

2. The 25th Child of Phraya NitisastraBaisal and Grandson-in-Law of HRH Kromlaung Chumphon

2.1 Bangkok Post Article About the 25th Child of Phraya NitisastraBaisal

Bangkok Post Newspaper on 26 June 1998 said the Father of Thai Internet or the father of hundred thousands of Thai Internet users has been familiar with large family because he is the 25th child of Phraya NitisastraBaisal.

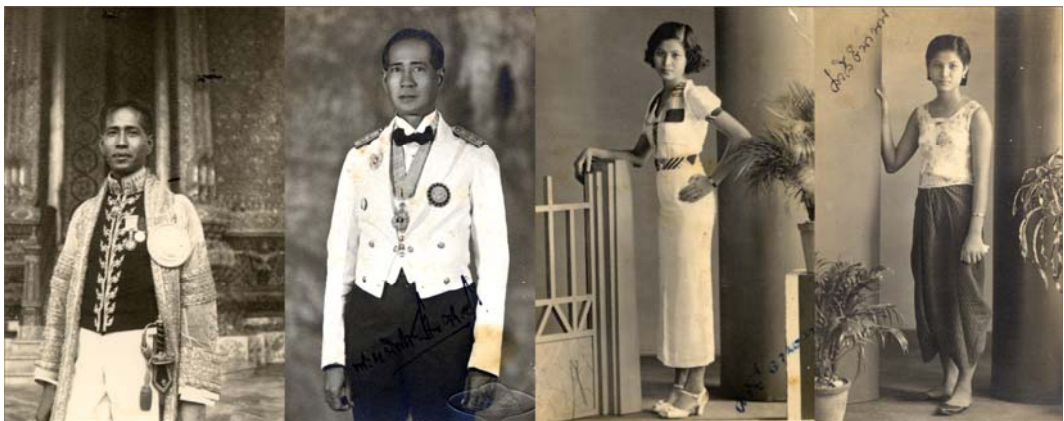


Figure 2.1 The Father and Mother of Srisakdi Charmonman

The rank of “Phraya” or “Choa Khun” is a very high rank. The son of “Choa Khun” is a “Khun” which some said to be the same level with “Mom Rajawong”.

Phraya Nitisastra was once the Director General of the Royal Scribe Department and Deputy Secretary General to HM the King Rama VII. My father claimed that several families upcountry brought their daughters to him and asked him to present the women to be consorts of the King. He said the King did not want to take any move consort and the parents asked my father to take the women to be his wives and so in order not to bother the King, he had to perform his duties of taking more wives. In the old day, it was legal and good practice for a high-level official to have many wives. All in all, Phraya Nitisastra had 16 wives and 31 kids. He said he was fair by not requesting the title of “Lady” or “Khunying”

to any wife formally. There was one year in which three of his wives were pregnant. Could that be considered a special achievement?

I myself was born when my father was 50 years old and my mother about 20 years old. My mother is a native of Chonburi. Her first name is “Sallee” and last name “Chonanop”. Figure 2.1 and 2.2 show my father and mother. From the book printed to commemorate Phraya NitisastraBaisal’s funeral, that Srisakdi is the 25th child.

My mother wanted me to be a medical doctor and let me carry a black briefcase like a medical doctor. In figure 2.3, I had a necktie and a hat like my father in Figure 2.2. However, carrying a briefcase may be like a businessman.

