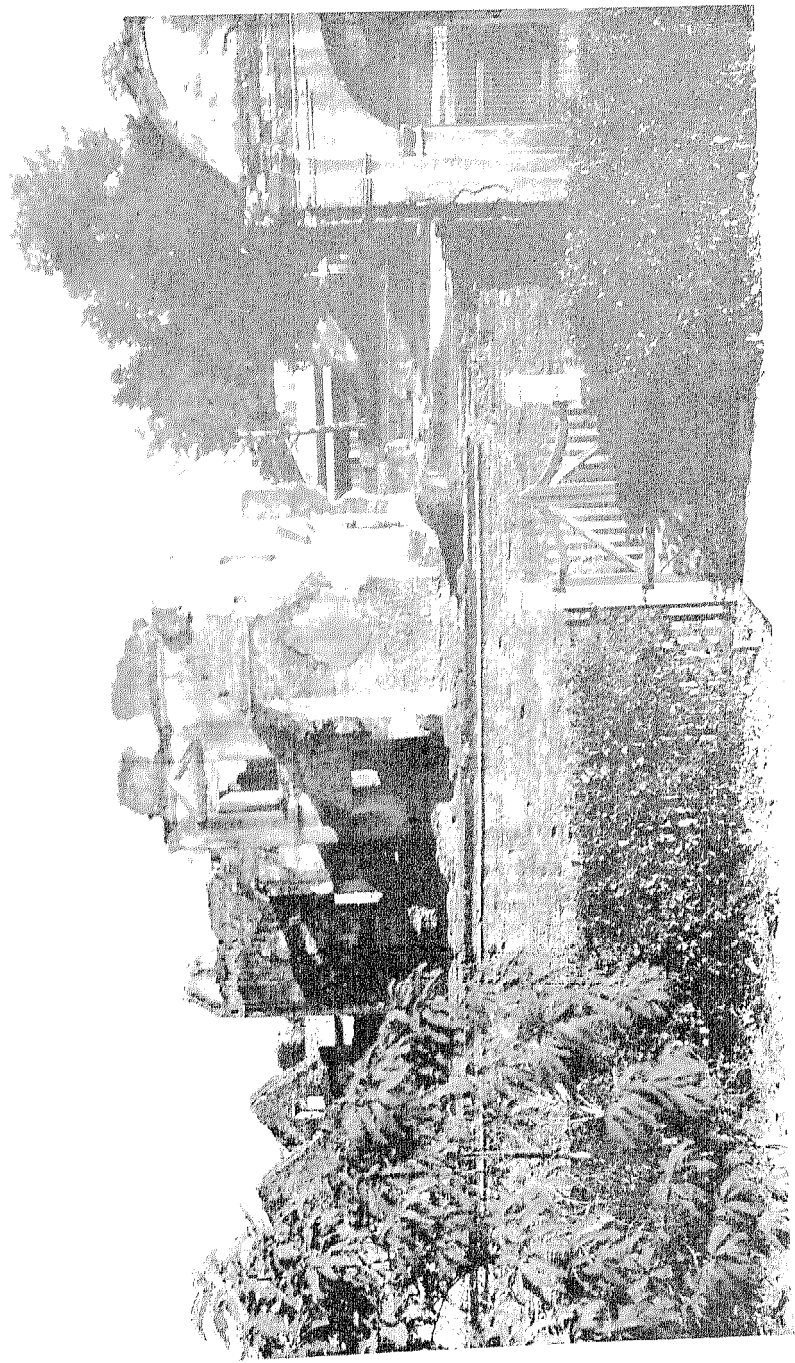
*View from Eastern court looking West.*

In foreground, steps leading to site of great Hall. (H. on plan). Beyond the steps, the living room R. W. on west side of Hall.

