

SPICES, SILK, JEWELS AND CATS

*On Wichienmaat, Siamese, Thai,
Suphalak and Khao Manee cats*



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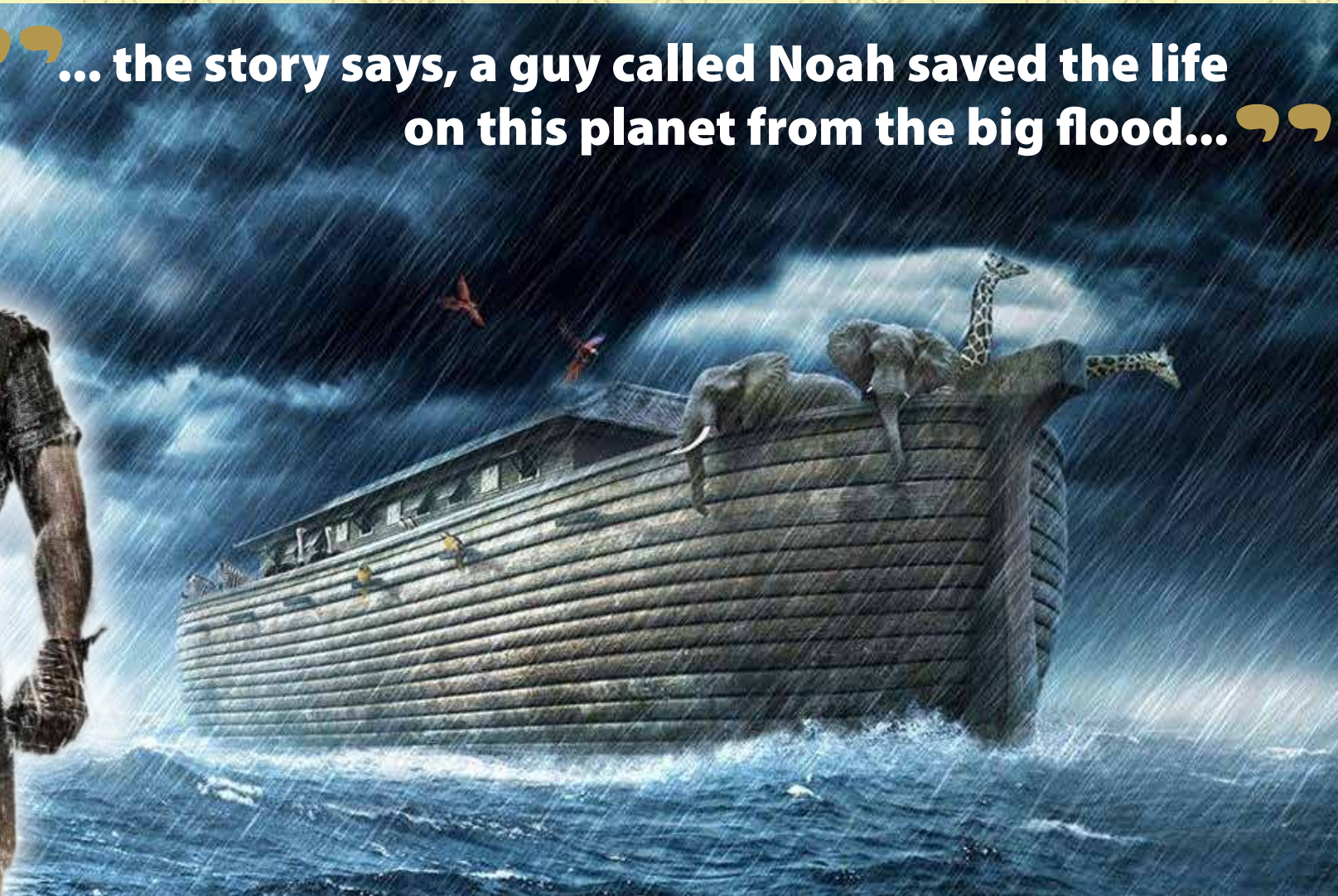


This is one brief history of cat breeds that originated from ancient Siam, today Thailand. We will explore history of one very popular breed, Siamese cat, a history full of dramatic twists and turns. Then, we will find out how and why Thai breed was developed. We will also explore origins and discuss of some lesser known cat breeds - Wichienmaat, Suphalak and Khao Manee.



Once upon a time...

“... the story says, a guy called Noah saved the life on this planet from the big flood...”



Let's start with a story!

Once upon a time, the story says, a guy called Noah saved the life on this planet from the big flood. Noah built the Ark and he filled it with every animal of the world, two by two, one male and one female. After the flood covered the whole land it looked like the water will not withdraw ever. The land was under the water siege for a very long time and every day was long and monotonous. The animals in the

ark became very bored and searched for something to do. The monkey spotted the pretty lioness and immediately fell in love. After a while the fruit of that funny love was born. It was one personable little creature, that had the cleverness and agility of the monkey, and the courage heart of the lioness!*

**Inspired by George Cansdale's story from the book "Animals and Man", 1952*





*Some of the
passengers
of the
Noah's Ark*

When the big flood ended, the animals spread all over the world and the rest of the legend is well known. But our unusual cat-like creature disappeared without a word. Or, better said, without a meow! And then, after many, many centuries it appeared again, right in the Kingdom of Siam...



That was one nice bedtime story, but let's get serious and move to facts!

Before the 19th century, access to the interior of Kingdom of Siam was strictly limited to all but a few diplomats and some privileged merchants. These lucky often returned home with mysterious tales about the beautiful Kingdom. After the middle of 19th century, the Kingdom opened to the outside world. European traders and travelers found a variety of extraordinary goods, to be exported to their home markets - spices, silk, jewels... But, one of the most exotic things they took back home were elegant little cats...