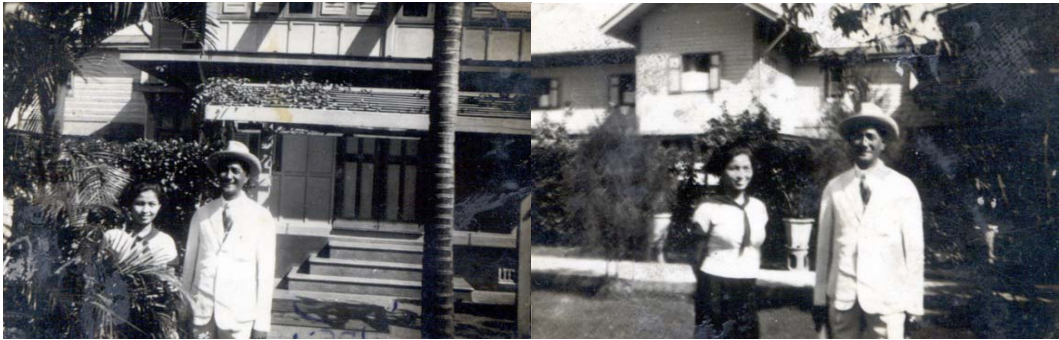


Figure 2.2 The Father and Mother of Srisakdi Charmonman

Figure 2.4 shows me when I was rather young. In the picture on the left, I did not want to dress up to take a picture. My mother was annoyed with my refusal to dress up and so took a picture of me naked and crying. In the picture in the middle, I and my brother were playing with a cat. In the picture on the right, I was driving a toy car in the flood.

2.2 May Take My Father as a Role Model

My mother told me to study hard in order to be successful like my father. When I was in Grade 1, I sneaked back home from the school which shared a fence with my house. My mother found out and gave me a lengthy sermon which may be summarized that if I continued skipping classes, I would not have good knowledge. Without knowledge, I would not get any good job. My mother said

that I should take my father as a role model. My father studied very hard and got a scholarship to England to study at Grey Inn and became highly respected.



Figure 2.3 Srisakdi with necktie and a hat similar to his father



Figure 2.4 Srisakdi when he was a child

My father graduated from the “English Section of Saunkularb School” which later changed its name to “Dhebsirin School”. Then, he became an “Interpreter Trainee” at the Supreme Court and Court of Foreign Affairs.

Concurrently he also studied at the Law School. He passed the examination to become a barrister at the age of 22 and became a Judge of the Court of Foreign Affairs at the age of 23. Then, he got a scholarship to study at the “Grey Inn” in England. He told me that at Grey Inn, he did not have to attend classes. To prepare for the examination, he asked the owner of the house where he rented a room to stay to lock the door from outside and send meals to him three times a day so that he would be forced to study all day. He passed the exam and became an English Lawyer at the age of 28 and attended special lectures as the Inn of Court.

My father returned from England to Thailand at the age of 29. He was appointed a Judge of the Criminal Court and HM the King graciously bestowed to him the title of “Laung Attakalayanawarkya”. At the age of 31, he became Assistant Judge of the Supreme Court and promoted to the title of “Phra Nitisastra Baisal”. At the age of 32, he became Director General of Foreign Affairs Department of the Royal Secretariat, Acting as Secretary General of the Privy Council, and Secretary of the Cabinet Council. At 34 he became Assistant Minister of Justice (Samuha Phra Nitisastra). At 35, he was promoted to become Praya Nitisastra Baisal. At 36, he became Permanent Secretary of the Directorate of Justice of the Royal Scout, and Acting Secretary General of the Royal Secretariat. At 38, he became Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs to HM the King and Director General Designate of the Royal Scribe Department. At 39, he became the Director General of the Royal Scribe Department. At 42, he became a Judge of the Appeals Court. At 43, he became the Chief Justice of the Criminal Court. At 44, he became the Chief Justice of the Court of Foreign Affairs in addition to being the Chief Justice of the Criminal Court. When he was 31-32 and in his capacity of being the Director General of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Royal Secretariat, he was also Chairman of the Committee to Draft the first copyright law of Thailand. Much later, I myself was appointed Chairman of the working group to modify the copyright law to include software and related IT matters,

On June 24, 1932, a group of G9 members led by Phraya Phahol Pholphayuhasena took power from HM King Rama VII who was in the Summer