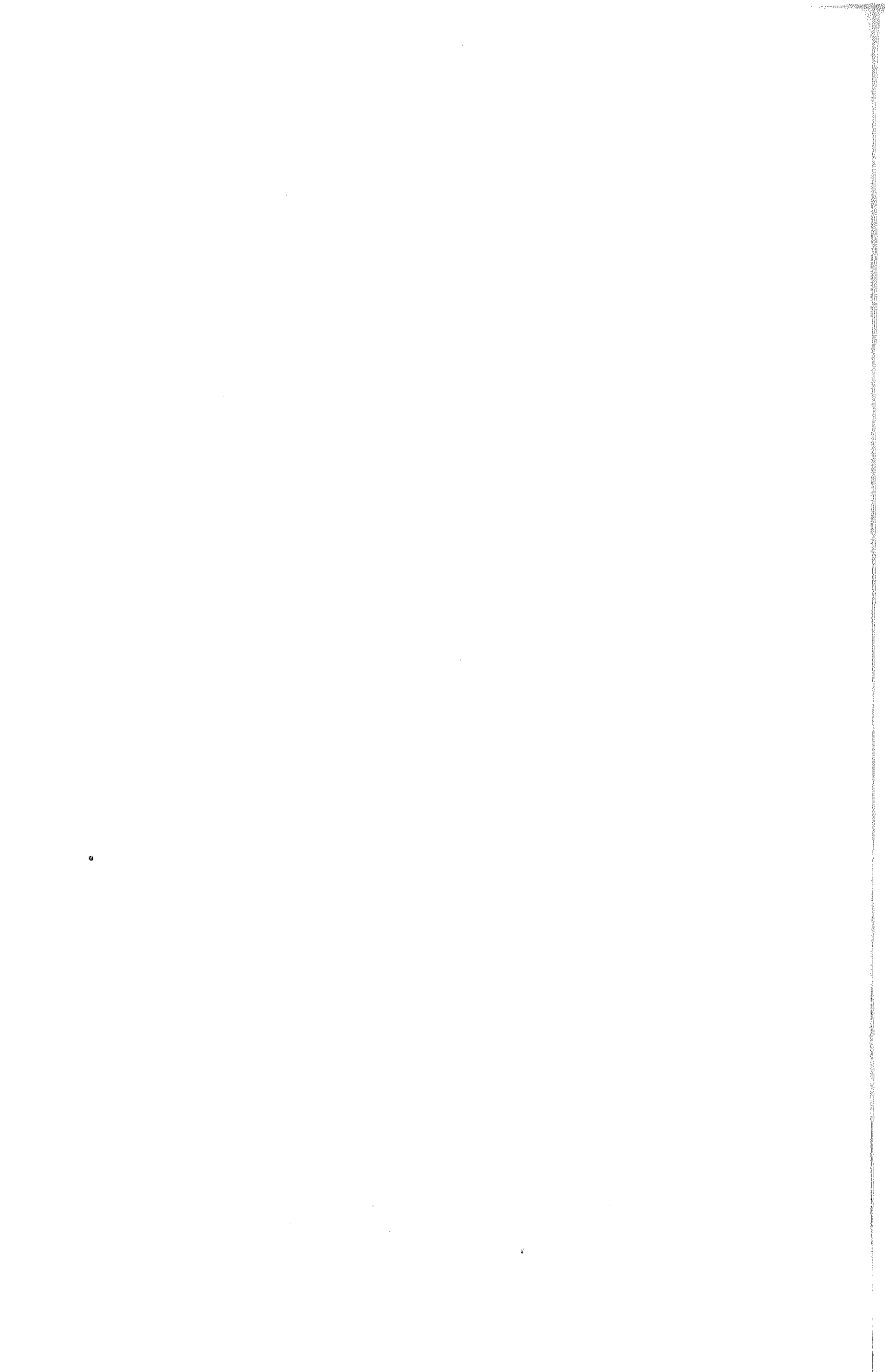
In background, the two narrow gabled buildings (b) (c) in western court.







*Central view as seen from house across the road.*  
On extreme right: Entrance gate leading to site of great Hall (H.) in centre: living rooms R. W. with chapel behind.  
On extreme left: Narrow gabled building (c) in western section.



Between both plots and the outer Southern Wall are corresponding, but smaller plots, which connect by a couple of steps at the end of walls (T. T.) with the small elevated Courts in front of the projecting buildings (f) and (g).

The platform above the grand stairway extends into a pavement of noble dimensions, roughly  $63' \times 33'$ , which probably formed the floor of a great Hall of Ceremony, now totally destroyed (H).

The walls (T. T.) are conterminous with the walls no longer existing of the Hall of Ceremony; they formed the sides of two long narrow gable-roofed buildings, which have been destroyed like the Hall. These two buildings (f) and (g) together with the great stairway leading to the Hall enclosed three sides of the Entrance Court, and projected from the main alignment. Access to them was obtained by a small semicircular brick stairway from each of the two small elevated Courts on either side of the South end of the Entrance Court. Although the dimensions of (f) and (g) were approximately the same, their ground plan was far from identical, since (g) is filled up with the foundations of four small rooms, and a flanking passage; (f) however appears to have consisted of a single big room.

A narrow passageway outside the Eastern Wing leads through a gap in the wall (which doubtless contained a gate) to the adjoining building, called in the French Plan "House of the P'ra Klang", the site of which has recently been cleared, revealing an immense platform now devoid of foundation walls, and numerous foundation walls of small buildings on the east and north sides.

The blocks RE, RW, each consist of a ground floor and a first floor room  $19' \times 33'$ . In both cases they are separated from the great Hall by a small walled Courtyard, which in the West Block (RW) contains an outside stairway leading to the first floor room.

The corresponding room in the East Block (RE) was reached by a spacious indoor staircase, the outline of which can be seen on the walls at the East end of (J).