The Wichianmaat



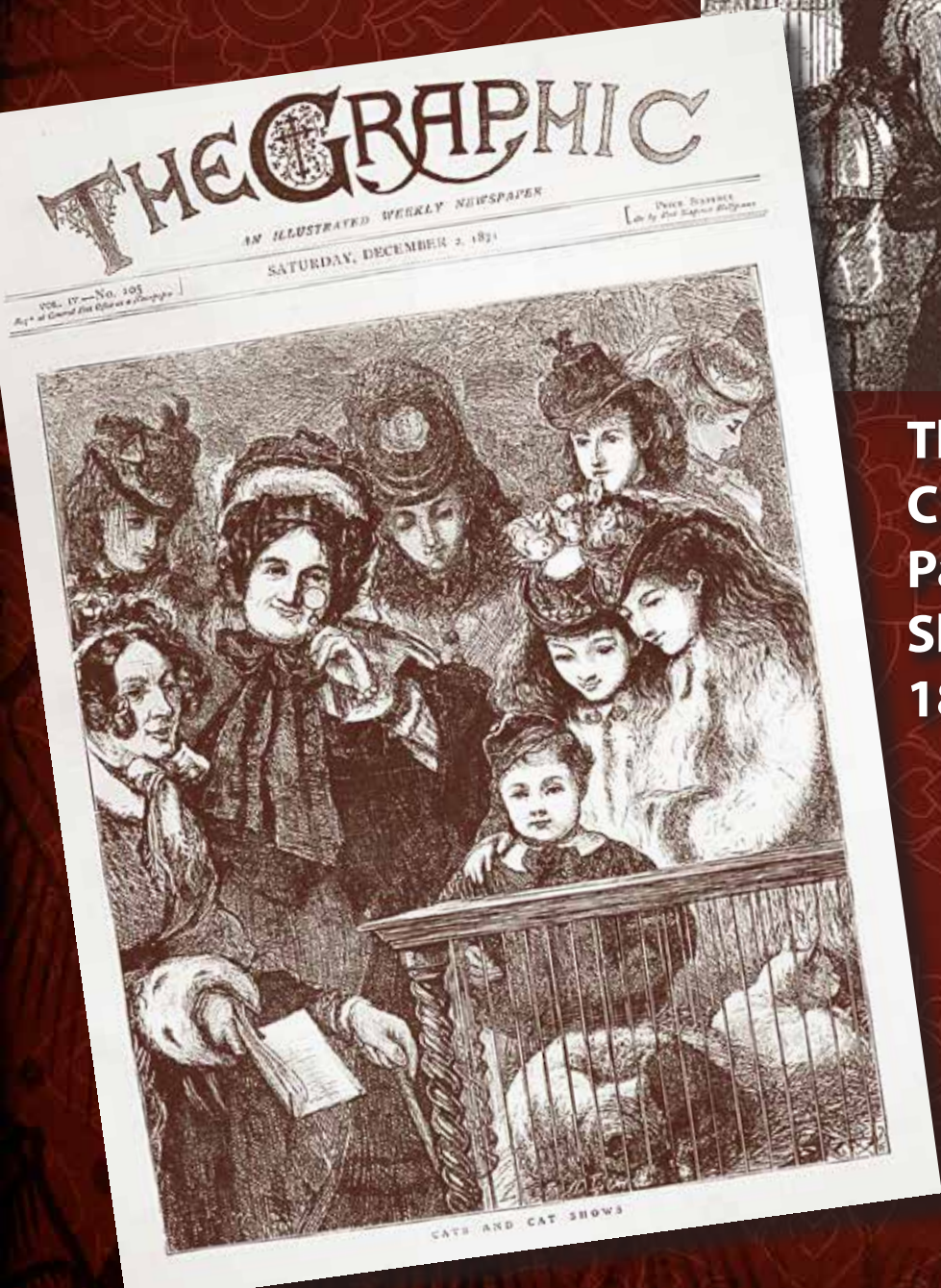
Those cats of exceptional appearance had unique color and mystical blue eyes, glowing like a precious stone. The Siamese name for those cats was Wichianmaat, which translates as Moon Diamond, or Wichien Maas, which means Gold Diamond. The breeding and keeping of those cats was reserved only for the royal court of Siam. In ancient Siamese manuscripts Wichianmaat cat is described as a cat that brings luck and good fortune to owners.

There were the rumors that those Royal cats, which will be known in the West as “Siamese cats”, were seen in Europe at the beginning of 18th

century. However, based on available evidence it is safe to say that importing of our Royal cats started between 1860 and 1870s.

Two cats from Siam were exhibited at the very first documented cat show - Crystal Palace Cat Show in London, on July 1871. The owner and exhibitor was some Mr. Maxwell, and it was reported that those cats were “the first of their kind ever brought to this UK”. And then there was one lady Dorothy Neville who showed Siamese cats at the subsequent shows at the Crystal Palace, in December of 1871 and again in May next year.





