

## Tem Smitinand 1920 – 1995

The Siam Society, and the Natural History Section in particular, has lost one of its most honored and dedicated leaders. It is as though an era has come to a close. For at least 30 years, Prof. Dr. Tem Smitinand has been Thailand's most important botanical expert, and for 20 years, the Leader of the Natural History Section of the Siam Society. During this era this highly talented but modest leader impressed everyone he met with his seriousness, integrity and passionate interest in plants, nature, literature and many other subjects.

Prof. Dr. Tem has left behind a considerable legacy of achievements. What is most remarkable about his career is that his climb up the ladder of achievement was unaided by a university education, patronage or personal wealth. This proves that such achievement is, or can be, the reward for hard work, honesty, and a good sense of direction; it is not the automatic reward that comes with a degree from an institution of higher learning. Prof. Tem received well-deserved honorary degrees and titles from Kasetsart, Srinakarintharawit and Silapakorn Universities. Very likely he would have achieved greater scientific heights with first rate university training, but all of us who are proud of the hard-earned degrees after our names, but have not accomplished as much as Prof. Tem did, have been taught a little humility. Prof. Tem became a Fellow of the Linnaean Society (FLS) in 1956, and a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Thailand (Botany) in 1981.

A graduate of the Phrae Forestry School in 1939, Tem started his career in the Royal Forest Department, first as an employee of the Phrae School. Then he worked at a forest protection unit. After two years in the army, he returned as chief of the Reference Section of the RFD in Bangkok, in 1951. FAO selected him for a one-year training course in botany involving training in India, Scotland, The Netherlands and France. Through the years, Dr. Tem developed the Forest Department's herbarium into an internationally recognized institution with an active research staff.

In spite of not being in an academic university environment, Prof. Tem is survived by a generation of systematic botanists whom he inspired and aided in obtaining advanced degrees abroad. This is probably his most important accomplishment. Every good university teacher wants to see his students surpass him in their knowledge, and this was Prof. Tem's attitude also.

In 1977 Prof. Tem became Deputy Director-General of the RFD, a position he held until retirement. "Retirement" for him meant returning to his desk in the Forest Herbarium and continuing to practice botany and engage in a wide range of activities for as long as he was physically able to get to his office.

One of Prof. Tem's most notable contributions to botany was his organization and coediting of the *Flora of Thailand*, in collaboration with Prof. Kai Larsen of the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Prof. Tem's friendship and collaboration with Larsen began in 1957; the first Thai-Danish botanical expedition was conducted in 1958. The Flora of Thailand Project is a huge and extremely important undertaking which will be continued by his

students and colleagues, both Thai and foreign.

Tem Smitinand became a member of the Siam Society as a young man in 1947. There he established many close friendships, and he and his Danish colleagues helped to make the *Natural History Bulletin* an important outlet for botanical publications. With H.E. Monsieur Gunner Seidenfaden, former Danish ambassador and editor of the *Natural History Bulletin*, he wrote *Orchids of Thailand* which the Siam Society published during 1959–1962.

Prof. Tem was Honorary Editor of the *Natural History Bulletin* from 1967 to 1985, and Leader of the Natural History Section from 1967 to 1986. No other person has ever held these posts for so long, and probably no other individual has served the Natural History Section in so dedicated a fashion. He served as a Vice President of the Siam Society from 1978 to 1992. His relationship with former council members Dr. Rachit and Mrs. Kathrine Buri was especially close, and these three individuals, aided by several of the current *NHB* editors, helped to give the Siam Society a stronger profile on nature conservation issues. In 1976, he headed a joint botanical/zoological expedition to the Surin Islands, which resulted in the islands being proposed as a new marine national park.

Most members of the Siam Society undoubtedly remember Prof. Tem best as an intrepid hiker and trip leader. He gave his time unselfishly to lead many trips every year. His trips to remote mountaintops such as Doi Chiang Dao, Phu Luang and Doi Inthanon are vividly remembered by many.

Prof. Tem is survived by his wife, Khun Pornphen, and four children.

### *The Editors*

#### **Photo captions:**

Page 3. *Upper:* Prof. Tem Smitinand with Prof. Rapee Sagarik (left) and Dr. Rachit Buri (right) on Phuket in 1987. *Lower:* Prof. Tem with Dr. Rachit.

Page 4. *Upper:* Prof. Tem leading an excursion to Doi Inthanon in 1981. Dr. Sy Sohmer of the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, is at right. *Middle:* Prof. Tem guiding visitors to Phu Khae Botanical Garden, Saraburi, in 1991. Nearest him is Prof. Peter Ashton of the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard; Dr. Jeff Vincent is in middle. *Lower:* Prof. Tem and Dr. Thawatchai Santisuk (far right) enjoying an evening with Japanese botanists in Kyoto in August 1984.





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