

## THE HISTORY OF THE KORAT CATS



The earliest known picture of a Korat, or 'Si-Sawat', cat is to be found in the ancient book of paintings and verses, known as THE CAT-BOOK POEMS, in Bangkok's National Library. It is believed by the Fine Arts Dept., a Division of Thailand's Ministry of Education, to have been produced some time during the Ayudhya Period of Siamese History (1350-1767). Identity of the artist is lost. Cat, as well as dog and bird books, represent a cultural tradition in Siam (which became Thailand on June 24, 1939). Of the fifteen or so ancient MSS, in the National Library, nine contain pictures of cats



A high-ranking monk, Somdej Phra Buddhacharn Buddhasarmahathera, was commissioned by King Rama V (1869-1910) to copy "The Cat Book Poems" on a special Khoi paper. Known as the SMUD KHOI OF CATS, it hangs in a high glass case in the Minor Arts Room of Bangkok's National Museum. Books were folded, not bound as is a more recent version, known as THE BOOK OF THE CAT, also in the National Library, apparently a twentieth century version of the cats and their accompanying verses. This shows seventeen cats whose ownership brings good fortune and six with boding of the very reverse. Among the Good Luck cats is the KORAT.

A translation of the verses by Khun Prasit Sakhorn says: "The cat 'Maled' has a body colour like 'Doklao'. The hairs are smooth, with roots like clouds and tips like silver. The eyes shine like dewdrops on a lotus leaf". 'Maled' means seed. 'Dok' means flower, and 'lao' can be translated as 'lemon-grass', 'pampas grass', or 'reed blossom'. All of these are silvery and silky smooth, so are applicable to the Korat coat.

King Rama V is said to have named the breed when he remarked: 'what a pretty cat - where is it from?' and was told "KORAT". A Mr. Robins, of New York City, attested to their existence in that Province in 1906. It is said that their coloring protected them, among the granite areas of Pimai

District, from extinction in the constraint wars that raged between Siam and her neighbors.

Nowadays in Thailand, the Korats are generally referred to as the "SI-SAWAT" cats (see-sah-waht) and, of course, they are found in other provinces. 'SI' means color. SAWAT has several meanings, including good fortune or prosperity. Si-Sawat is also a compound Thai work meaning a mingled color of grey and light green. The seed (Maled) of the Look Sawat, a non-edible fruit that grows wild in Thailand is this mingled color, with a smooth, glossy shell. There's no changing the color of the breed. It can only ever be 'Si-Sawat'. Korats are silver-blu from birth until death; a cat of any other color is not a Korat.



## KORATS REACHED THE USA

"....When I first caught sight of the enormous, luminous green eyes of a Korat, I stood riveted to the spot. The eyes that captivated me peered out from the silvery blue, heart-shaped face of a little Korat female named Cedar Glen's Kami. She stood gazing down the aisle, an oval paw resting on the cage wire, her body quivering excitedly in the effort to concentrate. Shortly after that California show in 1964, I received my first Korat as a gift and established a registered cattery under the name "Si Sawat". I soon made contact with breeders in the United States and Thailand and obtained my first Korat breeding pair. My life with Korats had begun...."

The first American cattery to breed Korats was Cedar Glen, owned and operated by Jean L. Johnson. In 1959, Jean received two imported Korats, Nara and Darra, from a friend in Bangkok. The cats originally had been obtained from the celebrated Mahajaya cattery of Khunying Abhibal Rajamaitri, an illustrious breeder in Thai cat circles. Nara and Darra are the first Korats known to have been imported from Thailand for breeding purposes. Korats began attracting the attention of cat fanciers in the 1960's. Their numbers were few and they had no championship status in the shows.

By 1962, a female named Mahajaya Dok Rak of Gala, also bred by Mme. Rajamaitri, and a sturdy male from Cholburi, Nai Sri Sawat Miow of Gala, had been imported from Thailand by Gail Lankenau Woodward. Gertrude Gecking Sellars imported a single female, Me-Luk of Tru-Lu, bred by Colonel Chompoo Arthachinda. These became the foundation cats of the Korat breed in the United States.

In May 1965 the *KORAT CAT FANCIERS ASSOCIATION*, an unaffiliated breed society, was founded. A proposed standard was compiled from descriptions of their Korats sent in by the members. This standard was submitted to the U.S. and Canadian cat associations in October 1965, for their consideration and acceptance. In a few months, the Korat was recognized and the standard adopted by most of these bodies. The first time the Korat competed for honors in Championship classes was June 1966, an American Cat Association show, in King of Prussia, PA. We attribute this extraordinarily rapid acceptance of the Korats to their intrinsic beauty and the united effort of a dedicated group bound together by a shared love of a highly prized native cat, whose characteristics and traditions we all pledged ourselves to maintain.

The first Korat grand champions were imported cats or offspring of imported cats. They were the first of a long list of Korats to make show history. A group of dedicated breeders, including Rosemarie Voelker, Rose Meldrum, Norma O'Neil and Helen Basford, keeps the history of the Korat up to date by maintaining lists of each cat's lineage. Each year, the group mails special "census forms" to owners and breeders. Because of the group's effort, we can trace the lines of our cats back to their beginnings. Paperwork about the Korat doesn't stop there. Imported Korats have more paperwork to prove their country of origin than most human travelers do!