**The 1st
Crystal
Palace Cat
Show, July
1871, London**



**Mr J. Walter's cat Myrriee
at the age of 5 (born 1870)**

Early breeding of Siamese cats

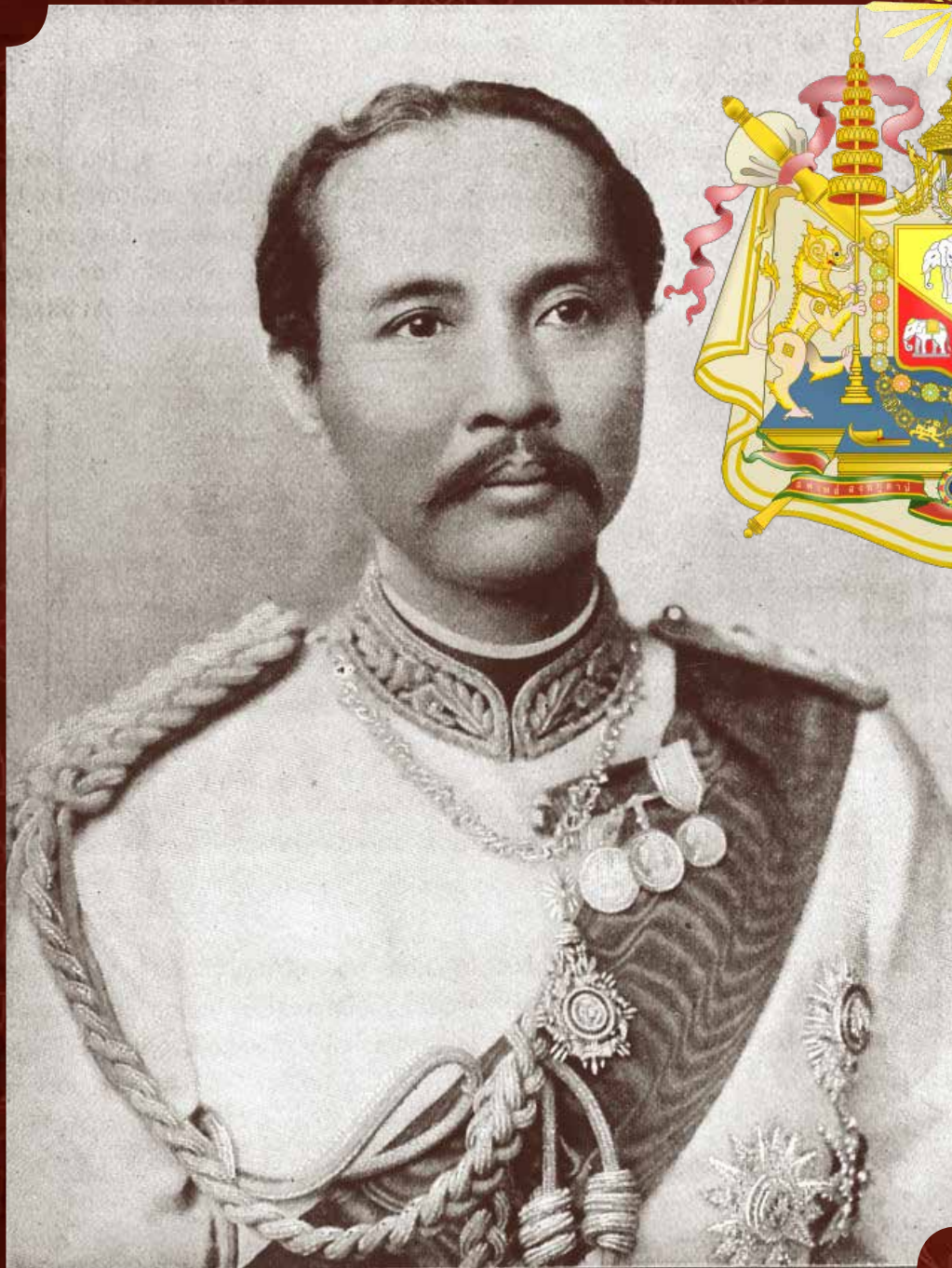
In the very beginning cats imported from Siam were not used in breeding program. Documented history of breeding Siamese cats in Europe begins in 1884, with a pair of cats named Pho and Mia. According to the widely accepted story, those two cats were given to the British consul in Bangkok, Edward Blencowe Gould, by the King of Siam himself, Rama V. Cats were a farewell gift.

These pointed cats were favorite pets of the royal family and legend says that they were kept exclusively, with a great care, in the King's palace. The

cats were the guardians of temples too, and it was considered to be a great honor to give someone a cat as a gift. Those days, cats were sacred in Siam. Allegedly, the people from Siam believed that cats were a resting place for the souls - the cats will receive the souls of the owners at death.

King Rama V also gave a pair of cats to French diplomat August Pavie in 1885. A few years earlier another Siamese cat was sent to wife of American president but this cat did not survive.





**King
Chulalongkorn
- Rama V**

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King Rama V also gave a pair of cats to French diplomat August Pavie in 1885.



In 1904 King Rama V visited the Russian Empire and he brought a Royal Siamese cat, as a present for the princess, a daughter of the Emperor Nicholas II of Russia.

NOTE: There is some suspicion that the King of Siam himself was giving cats as the Royal gifts to foreigners, and it is a only popular belief, because there is no recorded evidence (at least for the most of cases). Anyway, some other members of the Palace could have done it in the King's name.



**King Chulalongkorn Rama V
and Emperor Nicholas II of Russia**

Soon after Mr. Gould brought the Siamese cats to Britain, they became instantly popular because of distinctive marks, cleverness and dog-like behavior. Some rude comments were heard too, such as „an unnatural nightmare of a cat” but, fortunately, most people were impressed. British illustrator Harrison Weir, who is known as the father of cat fancy, in his book „Our Cats and All About Them“ from 1889 wrote: „Among the beautiful varieties of the domestic cat brought into notice by the cat shows, none deserves more attention than The Royal Cat of Siam”.

Mr. Harrison Weir wrote the first Siamese breed standard in 1892. Shortly after, in the year of 1902, the first Siamese Cat Club was founded by enthusiastic admirers of the breed.

In their early days in Britain, all cats coming out of Thailand were called “Siamese”, regardless of color. Two types of those cats were the most prominent. The cream colored body with sharp defined points and notable blue eyes was called “**Royal Cat of Siam**” or “**Palace cat**”, reflecting the legend that they were kept only in royal palace.

And the other type was called “**Temple Cat**”, also known as “**Chocolate Cat of Siam**”, with deep brown body and hardly visible points.

The Siamese Cat Club was encouraging breeders to distinct breeding of Royal cat and the Chocolate cat of Siam.





**The Royal
Cat of Siam**



**The
Chocolate
Cat of Siam**



**British illustrator Harrison
Weir, who is known as the
father of cat fancy, wrote the
first Siamese breed standard
in 1892.**