(J) is a long, narrow Annex, parallel with and adjoining the northern wall of the Hall, and overlapping a portion of the north walls of (RE) and (RW). It may have served for offices behind the Hall, as well as covered way between (RE) and (RW) and the Central Court.

The ground behind (J) is honeycombed with the foundations of small buildings, presumably retainers' quarters.

A reference to the ground plan reveals the fact that the Chapel is in better alignment with the Eastern than with the Western section;

and an examination of the ruins shows that the Chapel and Eastern Section are more solidly built than the rest of the ruins.

These observations suggest the conclusion that the Chapel and Eastern Section represent the original Buildings constructed by P'ra Narai's orders for the reception of Ambassador de Chaumont and his staff. The French map of Lopburi, made at that time, supports this theory, which is furthermore reinforced by Prince Damrong's comments on the ornamentation of the Chapel windows.

In the French map, the site of the ruins is described as "The residence of the French Ambassador" (D), and the western boundary wall is shown close to the west end of the Chapel. The ground beyond that boundary is shown as a Buddhist Temple, which must have been acquired in order to construct the western part of the present ruins, since the latter extend almost to the City wall. Phaulkon's house (T) is shown outside the City wall.

It is possible that after the departure of de Chaumont's Embassy, Phaulkon built the Western Section for himself and for the twelve Jesuits who came out in 1687 as well as for the six left behind by de Chaumont. The two parallel narrow gabled buildings (b) and (c) are more suggestive of friars' cells than of lay habitations.

As mentioned above, the building on the East side of the Ruins is marked as the "P'ra Klang's" House.

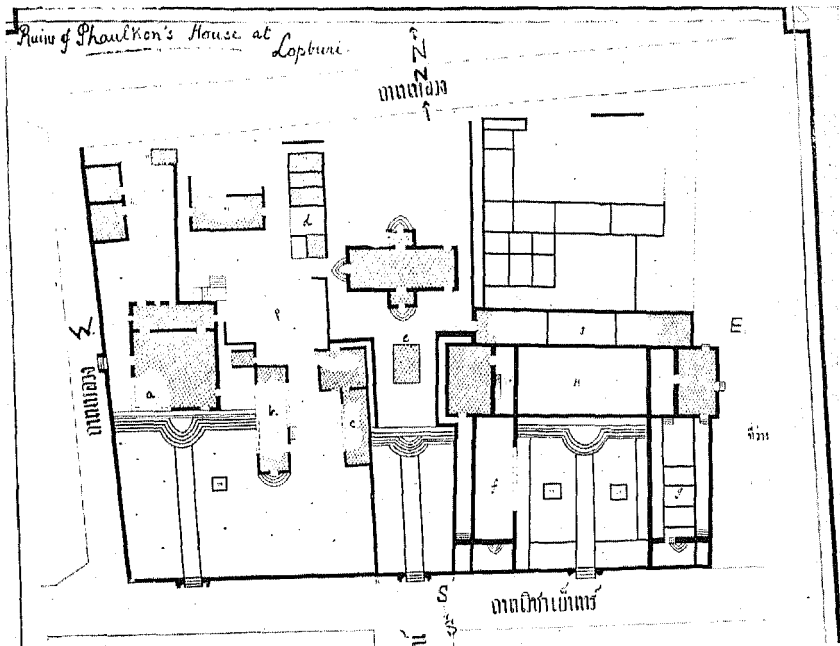
The Royal Gardens (G) occupied the present site of the Co-operative Department Buildings—separated from the Palace (A) by a line of Royal Stables (K).

Nothing now remains of the French Mission (F), or of the populous quarter on the island (Q) opposite to the Market (S) which is still in that part of the town.

Phaulkon's house and garden (T) lie beyond the N.-E. end of the Moat, parallel with the Jesuit Astronomers' Observation Tower (P), a ruin now known as San Polo. This quarter is now very sparsely populated and contains no vestiges of Phaulkon's garden.

Its place however on the French map far away from the ruins now known as Phaulkon's house may be taken as evidence that at the time when the map was made Phaulkon resided far away from the Palace; also that the eastern and central portion of the site now known as Phaulkon's house contained apartments which were built for the reception of the French Ambassador.

It is incredible that a foreigner in the Siamese service could have been permitted to build so magnificent a palace for himself, while the



Plan of Phaulkon's House at Lopburi made by a Cadastral Surveyor,  
June 1932.