Figure 2.5 Phraya Nitisastra Baisal

Palace of Hua Hin. One of the military leaders was Luang Subhajalasaya (Who later became my Father-in-Law) led a group from the Royal Thai Navy to the area around the Status of HM King Rama V. The military invited or arrested members of the Royal Family and high-ranking officials. My father, in his capacity as the Deputy Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to HM the King, was also invited or arrested. He was assigned to work on the Temporary Constitution of 1932 which HM King Rama VII graciously signed and made it effective (Chao Khun is any title used for Phraya) sided with the Revolution Party. My father said he did not join the Revolutionary Party but was forced to help in drafting the Temporary Constitution of Thailand.

The Temporary Constitution effective on 27 June 1932 specified that there had to be a House of Representative with 70 members. So on 28 June 1932, the Revolutionary Party appointed the 70 members of the House of Representative. The House established a Subcommittee of 7 members to draft the first Permanent Constitution of Thailand. Of course, as his title of “Phraya” Nitisastra Baisal” literally means “Marquis of Legal Expertise”, he was appointed a member of the Subcommittees. Then on 10 December 1932, HM the King graciously signed the Permanent Constitution.

When he was 45 in the year 1933, the Government appointed him the Minister of Justice. At the age of 47 in the year 1935, he was named Acting Minister of Finance when Phraya Manavarajsevi took a sick leave from June 18 to November 14, 1935. He also became Acting Prime Minister and assumed all positions held by the Prime Minister, Phraya Pahol Polpyhasena, including the position of Chairman of the Revolution Party.

At the age of 59 to 61 in the year 1947 to 1949, my father became Chairman of the Governmental Saving Bank. He became the first Dean of the Faculty of Law at Thammasat University in 1949. HM the King kindly bestowed him the first royal sash, “Patamaporn Mongkut Thai (The Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand)” at the age of 63 in 1951, and the second royal sash “Patamaporn Chang Purg (The Exalted Order of the White Elephant)” at the age of 67 in 1955. In my father’s time, it was probably difficult to be bestowed the Royal Sash as can be seen that by the age of 67, my father got only 2 Royal Sashes. In my time, I was bestowed all the four Royal Sash for Government official before the age of 60.

My father liked to drink a lot of whisky, i.e. as much as 2 bottles a day. In the year 1960, while chairing “the Council of State”, he got up to go to the bathroom but collapsed with capillary break. He was taken to the hospital and the doctor said he would die very soon. So, he was taken to his house at Kaosarn

Road to die peacefully. The house is very big with one door on Rambutri Road and another door to Kaosarn Road. There were about 100 people in the house. One day a Chinese man walked to his bed on the ground floor and gave him medication and then left without anyone caring too much what the Chinese man has done. Surprisingly, my father recovered and could walk with two young ladies helping him, one on each side. He could teach students from Thammasat University who went to his house. My father passed away in the year 1967 at the age of 79 years and 6 months. From the fact that my father drank too much whisky, my mother asked me not to drink whisky and I complied. I would drink whisky and wine only a little bit at social functions. At the welcoming party for freshman at Chulalongkorn Faculty of Engineering. I pretended to drink but allowed the whisky to overflow from my mouth. The whisky made people thought that I had been drinking a lot but actually I drank only a little.

2.3 The Surname “Charmonman” was given by HM the King

On 19 November 1915, HM the King Rama VII graciously granted surnames to those who requested surnames. My uncle, Phra Chaiyasastra Rajspabordi who was the Chief Justice of Nakorn Chaisri region, together with my father who was a Thai barrister named “Van”, and my great grandfather named “Muenharnjai-art” requested a surname from HM the King and was granted the surname.

My father explained to me that the surname means “As diligent as a royal which works all day and all night to prevent insects from bothering HM the King”.