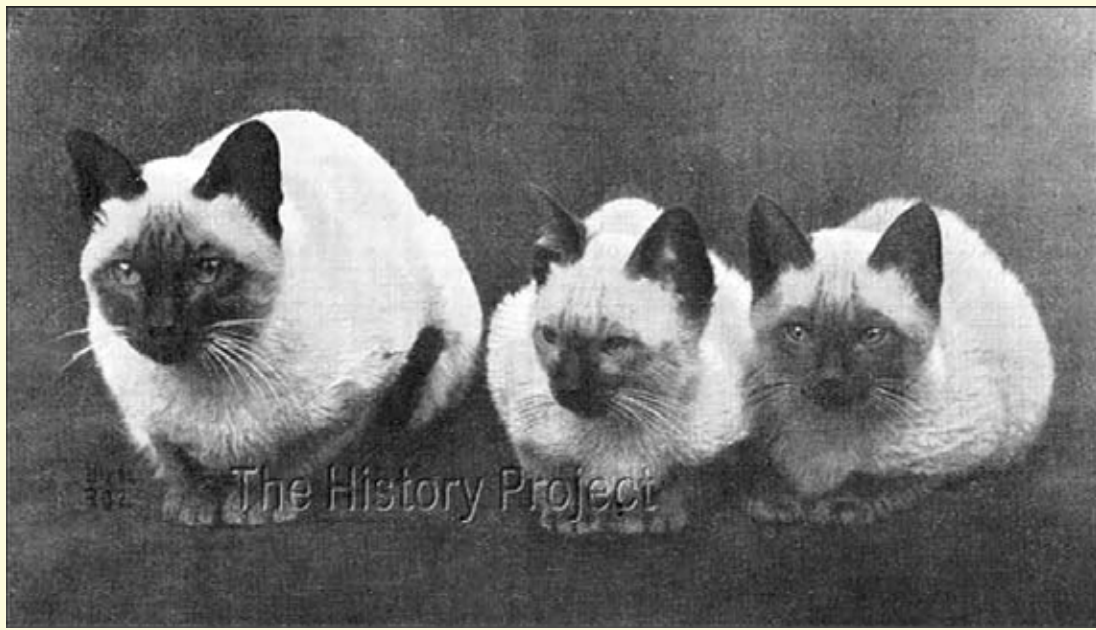
Pedigreed Siamese cats of today

Those days the British were beginning to hold cat shows regularly and develop standards for breeding pedigree cats. The Brits were also the first to become fascinated by Siamese cats in a big way, and they constantly traveled to Siam to obtain and import them into UK. It was not long before Siamese cats were a small but persistent part of the cat fancy scene. According to Milo Denlinger's book "The Complete Siamese Cat" from 1952, all pedigreed Siamese cats of today descended from about eleven cats that were

imported into England from Siam in the beginning in the 1880s. Pho and Mia, king Rama's gift we mentioned before, are among them. Their owner was Lilian Jane Veley (Gould)*, the sister of British Consul in Bangkok.

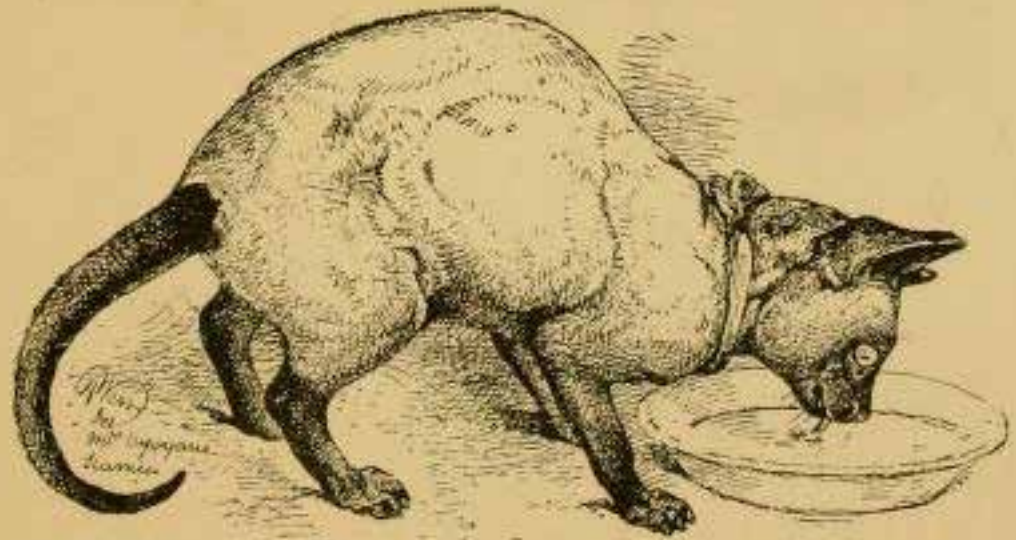
***Lilian Jane Veley (Gould) was a British biologist mainly known for her studies of microorganisms in liquor. She was one of the first women admitted to the Linnean Society of London and one of the first European breeders of Siamese cats.**