*Central Court*

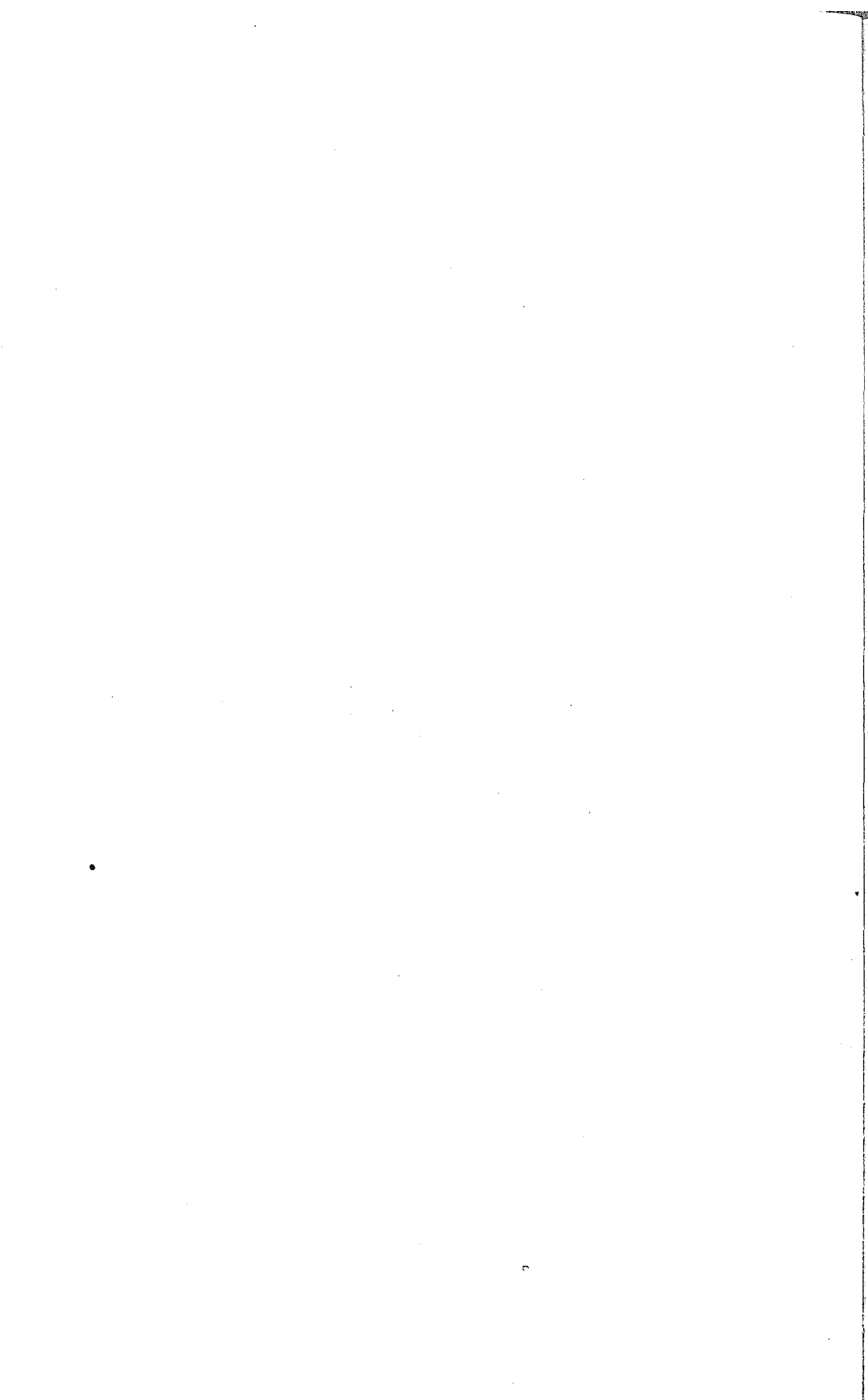
- e. So-called Bell Tower with Chapel behind
- K. L. Flanking walls, dividing this court from the Eastern and Western Sections.

*Western Section*

- a. The Big House, of flimsy construction
- b. c. Narrow rectangular gabled buildings, suggestive of Friars' cells.
- d. Bath - Latrine (?), Dressing room (?), Courtyard (d) eastern.
- p. Walled garden.
- m. n. o. Outhouses: probably kitchen and stables.

*Eastern Section*

- T. T. Ruined walls of narrow gable-roofed building F.G. on either side of garden plots.
- F. G. Narrow gable-roofed buildings flanking the garden plots.
- H. Great Hall of ceremony.
- R.W. } Small walled courtyards dividing great Hall at west and east ends from ground floor and first floor living rooms, 19' x 33'.
- R.E. }
- J. Long narrow annex behind Hall, divided into three apartments.



Siamese grandees were content with less permanent houses. When however de Chaumont and his suite had departed, leaving behind five out of the six Jesuit Astronomers who came out with him, some of these Jesuits may have remained behind to serve the chapel.

It is possible that then Phaulkon may have acquired the Temple land at the West end and built some of the more fragile edifices in the Western Court for his own use, in order to be nearer to the Palace than in his original house outside the Moat.

Chiengmai, 1933.