A lot of people misspell our surname. Some spelled “man” in Thai as “mar” in Thai, which mean “giant”, while others used “malaya” which means “flowers”. I had to explain that “man” is from “mana” which means “diligent”. The Thai word “chamorn” is an abbreviation of “sae chamorn” which means a whisk made of hair and used to move insects away. Altogether, “chamornman” means diligent in using the whisk to protect the King from insects. Once a clerk at the district with a lot of Muslim pronounced our surname as “Chamaraman” which sounded like “Abdul Raman”, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia who graduated from Dhebsirin School where both my father and I myself also graduated.

In English, HM the King gave our surname as “Chamaraman”. When I was at Chulalongkorn University, I went to Samyan Shopping Center to print my name card. At that time, the printer use a metal block for each character. There were not enough blocks of the character “a”. They had only three but I needed five “a” in “Srisakdi Chamaraman” So, I decided on the spot to change the spelling of the last name from “Chamaraman” to Charmonman” meaning “Charm-on-man”. My father was furious when he found out later. I apologized and explained that it was too last to change because all English document to apply to study in the US had been issued with my version of the last name. I further appealed for mercy that we are Thai and should take the Thai language more important than the English language. Thus making the spelling in Thai correct is more important than the spelling in English. My father kindly conceded that I had a reason which was not very good but barely acceptable. He told me not to make that type of mistake again and I obeyed by not changing my version of English surname again.

For my first name, it was given by a respected Buddhist monk “Srisakdi” means “Glorious Dignity”. However, many foreigners learning to use Thai made several wrong spelling. For example, a wrong spelling give the meaning of “color (see) of teak wood (sak)”. Another wrong spelling means “color of the pestle”. A funny incident also occurred when I got a short message or SMS to “Tee Sak” meaning a Chinese boy named “Sak”.

2.4 Must Learn to Be Peaceful in a Large Family.

There were about 100 persons in our house at Kaosarn Road, my father, 16 of his wives, 31 children, baby sitters for the children, cooks, house maids, launders, gardeners, guards, etc. In such a very big family, there would naturally be someone quarrelling with a lot of noise. Therefore, to survive peacefully, I had to condition myself to hear only what I want to hear, and to see only what I want to see. There is a Thai proverb, “get in your left ear and goes out your right ear without bothering your at all”. There is also another Thai proverb “let your ears go to the farm and let your eyes go to the field”, i.e. your ears and your eyes are not with you. So you do not hear what you do not want to hear, and you do not see what you do not want to see. Alternately, I could condition myself to see and hear things like watching a show or drama and enjoy it. So, I have been smiling or laughing all the times. Many people said that it anyone calls me and I do not smile with him, that person would be highly unlucky.

If someone keeps nagging in front of me, I would pretend not to hear. If he or she goes on nagging, I would pray aloud, 3 times, 6 times, 9 times, louder and louder until that person realizes that I do not want to hear him nagging. It became well known that when I pray aloud to someone who was nagging, he must stop or go away.

The advantages of conditioning myself as mentioned above are that I have never been stressful with any thing. Every morning when I wake up, I would look at the mirror, smile, and say “I shall be kind and considerate, I will do good deeds, and I shall be happy”. Every night before going to bed, I would look in the mirror, smile and turn left and right to see which post would look good. Then I would say “I shall be kind and considerate, I shall have good dreams, and I shall be happy”. However, I usually do not dream. As soon as my head is on the pillow, I would fall asleep, just like a computer shutting down when one pushes the button. In case there are some problems to solve, I may dream about how to solve them. I might wake up in the middle of the night; write down how to solve the problem and return to sleep without having to bother about the problem again that night.

2.5 Discouraging Children not to Quarrel by Spanking before Finding out Who was Right or Wrong.

With a lot of children in the house, it is like “tongue and teeth which may have conflicts often”. My father established a rule that if there is any quarrelling, everyone involved would be spanked three times first. Then he would ask everyone to explain the incident. Then he would decide who was wrong and spank that one some more.