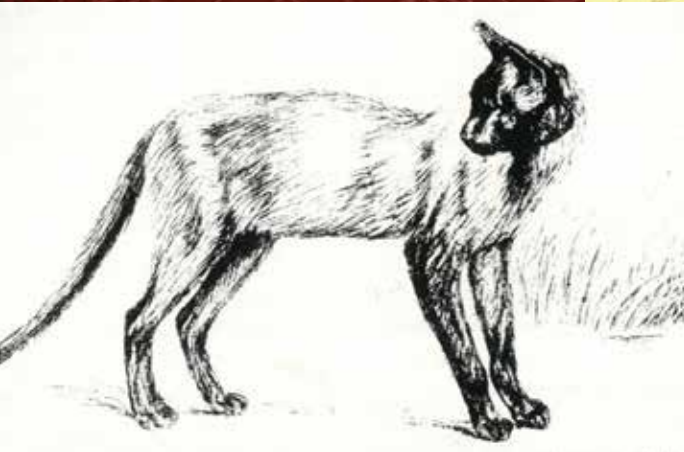
**Pho
and Mia
offsprings**

**Mrs. Vivian's Royal Cat of
Siam, Prize-winner;
illustration by Harrison
Weir, from „Our Cats and All
About Them“**

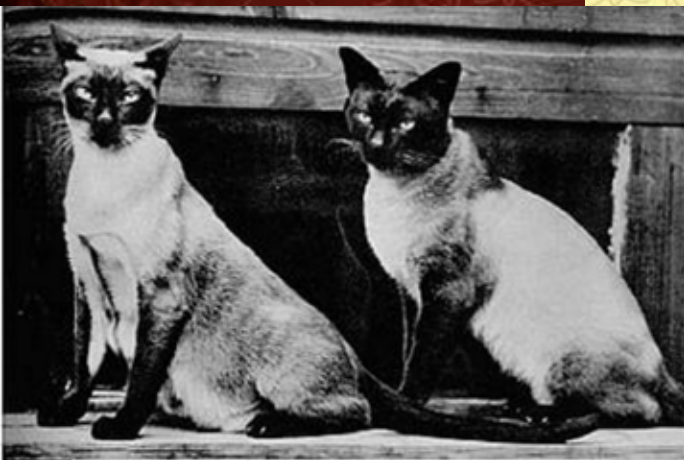




**Goblin,
born 1888
owner the
Duchess of
Bedford**



**Siamese cat
from Dresden
Zoo Drawing
by B. Dittrich,
1895**

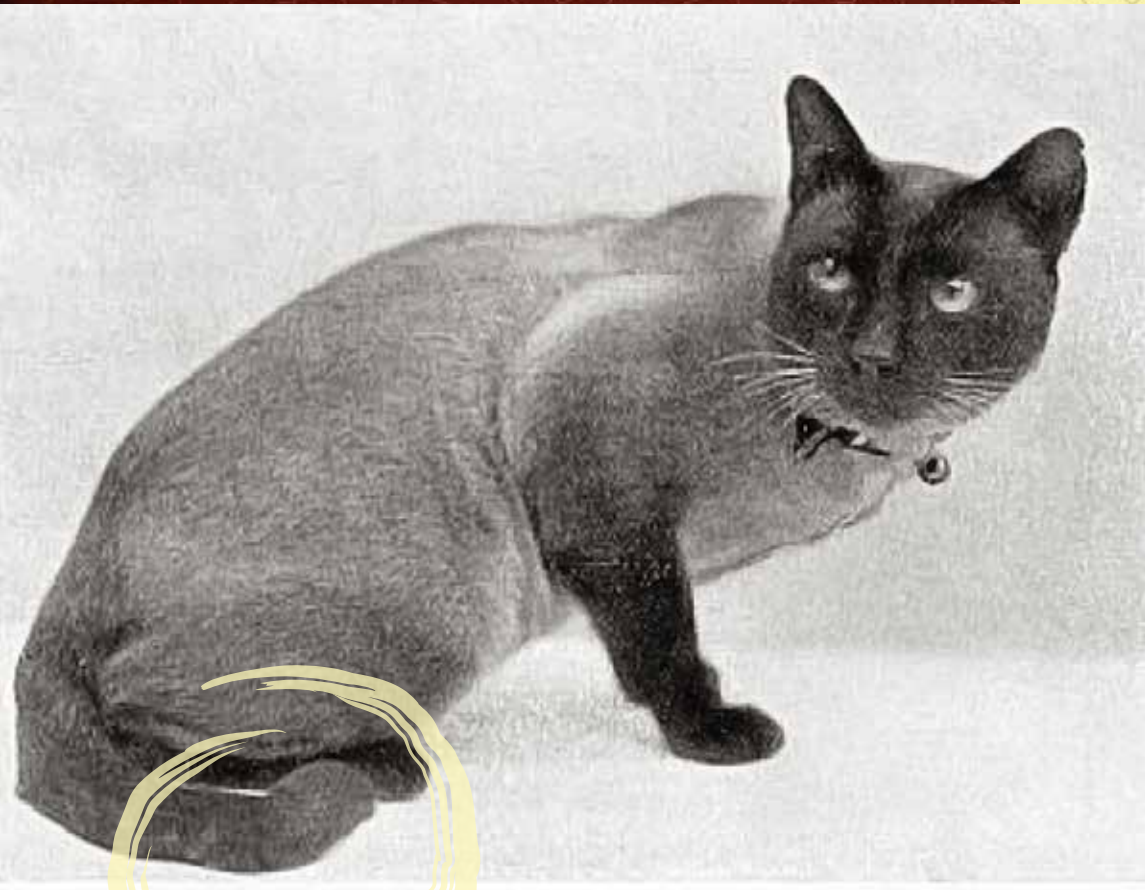


**Pair of imported
Siamese cats,
in 1930s:
Oriental Minoo
Pinklepurr &
Oriental Nai
Tabhi**

Variability in appearance

Photos and illustrations from the first decades of Royal Siamese cats reveal that they were more robust and had more rounded, wedge-shaped heads than today's show-style Siamese. This early Siamese were variable in appearance.

Some of them were rounder and more robust than others, some were more elegant than others, but all had longer body and “wedgier” head than the cobby British Shorthairs and Persians of that time and of today. This is probably why the father of cat fancy, Harrison Weir, in a Siamese breed standard from 1892 describes them as “marten-faced, Oriental type of cat, distinctly different from the cobby, round British cats”.



**Mrs. Robinson's
Champion
Wankee**

Here is the Siamese superstar from that period – Wankee, the first official Champion of the world in his variety. He was imported by Mrs. Robinson. In „The Book of The Cat“, by Mrs. Frances Simpson from 1903, records that Wankee was bred in Hong Kong and his mother, named Nims, was a stolen palace kitten. Wankee was born in September 1895 and was six months old when he arrived in England. In the same book we can find this:

“Champion Wankee won over thirty prizes, but was never shown until June 1898, therefore losing the time in which most Siamese cats gain their honors - namely, between six months and two years, when they are pale in color of coat.”

Kink of the tail



**Siamese of
nowadays with
kink of the tail**

„The Book of The Cat“ also reveals one important issue – kink on the tail, which could often be found on cats imported from Siam. We read the following: “A point on which the Siamese fancy is divided, is whether the ideal cat should have a kink in the tail or not. The Club remains neutral. Champion Wankee has a decided kink, looking in fact, as though the tail had been caught in a door in his early youth“.

On the other hand, Miss Forestier-Walker, owner and breeder of many famous Siamese cats and the judge of the Siamese, in the same book says:

“The tails are sometimes straight, which is not a fault; but a knot or kink in the tail is a peculiarity of the breed and therefore desirable. In England it has been asserted that this is a defect, but in Siam it is highly prized... In the East cat with a kinked tail fetches a higher price”.

There is one nice legend of the Siamese kink of the tail. The origin of that legend is unknown, maybe the legend comes from the cat's homeland, and maybe it was made up by western breeders. The legend says that when Princess of the Royal Court went for

a swim, she used a tail of her beloved cat as a ring holder. The devoted cat could bend the tip of it's tail and securely hold the rings. Over time cat's tail had stiffened permanently, and all Siamese cats from then on were born with a kink in the tail.



Let's back to the facts again!

Here is a further description of Siamese breed beginnings, from Mrs. Robinson, Wankee owner and Siamese judge. In „The Book of the Cat“, she says:

“Of the Royals there seem to be two types in England. The first, with rather a small, long headed cat, with glossy, close lying coat and deep blue eyes and with a decided tendency to darken with age - it is generally the imported cat or having imported parents. The other is a larger cat, with rounder head, a much thicker,

longer and less close lying coat, and the eyes a paler blue. These cats do not darken as much or as soon as the other type, and have generally been bred for several generations in England”.

Let’s take a look on Tiam O’Shian IV, another early Siamese Superstar. This cat did not have the kinked tail. He was never to become a champion, but was often described as „the best Siamese male in England“.