Breeders insist on such documentation because if a cat cannot trace its lineage to Thailand, it is not a Korat. Recently the Thai government officially recognized the Korat as a national treasure, making importation of the cat difficult but not impossible. Our most recent arrival is a handsome male from the Chiangmai cattery of Professor and Mrs. Mali Rose. His owner here, Nancy Wanwong, had to overcome many obstacles to get Chiangmai Chup home to Florida!

*From "The good luck cat of Siam" and  
from "The Korat Story" written by [Daphne Negus](#)*



## KORAT RECOGNITION IN THE USA

As KCFA secretary, the presentations I made in 1965 to each Board Member, set out the names and dates of each show and the name of each judge who had handled our cats, the extent of our Korat population, our proposed standard, the names and addresses of our breeder/owners, and some of our information sheets, accompanied by a letter of formal request for recognition of the Korat breed, and the lovely photo of Mali of Si Sawat standing between two plaster elephants that my husband took.

With Bertha Nuttall's assistance, I then compiled a further presentation and Formal Request for acceptance, updating and adding to our information on places, dates and judges where Korats had been shown, number of Korat breeders and their stock in each Region, including Alaska and Japan, the KCFA Officers and Board, Mali's photograph, sample of pedigree of a Thai-born Korat, and sample of a pedigree of a 4th generation American-born Korat, history and background, and I included proof of the real aims of the private listing, set up by Mrs. Robert A. Clark, to show origin of our Korats in Thailand. The way seemed open to our longed-for acceptance. At the ACA Annual Meeting in March 1966, Miss Marie E. Purdy, a Korat breeder who had been active in CFA for many years, moved that the Korat cat be accepted, and the motion carried with favorable recommendation.

We were producing litters of fine, all silver blue kittens. Inquiries were coming in from other parts of the world. We had already sent a pair of Korats to South Africa. Mrs. Clark attended the August meeting, taking with her

the Preliminary Breeding Chart she had made for the Korats. In future years, this would be of tremendous interest - as it showed the first imports and their descendants, and the added imports - with the symbols to signify the silver blue and the outcross, the males and the females. Other business precluded discussion of the Korats at the August meeting.

Then came the meeting of August, 1966. It was not quite a year since we had put in our first request for recognition. Mrs. John Bloem moved that the Korat be accepted for championship competition as an Established Hybrid Breed. Motion carried. 11 Yes 4 No. Mrs. Louise Sample, CFA President, wrote us, congratulation us with "Best Wishes to you all, and I shall look forward to that glorious day when a Korat goes Best Cat in Show". I didn't dream mine would be the female first so honored! The joy for our silver Korats was somewhat tarnished at the news that they were to be registered as, and classed as, an Established Hybrid Breed, a comparatively new classification for which Jane Martinke was a prime mover. We were developing what was (still is) possibly the only natural breed being bred in the western world as well as in its native Thailand in its ancient, natural form!

### Early Champions

In 1965-66, for the first time, Korats were included in the All-American lists. So honored were: Cedar Glen's Pichit of Si Sawat and Mali of Si Sawat, both belonging to me. Cedar Glen's Little Kay of Arcadia, who belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Ray Gardner. Mrs. Paul L. Gecking's (Mrs. Sellar's) Tru-Lu's Thai Koratie; Cedar Glen's Sukisan of Larlin, Mrs. Alayne Appel; and Cedar Glen's Kasem of Ab-Hi-Ko, Mrs. Bertha M. Nuttall.

Many of our Korats made CFA Championships. Among them were: Ch. Mali of Si Sawat (mine), Ch. Cedar Glen's DiDi (Mrs. Jean Johnson) Ch. Larlin's Sukisari (Mrs. Alayne Appel), Ch. Si Sawat's Maliwan of 3R's (Mrs. Marguerite Swift), Ch. Larlin's Kasuki of Margus and Ch. Leck of Margus (Mrs. Margery S. Hoff), Ch. Tru-Lu's Thai Timia (Mrs. Trudy Sellars), Ch & Int. Ch. Cedar Glan's Rajada (Mrs. R.D. Cooper and Mrs. J. Glen Brown, Canada), Ch. Cedar Glen's Kasem of Ab-Hi-Ko (Mrs. Bertha M. Nuttall).

### First Grands

The world's first male Grand Champion was born in Bangkok in 1965 bred by Khun Luang Paripon Pochanapisuti, a former judge and professor at law in Bangkok, the cat was named McPaws Miow Thai. He was owned by Mr. P.L. McMillen of Detroit, MI. and had been purchased on April 30, 1966. He was brought to America by Mr. McMillen's soldier son and shown extensively. Miow Thai was history's first male Grand Champion Korat.

