A Drunken Bee: Sunthorn Phu And The Buddhist Landscapes Of Early Bangkok

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Abstract
Although Sunthorn Phu (1786-1855) is considered the ‘Shakespeare of Thailand,’ he is still relatively unknown outside of his home country and, although he spent almost twenty years as an ordained monk, is virtually never thought of as a poet who has anything to do with Buddhism. This study takes Phu's nirat, a classical genre of Thai journeying poetry, as a new source for excavating Thai Buddhism of the early nineteenth-century. It argues that we must expand the bounds of what we consider Buddhist literature to include popular vernacular literature such as that of Sunthorn Phu. Making use of theoretical approaches to interpreting landscape such as that of Tim Ingold and Edward Casey amongst others, this study argues for understanding Phu's poetry as a record of a particular way of seeing and engaging with the Buddhist landscape. Phu's nirat are taken in turn to explore particular sites - cities and rivers, Buddha footprints, temples and ruins and the forest and the ocean, respectively – in order to understand how Buddhist values inhered in and were thought through via the landscape itself. Examined in this way, a poem like Phu's Nirat to Golden Mountain Temple can be understood as a trenchant political critique which depicts early Bangkok as a Buddhist kingdom in dharmic decline. Similarly, Phu's nirat to the forests of Suphanburi can be understood as both a poetic treatise against practices of transformation such as alchemy as well as an oblique critique of a feudal system where one's karmic merit is largely determined at one's birth. Studying the nirat of Sunthorn Phu gives us a window onto the Buddhism of one particular time and place. It is Buddhism as an ongoing process of living, feeling and contesting within the bounded world of the landscape of early Bangkok.

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A DRUNKEN BEE: SUNTHORN PHU AND THE BUDDHIST LANDSCAPES OF EARLY BANGKOK

Paul Lewis McBain

A DISSERTATION

in

Religious Studies

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Steven Collins, early in my graduate career, served as an exemplar of a diligent but creative scholar and it is a source of regret that he will not be able to read this dissertation. The study would never have happened without the (often, in retrospect, unwarranted) trust and care of Justin McDaniel, whose innovative approach to the study of Buddhism was one that I was keen to follow and who was unfailingly enthusiastic and full of insight throughout the process. I would also like to thank Rita Copeland and Paul Copp who were willing to lend their theoretical and academic expertise to a subject which they or indeed hardly anyone outside of Thailand is familiar with. I would also like to thank Trent Walker for his comments and help with Pāli translation, as well as Joe Littler, Mark Bookman and Chris Baker for their comments and suggestions. I would like to thank my father for instilling in me a fascination for history and my grandmother a love of language. My time at the University of Pennsylvania afforded me stimulating conversation with Susanne Ryuyin Kerekes, Aditya Bhattacharjee, Martine Tchitchihe, Jae Hee Han, Gabriel Raebrun, Andrew Hudson and Jillian Stinchcomb amongst others. The advice and mentorship of Jolyon Thomas, Anthea Butler and Donovan Schaefer in the department of Religious Studies was at times pivotal. While researching in Bangkok, my work was made infinitely easier because of the existence of the excellent library and the help of the staff at the The Siam Society in Bangkok. A special note of thanks also has to go to Ajarn Pattama Theekaprasertkul at Silpakorn University, who helped with
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ABSTRACT