Therefore, in order not to get the initial spanking, all those who were quarrelling would stop and pretend to be getting along very well any time my father arrives at the scene. Once we were quarrelling and found it too late to stop because my father had already seen us in the action. All of us ran out of the house to escape being spanked. We ran to a nearby market place where there was a Thai theater showing “likey” or Thai drama. We enjoyed the show of likey for a few hours. When we returned home, we found the doors of our bedrooms locked. So we had to go to our father who unlocked the doors, spanked us, and found out who were wrong in the quarrelling incidents and spanked them some more.

2.6 Every New-Born Child Gets the Title to a Plot of Land

In order that all the children would not have to argue who get what when my father die, he gave each new-born child the title to a plot of land. A boy got

three and a half rai and a girl get seven rai. A rai is 1,600 square meters. An acre is 2.5 rai. The reason that a girl got more was that a girl those day did not need additional money to go to school. A boy needed a lot of money from my father to finance his further educations.

The land was on Sukumvit Road, near the district of Samrong. My father bought the land at 80 baht per rai. The amount of 80 baht was equal to his salary at that time. He told me that the price of land at Samrong was the same as at Soi Nana near the Erawan Hotel. At that time, the end of Bangkok was at what is now the World Trade Center. There were only 18 million Thai at that time comparing to over 64 million in the year 2009. My father reasoned that Nana would be developed much later than Samrong because Samrong was close to the sea. My father made a wrong judgment about the price of the land.

For the plot of land my father gave to each of his children, he stipulated that it could not be sold until the owner reaches the age of 21. When I was 21, I got an offer to sell the land for one million baht. I liked to be a millionaire and sold the land in the year 1958. Later in Prime Minister Chatchai's time, the price of land increased almost every day. Had I kept that plot of land, it would have fetched about one hundred million baht. So I had to think that "whatever will be will be."

I used the one million baht I got from selling the plot of land in buying several other plots. As an example, I bought a plot of 21 rai in Ayudthaya for 300,000 baht and later sold it for several million bahts. I bought another plot of 100 rai on Paholyothin (Highway #1) in Lopburi at 6 million baht. Later, a Japanese company offered to buy it at 2 million baht a rai, totally 200 million baht but I asked for 4 million baht per rai or 400 million baht in total. The price of 4 million baht per rai was what another Japanese company paid for another plot nearby. However, there came an economic crisis and the land price decreased and decreased. Even at 20 million baht for the 100 rai, nobody wanted to buy it in the year 2009.

My father told me that a plot of land might be considered like a bar of gold which Thai people like to buy. When necessary, a bar of gold can be easily sold. However, keeping a bar of gold at home may be very dangerous because it could be stolen or robbed easily. A plot of land may be considered "black gold" or gold in the color of the earth. It would be more difficult to steal a plot of land than stealing a bar of gold. So, I took my father's advice and bought about 200 rai such as about 10 rai in Bangkok, 30 rai in Ayudthaya, 100 rai in Lopburi, 10 rai in Rachaburi, etc.

2.7 A Son-in-Law of Luang Subhajasaya and a Grandson-in-Law of Kromlaung Chumporn

When I got my Master's degree from Asian Institute of Technology and got a scholarship to pursue my study at the Ph.D. level in the US, my father was afraid that I might do like my elder brothers who married foreigners. So, my father asked me whether I was interested in any girl at Chulalongkorn University. I told my father about several girls. My father and I established a table with names in the first column and other attributes in other columns, such as parent's names family history, behavior, education, etc. We gave scores to all the entries. The result was that the one who got the highest score was Miss Parasubhasri Subhajalasaya. She is a daughter of Luang Subhajalasaya (the National Stadium was named after him) and Momchao Charubhatra who is, in turn, the eldest daughter of HRH Kromluang Chumporn Khet Udomsak (The Founder of the Royal Thai Navy). Therefore, many people have said that I am a Son-in-Law of the man whose name was given to the National Stadium and a Grandson-in-Law of Kromluang Chumporn Khet Udomsak.