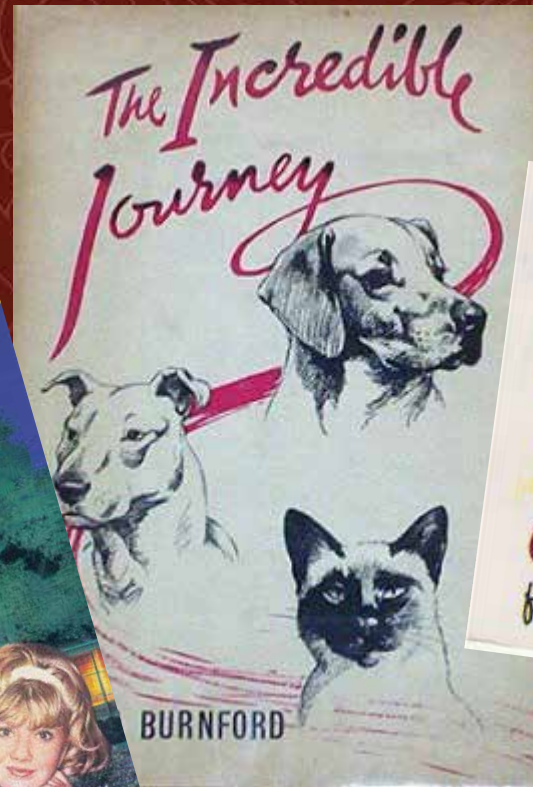


Tiam O'Shian IV, born August 1899, described as „the best Siamese male in England“.



One Mrs. Fleitman and five of her Siamese Cats in Paris, 1930 New York cat owner that took the first place at the International Cat Club Show

The Siamese-mania



The Siamese breed at the end of the 19th century was spread all over the Western world. As mentioned before, the first Siamese cats came to France in 1885. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, Siamese cats were imported into North America from Britain, France, Japan and Siam. In April 1909, The Siamese Cat Society of America was founded and the first standard for the Siamese Cat was approved. In Germany, first catteries were registered by the end of 1920s. The Siamese-mania was growing quickly and it affected the whole world. During the 1950s and 1960s the breed's popularity reached its peak

and Siamese cats appeared in movies or cartoons such as “Bell, Book and Candle”, “That Darn Cat”, “Incredible Journey”, and of course “Lady and the Tramp”, making the Siamese breed ever more famous.



Scene from famous cartoon “Lady and the Tramp”

Judging from numerous historic photos, the development of the breed towards a more extreme Oriental type started sometime after 1950. It started in America (maybe the characters from Disney's „Lady and the Tramp” started this trend?!) The written standards didn't change, but their interpretation did. And in 1966 a new preamble to the CFA breed standard was written. This 1966 preamble favored a more extreme type of Siamese. In the “All About Siamese”, a book by Barbara Burns (from 1993), states that the new role model for the

Siamese breeders was the elegant line of the cheetahs. At this time the Siamese breeders felt like the artists, trying to create a new work of art. It was the beginning of domination the ultra-oriental, modern type of Siamese at the cat shows.

Over time a more extreme body type became apparent. By the mid-1980s, cats of the original style had almost disappeared from cat shows.



CHANGING OF PREFERRED SIAMESE TYPE OVER DECADES



Duen Ngai, Po and
Mia progeny, 1885



Typical show specimens, 1900-1910s



Champion Prestwick
Perak, female, 1920s

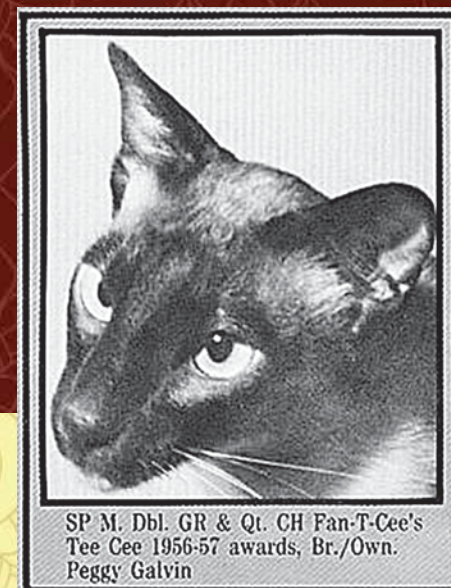
CHANGING OF PREFERRED SIAMESE TYPE OVER DECADES



Bouddah, 1930s



Afka Khan and Champion Clonlost YoYo, 1940s



CH Fan-T-Cee's Tee Cee, 1950s

CHANGING OF PREFERRED SIAMESE TYPE OVER DECADES



1960s



1970s



1980s



Nowadays

The Thai cats



VS



”” In 1980's the old cats had the completely new look, but it was not appreciated by everybody.

In 1980's the old cats had the completely new look, but it was not appreciated by everybody. A lot of people - breeders, fans or potential buyers preferred a moderate Siamese from the past, similar to Wichienmaat - ancient native pointed cat of Thailand. So the breeders from North America and Europe, especially those from England and Germany, united for the common task to return to the original appearance of breed.

The new-old cats were named Old-Style Siamese, Traditional, Original, Primary or Classic Siamese. This pro-

cess started at the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s. Of course, that was a very difficult task. It was apparent that „fashion“ trend in cat fancy did not penetrate much in eastern countries of Europe where they retained the early 20th-century Siamese look, and it was possible to revitalize the old look using old Siamese bloodlines. The cats from Balkan countries and from the East (ex-Soviet counties) were imported to the West for the task.



When enough breeding cats were collected from many sides, and after groups of breeders were formed, those cats were named Thai, after the modern name of the Kingdom of Siam - Thailand. This name was proposed by one lady whose energy and enthusiasm fueled this project. That lady is Mrs. Anneliese Hackmann, the founder and the president of WCF.