A Thai-born female Saraphi Ra' (imp.) of Jalna, was dam of the world's first two Korat Grands. Bred by Dr. Kamol and owned by Robert & Jean Clark, New Jersey. Jalna's Ming-Ti of Chi'Un Ch'i was the first male Korat Grand Champion in CFA. First female to win a Grand Championship was Malaid's Doklao Noi of Si Sawat (imp.) owned by Richard Negus. Miss Catherine Barclay, Boulder, Colorado owned the fifth Korat Grand, Cedar Glen's Chalerm of Si-K'Iu. He was the world's first Neuter Grand Champion.

*Daphne Negus  
for a CFA Year Book*



## KORATS RECOGNITION IN EUROPE

In 1974 Elfi Kleive and her family returned from Thailand bringing Europe's first Korats with them. When Elfi Kleive came to Norway and tried to register her Korats, she was very surprised to learn that the Korat was not yet recognized as a breed by FIFe. She decided to change that. But finding a cat-club that would help in this progress was not so easy. Finally, NRR (Norske Katteklubbens Riksforbund, the Norwegian cat club organization under FIFe) decided to help.

The reason that the Korat was not yet recognized by FIFe was "we have enough blue cats already". The fact that the Korat is an old original breed, which has been allowed to stay unchanged for several hundreds of years in its home country did not seem to be important.

In 1977 a proposal for recognizing the Korat was put to NRR's Annual General Meeting so NRR could put it to FIFe. NRR did not react to this proposal.

It was used for FIFe to automatically approve all breeds which were approved by GCCF (the British cat club association stands alone, but is recognized by FIFe and cooperates to some extent). In 1976 the Korat was approved by GCCF with the colour-code 34, without certificate status - we were extremely pleased. But it was not to be that easy. FIFe refused, because the GCCF president declared at the GCCF Annual General Meeting that it had been a mistake!

The year after we reset the proposal to FIFe. They said no!

In the mean time, the number of Korats was increasing, Elfi Kleive was breeding her original Thai imports and a new stud had been imported. Elfi Kleive talked to everybody she could think of, defending the Korat's right to be recognized as a breed. She was invited to give a speech about the Korat. She and another breeder made this speech, bringing with them several cats.

In the winter 1978/79, Elfi Kleive was informed that in order to recognize new breeds, FIFe demands judgements and recommendations from 10 different judges. So the work began. All available Korats were shown at all possible shows.

Spring 1979, Elfi Kleive managed to gather 32 Korats at one show! Norge Rundt (a TV show) transmitted from the show. The papers even reported from the show. All the shorthair judges present at the show were asked to sign a petition recommending the Korat be recognized, which they were all willing to do.

Fall 1980, there was a show in Sandefjord (Elfi Kleive's home town). Anneliese Hackmann (Vice-President of 1.DEKzV in Germany, judge and chairperson of FIFe committee of judges) was invited specially to judge the Korats, and she did so for hours. 38 Korats were shown at this occasion. Anneliese Hackmann informed Elfi that she and the others were following the wrong procedure for getting a new breed approved. A new breed is to be presented to FIFe's Committee of Judges. The work for the Korat had to start all over again.

The Korat was offered to try again at a show in the fall of 1981. Four important judges accepted the invitation to the show and all available Korats were again mobilized. An attractive PR-booth was also arranged. Saturday morning, 28 Korats and their rather nervous owners were assembled. The cats were judged endlessly. All the Committee members had to see and handle them. On top of all that, Dr. Martin (a German judge and a member of FIFe's Committee of Judges) ran around and took photographss of all the blue cats at the show.

The judges decided against the Korat, again!

In November 1981, the Korat gang traveled to Vienna to visit FIFe's Annual General Meeting. The day before the Annual General Meeting, the Committee of Judges had a long debate about approving the Korat. In the end, they were asked to take a vote - 5 voted in favour and 4 against! The Korat gang celebrated their decision immensely! After the gala dinner, Dr. Martin invited them to a slide-show of 'blue cats' - all the Korat pictures he had taken during the show were there! They were given a piece of paper and a pencil each and were to write down which cats they saw on the slides as fast as possible, because he was of the opinion that no judge was able to tell the difference between a Korat and any other blue cat just by a quick glance. Of course, most of them present managed the test. The average score was about 32 right out of 35!

The vote and the Annual General Meeting the next day gave the same result. The Korat was approved, without certificate status, but that was normal at the time. The Korat gang was exstatic!

Now the preliminary work for the Korat had succeeded. Now it was time to work with the Korat, so the judges could be presented with the best specimens possible and learn to see what to expect from a good Korat.

New studs were imported and bred. The number of Korats increased to about 100 cats.

In 1983 the Korat was awarded Champion-status. After a while the first Korat champion was celebrated. All the work had been worth while. The Korat has since been awarded general certificate status like all other breeds. In 1992, there were 12 European Champions/Premiers.

There are still a few of the old fighters and breeders left. New ones are becoming interested in other parts of Europe. There are still a few FIFe-breeders in Norway and Sweden a few in Finland, a few in Germany, one in

Italy and one in Denmark. There may be other breeders in Europe, but they are not members of FIFe.

*This article has been written by [Elfi Kleive](#)  
and translated to [Camilla Baird](#)*