From the book "Descendants of HM King Rama V" by M.R. Kitiwatana Pokmontri, pp. 126-127, "The eldest daughter of Kromlaung Chumporn is Momchao Charubhatra Abhakara who is a high-ranking Princess carrying the royal article of use in the procession of HM the Queen Rampaipanee in the royal ceremony for HM the King in the year 1925. Princess Charubhatra resigned from the title of princess to marry Luang Subhajalasaya. A daughter of Luang Subhajalasaya and Princess Charkbhatra born in 1939 is Parasubhasri Subhajalasaya who married Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman. They have two daughters, Subhasri and Sareeporn".

Parasubhasri earned an honor degree from the Faculty of Arts of Chulalongkorn University. Then she followed Dr. Srisakdi to Atlanta, Georgia, USA, and graduated a Master's degree in Librarianship from Emory University. She has worked at a librarian in Canada and USA. After returning to Thailand, she became a librarian at UNESCO.

My elder daughter, Subhasri, with the nickname "Penny" was born in 1967 when I was an Associate Professor of Computing Science at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Thus, she was a citizen of Canada by birth. She earned an honor degree from the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy of Chulalongkorn University. She is the first Thai national who was admitted to the Annenberg School for Communications of the University of Pennsylvania, USA. She was offered a scholarship to study for a Ph.D. but she decided to marry Pravit Sukhum who is a senior official of the Budget Bureau. Pravit is a son of Prasong Sukhum who is in turn, a son of Phra Pisalsukhumwit

who was in charge of the construction of Sukhumvit Road. Subhasri and Pravit have a daughter and a son, Chayabha born in 1999, and Prin born in 2002.

My younger daughter, Sareeporn, with the nickname “Paula”, was born in 1971 when I was the Director of Graduate Studies in Computer Sciences at the University of Missouri, Columbia, USA. Because she was born in the US, Paula was a US citizen by birth. Paula got a Bachelor’s degree in Economics with First Class Honour and Gold Medal from Kasetsart University. Then, she got an M.B.A. from St. Louis University in the USA. She is later Chief Financial Officer of Fplus Co., Ltd. She married Surasak Pongsri who is the Managing Director of Giantic Co.,Ltd. Surasak is a son of the co-founder of the company producing Wai Wai noodle. Paula has two sons, PooHPa born in 2001, and Poptorn born in 2002.

When we returned to Thailand, the maid did not know English language. So, instead of calling my daughters, “Penny” and “Paula”, they called them “Pepsi” and “Cola”.



Figure 2.6 From left to right back row, Subhasri (with Chayapa on her lap) Parasubhasri, Srisakdi, and Pravit, and front row, Paula and Surasak



Figure 2.7 Srisakdi at the age of 72 and grandsons, PooHPa 9 years old and Poptorn 8 years old in the office at Srisakdi Charmonman IT Center



Figure 2.8 Srisakdi with daughter, son-in-law and grandsons at his office



Figure 2.9 Srisakdi with daughter, son-in-law and grandsons, in front of SCIT

Penny is a perfectionist and Paula is easy going. Paula used to say joke without intention. As an example, she asked me why I had to work hard. I told her that I had to work hard to earn money for her to use. She commented that she did not think I had to work hard to get money because every time I need money, she saw me going to the ATM and got money from the ATM.

Another example, my mother told her that if she wanted anything, she should ask “Phra Sriaraya” but Paula said she did not know whether or not “Phra Sriaraya” would give her what she asked for but she was sure that she could get what she wanted by asking “Phra Srisakdi”, i.e. her father.

Once I took Paula to the US Embassy to apply for Visa. The US officer said Paula could not get a Visa to go to the US. We were surprised and worried. So, I asked the officer what we had to do to get Paula a Visa. The officer said Paula was a US citizen and as such had to apply for a passport.