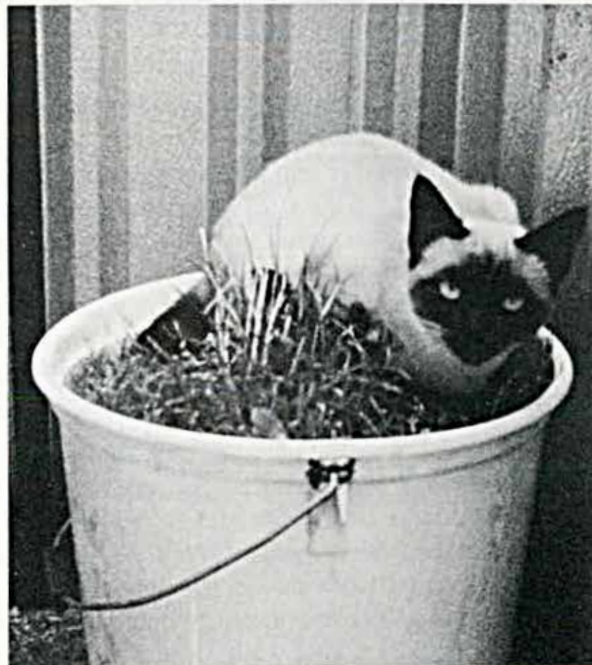
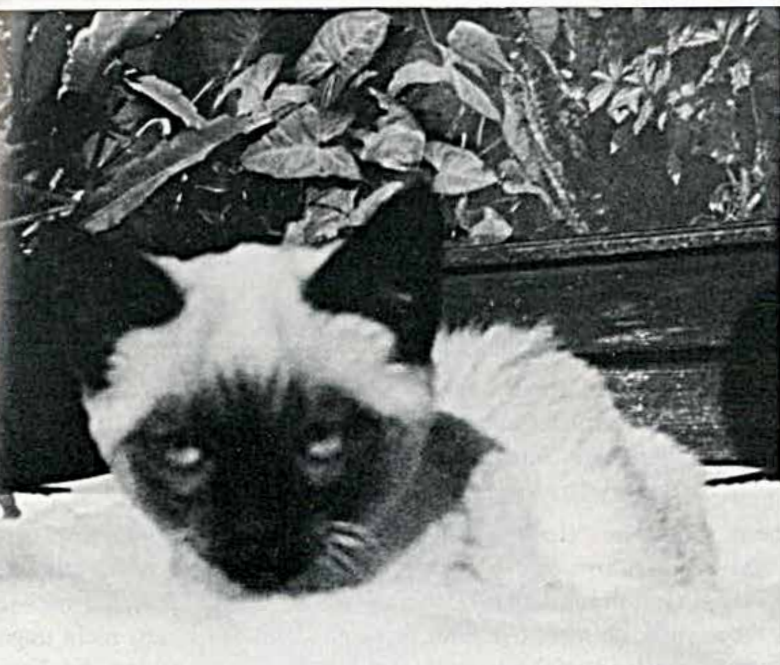


So the Thai breed appeared on cat fancy scene and although it could fit in an old standard, it was agreed that new the standard had to be defined. There were various proposals. At the end, proposals from Dr. Mrs. Rosemarie Wolf of FIFe and proposal from the United States were used for new standard. Soon there was a sufficient number of cats to be presented to WCF for new breed recognition. In 1990, the new-old breed got the championship status in World Cat Federation.

*Mrs. Anneliese Hackmann,
the founder and the president of WCF*



Lilly und Felix
Thai sealpoint (TH24)



**Thai cats in German cat
magazine "Katzen-Echo",
the end of 1980s**

Unfortunately, not all breeders respected breed standards strictly. In order to obtain the cobbler look or to quickly achieve desired old style Siamese look, they were out-crossing Siamese with non-oriental cats, for instance British and the pedigrees had many unknown ancestors. That was a wrong way, certainly.

Let's make a small digression here. Similar out-crossings already took place in the early days of Siamese in the West, when breeders tried to breed more durable cats, cats that would fit better in British climate. The first Wichienmaat imports in the West were delicate, only adjusted to tropical conditions in South-East Asia. Maybe the words of Mrs. Robinson, the owner of Champion Wnkee, reveal exactly that: "... the other (type) – she says – is a larger cat, with rounder head, a much thicker, longer and less close lying coat, and the eyes a paler blue. These cats do not darken as much or

as soon as the other type, and have generally been bred for several generations in England."

However, due to the good work of dedicated breeders, from 1990 to 2006 the Thai breed became well established in Europe. At the beginning of the new millennium the breeders started importing Wichienmaat cats from Thailand, in order to enlarge gene pool for the breed. American and European Thai breeders worked together, cooperatively sharing the bloodlines. After long journey the breeders have managed their goals and the rise of the new-old breed was simply unstoppable. At the World Cat Congress 2005 in Dortmund, nearly 40 Thai cats were present in the show hall. In 2007, TICA granted Preliminary New Breed status to the Thai, and two years later it was promoted to Advanced New Breed. In the 2015 FIFe accepted Thai as a Preliminary recognized breed.



It has to be mentioned that the standards are slightly different from one organization to another, but all standards are based on the appearance of Wichienmaat, the native cat from Thailand.

World Cat Show Stuttgart 2014

Best Supreme



© Silvia Pampallena - Onlyforpets



WCF and TICA preferred Thai type



**SAMUT KHOI
- Thai folding
book with
12 folios,
which open
from top to
bottom Central
Thailand, 19th
century (The
British Library)**

Let's go back once again to the past...

Long before the Western world has met Royal Cats from the Kingdom of Siam, several cat varieties were described and illustrated in the *Samut Khoi*, the old manuscripts, in the form of folded book. In 19th century in Siam, there was a tradition of producing treatises (manuscripts) on animals that played important roles at the royal court and in monasteries. Topics of the manuscripts varied from the elephants to birds, horses, cats...

One of them was “**Tamra Maew**” - it was a collection of ancient poems about cats. The oldest poems were as much as 600 years old. Those manuscripts have been copied and re-illustrated many times over and over, and they are different editions of the same original document which was lost somewhere in time.

The “**Tamra Meow**” describes 23 different kinds of cats – 17 that bring good luck and 6 that bring bad. Each was said to be an omen for a different blessing or curse. There was a strong belief that certain types of cats could bring good luck, prosperity, or health to the owner. Some of described cats were reserved for the royal family. Certain cats also were believed to be the “keepers” of Buddhist temples, which resulted in these cats being closely guarded and highly revered. In England of the 19th century, with cats of Siam also came a legend – the belief that light-colored Wichiemmaat cats represent silver, and the dark cats with yellow eyes represent gold, so the possessors of both will always have plenty.



In those old manuscripts we can easily spot Wichienmaat cats, the ancestors of today's Siamese and Thai cats.



แมวแก้วมงคลเชษ • นอพงเสดงแหงนของ
ทงนอพงวากู ทงงตั้งทงตบตบคอกตต

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**WICHIEENMAAT CAT, ILLUSTRATION FROM SAMUT KHOI,
19TH CENTURY (THE BRITISH LIBRARY)**

And on other illustrations we can spot the cat that represents the gold - the rich brown, self-colored chocolate-brown cat. This type is called Tong Daeng or Suphlalak, and it is the rarest type of all native cats in Thailand.



