



**His Serene Highness
Prince Sithiporn Kridakara**

His Serene Highness Prince Sithiporn Kridakara passed away on 22 June 1971.

Prince Sithiporn was born on 11 April 1883, the fourth son of His Royal Highness Prince Krisdapiniharn, Krom Phra Nares Voraridh. He was thus a grandson of King Mongkut and a nephew of King Chulalongkorn. He was educated at Harrow and the City and Guilds Technical College, now a part of London University.

Returning to Siam in 1901, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as one of the Secretaries to the General Adviser. Four years later, he was transferred to the Ministry of Finance's Opium Department of which he rose to become Director-General.

He resigned in 1921 to live in the country and to start an experimental farm as Bangberd, 400 kilometres south of Bangkok. There, he experimented with many new crops hitherto unknown to Siam. To

stimulate new ways of thinking about agriculture, he co-founded a monthly agricultural journal called *Kasikorn* or The Farmer in 1927. In 1931, he was recalled to become Director-General of the Agricultural Inspection Department.

Prince Sithiporn at once established three agricultural experimental stations in the North, the Northeast and the South. These stations were later expanded to become agricultural schools, demonstrations farms and extension agencies. This second period of government service was terminated by the 1932 Revolution which brought in its train more than a decade of great misfortune for Prince Sithiporn.

In 1944 Prince Sithiporn went back to Bangberd to rehabilitate his farm. He was recalled to be Minister of Agriculture in the Khuang Abhaiwong cabinet of 1947-1948. In the General Election of 1948, he was elected one of the representatives for the province of Prachuabkhiri-khan. In 1949, he was named Head of the Thai Delegation to the International Rice Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization, and was elected Chairman of the Commission. He held this position until 1953. In 1960, old-age forced him to sell his farm at Bangberd. Nevertheless, he bought a small plot of land at Khao Noi near Hua Hin where he continued to farm and to entertain to the last days of his life.

In 1967, Prince Sithiporn's services to Thai agriculture was recognized through his election to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service. The Award was conferred on the Prince on 31 August 1967 with the following oration.

“His Serene Highness, Mom Chao Sithiporn Kridakara, Thailand's “father of modern agriculture”, has been elected to receive the Award for Public Service for his nearly half a century of pioneering experimentation and education devoted to advancement Thai agriculture.

Progress in all countries, particularly the less developed, depends substantially upon examples set by traditional leaders; unless they show the way, change by ordinary farmers becomes doubly difficult. So often in Asia hereditary elite are content with the old order or simply leave the land to join the new urbanites. Mom Chao Sithiporn, instead, chose to leave high position, devoting his life and fortune to introducing agricultural methods new to the Kingdom.

A grandson of King Mongkut and nephew of King Chulalongkorn, Mom Chao Sithiporn grew up at a time when these vigorous monarchs were opening Thailand to foreign contact. Sent to England for schooling, he studied in engineering. Upon return to Bangkok, he first engaged in private business and later joined the civil service, rising in 13 years to the highest rank.

To relieve the routine of his official position he began to study agriculture. Increasingly convinced that other crops than rice should be encouraged, he decided to engage in farming. Also, he had married a noble lady reared in the Royal Household and felt her frail health only could be remedied by life in the open. Family opposition was overcome when his cousin, King Vajiravudh, gave the couple permission to leave and make their own life.

At Bangberd, some 400 kilometers south of Bangkok, Mom Chao Sithiporn, in 1921, acquired 40 hectares of uncultivated upland and set out to prove with scientific management that a farm could be both a place to produce and to live. Contouring, terracing and green manuring of fields and interplanting of crops were first seen in Thailand on his farm. Watermelons, flue-cured Virginia tobacco and improved corn—now Thailand's third largest export—were among the new crops he promoted, demonstrating use of fertilizer and insecticides. The earliest Thai advocate of diversified farming, he was the first to breed and sell pure-bred swine and, with imported strains of high-yielding layers, to set up a commercial poultry operation. In his garden were vegetables uncommon to his country. His wife applied modern methods of preserving food. On no Thai farm before had records and cost accounts been kept. Experimenting with Thailand's first tractor and many other labor-saving devices, he was his own mechanic.

Educator and researcher more than simple farmer, he helped neighbors follow his practices and offered his seeds. Young agriculturists in government became his ardent admirers. To share more widely his findings he founded *Kasikorn*, still the only agricultural journal in Thailand. Associates in this venture were graduates of the College of Agriculture at Los Baños in the Philippines.

Recalled to Bangkok in 1932, Mom Chao Sithiporn served briefly as Director-General of the Department of Agriculture. A lasting contribution was the establishment of the first three upland experiment stations. Deposed by the coup d' état ending absolute monarchy and imprisoned as a Royalist, he was incarcerated mainly on Tarutao Island for eleven years. For fellow inmates he gave lectures on upland farming which were later incorporated in a book. Released near the end of World War II, he was elected to Parliament from his home province and served as Minister of Agriculture for a short period until he was again deposed by a coup. A notable achievement was his vigorous attack on rinderpest. As head of the Thai delegation, he was elected Chairman of the FAO Rice Commission for three successive sessions.

His fortune exhausted but his spirit unbroken, Mom Chao Sithiporn and his wife returned to reopen their Bangberd farm. Finding it more than they could manage, it was sold in 1960 and a two hectare plot purchased near Hua Hin. There the Prince continues to grow vegetables, grapes and other fruits. Now 84 years of age, he maintains an active correspondence with agriculturists. In articles to newspapers, he vigorously defends the interests of Thai farmers, critically challenging government policies with the pragmatism of a man who knows the soil.

In electing His Serene Highness Prince Sithiporn Kridakara to receive the 1967 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service, the Board of Trustees recognizes his nearly half a century of pioneering experimentation and education devoted to the advancement of Thai agriculture."

On 23 April 1969, Prince Sithiporn delivered a talk at the Siam Society entitled "The Past and Present Status of Siamese Rice Farmers". The meeting was attended by one of the Deputy Prime Ministers and two other Ministers including the then Minister of Agriculture. The talk later became the basis for the book entitled *Some Aspects of Rice Farming in Siam* which was published in 1970.

His Serene Highness Prince Sithiporn Kridakara was elected by acclamation Honorary Member of the Siam Society at the Society's Annual General Meeting in March, 1970. His passing away so soon is noted with great regret and deep sorrow.