**SUPHLALAK CAT, ILLUSTRATION FROM SAMUT KHOI,
19TH CENTURY (THE BRITISH LIBRARY)**

In the Tamra Meow, the Suphalak color is poetically described as “color of copper glinting”, “claws and fur an unmixed red” and “color of red light all over” (translations by Martin Clutterbuck). Nowadays, the standard says: “Suphalak cats are brown tinged with red or a rust color, as tamarind seeds, or light brown; the color is consistent over the whole body, including legs, ears, face and tail”.

Between the early imported cats from Siam, together with Royal Siamese and Temple Siamese, there were described “solid rich brown body color Siamese cats with yellow eyes”. As mentioned before, at that time every cat out of Thailand was called ‘Siamese’, regardless of color. In Harrison Weir’s book „Our Cats

and All About Them“ from 1889 and in Frances Simpson’s „The Book of The Cat“ from 1903 there are references of one Mr. Young of Harrogate, who had a chocolate cat with yellow eyes. In “The Book of The Cat”, on page 234, there is also an interesting description:

„The best and most definitely colored AOC* I ever saw was Mrs. Davies’ Sin Li, a deep self colored chocolate-brown cat. He was supposed to be one of three Swiss Mountain cats imported to this country, and he was a most handsome and interesting animal. Unfortunately, he died young, leaving no progeny“.

*AOC is an acronym of “Any Other Color”, a color designation of cats that are of a color for which no class is provided.





**THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTO OF
CHOCOLATE COLOURED CAT
- NETHERLAND MA**

This “chocolate colored cat with the same color all over” was exhibited in 1894 as Swiss Mountain Cat. The breeder (owner) of this cat was one Mrs. Sutherland who lived among the Alps. The Encyclopedia Britannica in 11th edition makes mention of a “wholly chocolate colored strain of Siamese.” We can trace a few more solid chocolate cats from Thailand in the first years of cat fancy history in the West: Netherland Ma, Granny Grumps, Master Timkey Brown, Zetland Wanzies. About ‘Zetland Wanzies’, Mrs. Robinson, owner and breeder of many famous Siamese cats and the judge of the Siamese, consider them more likely to be a freak than a distinct variety, she said.

The legend that was mentioned before, about light cats of silver and dark cats of gold, gave an idea to Miss Forestier Walker „that originally the eyes of the pure chocolate cat were yellow, and that the present variety (with blue-green or aqua eyes) are outcrossings with the Royal Cat.”

However, chocolate color cats with yellow eyes vanished in the West, in the 1920s. Breeders were discouraged when the Siamese Cat Club ruled that only blue-eyed Royal Siamese Cats were acceptable for registration.



SUPHALAK CAT NOWADAYS

Suphalak cat could be considered as the natural equivalent of the Havana Brown breed and it is certainly one of foundations of Burmese and Tonkinese breed.



THE HAVANA BROWN CAT

The Khao Manee



Cat Mural in old Thai temple of Wat Thong Noppakhun



THE TAMRA MAEW KHAO PLORT

**STAMP FROM
THAILAND, WITH
ODD EYED WHITE
NATIVE CAT**



Another cat from Thailand intrigues the West world nowadays - the solid white cat, named Khao Manee, which means white jewel (white gem). It is a new breed in North America and Europe, but it is traditional in its country of origin.

In “Tamra Meow”, among the good omen cats there is a white cat called Khao Plort (meaning: all white) and it is described like this: “they shine like crystal, their eyes are like diamonds and they bring long life, prosperity in work, material wealth and happiness”. In another description their eyes are compared with “clear mercury” which is a poetic way of describing the cold tint of their pale eyes. Khao Manee cats of today can have blue, green, yellow or odd eyes on heart-shaped face with high cheekbones. The coat is like of other cats from Thailand - short, smooth, close-lying. They are muscular, athletic cats of moderate foreign type.

We know that first Kao Manee ever to leave the Thailand soil was in June 1999. The story about those cats shook the cat fancy history. The twist in official history happened! It seems that Royal Siamese cat, the Wichienmaat, were not the only Royal cats in Kingdom of Siam. It turned out that the true Royal Cats of old Siam were Khao Manee! Allegedly King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) owned 9 of those. The story continues, claiming that those cats were strictly protected and could be owned exclusively by the Royal head. Was that the reason why king Rama V gave a Wichienmaat to the British Consul (and to the other foreign diplomats)? Or the foreigners

just liked more the unusual pointed cats from the Palace instead of solid white which could be seen in Europe?

The Khao Manee fans firmly believe that this story, about the true Royal cats, may have a confirmation in the book “Siamese Cats“ by Sydney W. France from the middle of XX century. In 1948 (or 1949) “Cats and Kittens” magazine, of which Sydney France was editor than, published a letter from Mr. Garry of Minehead, Somerset. This Mr. Garry had lived in Borneo and he wrote:



“When I was in Siam in 1930, I was told that there were two distinct types of Siamese cats [...]. The first is the one we see in England, but I think its points are a shade different, [chocolate] brown instead of seal. The second, which was said to be peculiar to the Royal family and palaces, had the body colour of the first - but not the points; and hazel eyes. Having been a contemporary at Eton with the then King, I got a special permit to see the Bangkok Palace more thoroughly than the usual tourist does, and I saw one

or two of these “Royal” cats, whose appearance was (to the best of my recollection after so long) as I have described. At that time, the export of the first type, except neuter ones, was absolutely forbidden, owing to the fear that they might become extinct in Siam, because so many had been exported. The second type was absolutely unobtainable, far less exportable, for it was not to be seen outside the royal palaces.”





SRIPIA, THE FIRST KHAO MANEE CAT EXPORTED FROM THAILAND TO THE WEST, IN JUNE 1999.



KHAO MANEE CAT IN THE WEST

Khao Manee cats, as mentioned before, started their journey in the West in June 1999. In 2010 the breed got “exhibition only” status in GCCF and from 2015 the Khao Manee breed was advanced to Championship level in TICA.

After spices, silk, jewels and other goods from the far East which fascinated the West, throughout the centuries, that history is repeating. These days a “White Jewel” cat is slowly conquering the cat fancy of West!



I would like to finish this presentation with one personal belief. I have an impression that the primary goal of felineology and even of the cat fancy in the new millennium is not that much to create, but to preserve – to preserve what nature has created, to preserve it for the future and next generations!

Svetlana Lalović, Club Le PETit WCF, Serbia



Literature

- **Harrison Weir**, Our Cats and All About Them, 1889
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SPICES, SILK, JEWELS AND CATS

*On Wichienmaat, Siamese, Thai,
Suphalak and Khao Manee cats*



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Thank You!