A DRUNKEN BEE: SUNTHORN PHU AND THE BUDDHIST LANDSCAPES OF EARLY BANGKOK

Paul Lewis McBain
Justin McDaniel

Although Sunthorn Phu (1786-1855) is considered the ‘Shakespeare of Thailand,’ he is still relatively unknown outside of his home country and, although he spent almost twenty years as an ordained monk, is virtually never thought of as a poet who has anything to do with Buddhism. This study takes Phu’s nirat, a classical genre of Thai journeying poetry, as a new source for excavating Thai Buddhism of the early nineteenth-century. It argues that we must expand the bounds of what we consider Buddhist literature to include popular vernacular literature such as that of Sunthorn Phu. Making use of theoretical approaches to interpreting landscape such as that of Tim Ingold and Edward Casey amongst others, this study argues for understanding Phu’s poetry as a record of a particular way of seeing and engaging with the Buddhist landscape. Phu’s nirat are taken in turn to explore particular sites - cities and rivers, Buddha footprints, temples and ruins and the forest and the ocean, respectively – in order to understand how Buddhist values inhered in and were thought through via the landscape itself. Examined in this way, a poem like Phu’s Nirat to Golden Mountain Temple can be understood as a trenchant political critique which depicts early Bangkok as a Buddhist kingdom in dharmic decline. Similarly, Phu’s nirat to the forests of Suphanburi can be understood as both a poetic treatise against practices of transformation such as alchemy as well as an oblique critique of a feudal system where
one’s karmic merit is largely determined at one’s birth. Studying the *nirat* of Sunthorn Phu gives us a window onto the Buddhism of one particular time and place. It is Buddhism as an ongoing process of living, feeling and contesting within the bounded world of the landscape of early Bangkok.
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INTRODUCTION

Sunthorn Phu (1786-1855) is at first glance perhaps an unlikely figure through which to understand Buddhism. He is now known as a drunk and a womanizer. He was, in his own words, a ‘lusty bee’ who could not help but long for the impossible, for those flowers that lie ‘at the foot of the spheres of our nearest heaven’. He was a monk for much of his life, but not a very good one. The bulk of his poems and epics would be hard to define as ‘Buddhist,’ more centering on mourning, love and loss than monastic discipline, meditation and non-self. He was also a great wanderer, a ‘lonely crow’ who moved between the political, imaginative and geographic landscapes of his time with a wit, originality and candor that more orthodox monks could never match.

Making a poet like Phu the object of focus can serve as a ‘little history’ which questions categorical presumptions in the study of Buddhism. Rather than see Siamese Buddhism of the nineteenth century as an offshoot of Sanskrit aesthetics, Pāli doctrine or a response to colonial threat, this study seeks to stay on the ground as much as possible. Or, more precisely, to stay close to the words of one who floated along the rivers and canals of early Bangkok. These poems and the poetic milieu from which they emerge give us one of the only individual-perspective windows into the landscape of nineteenth-century Siam and Siamese Buddhism, of how it smelled, sounded and felt, of what past lives and impermanence meant to a single navigating and imagining self.
This study argues that we must understand the nirat genre of poetic travelogues as ways of thinking, arguing and relating thought in a Buddhist landscape. This is, as I shall explore in this introduction, contrary to modern expectations of poetry as concerned with subjective experience. Rather than through felt tensions in his own person, Phu’s nirat use the temples, forests, cities and rivers of his environs as the homeland of his thought. We will see that politics, debates about proper Buddhist conduct, and the tension between merit and personal effort are all explored in Phu’s poem and those of his contemporaries through the landscape itself. By no means does Phu provide answers in his work to these questions, but it is precisely in the dialogue, the leaving open of tensions, that I argue we must place one important, affective strand of Buddhist thought.

A brief introduction to Buddhism in early Bangkok

The earliest Buddhist kingdoms began to appear in the region of modern-day Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Laos in the first centuries of the second millennium, in both northern Myanmar amongst the Mon and in Cambodia in Angkor. Particularly prominent in the history of Ayutthaya and Bangkok is the prior kingdom of Sukhothai, which flourished in the thirteenth century after it had broken away from the rule of Angkor to the south-east. A kingdom built around largescale Buddhist monuments, a semi-divine monarch who supported Buddhism as well as a strong belief in Pāli language
and Sri Lanka as the proper sources of Buddhism, Sukhothai was one of the clearest models for the later kingdoms of Ayutthaya and Bangkok. Ayutthaya, thought to have been founded in the fourteenth century though likely somewhat earlier, later subsumed Sukhothai as well as, in the sixteenth century, the important Buddhist kingdom of Lanna (Chiang Mai) in the north. For centuries, Buddhist kingdoms such as Ayutthaya, Pago in Burma and Luang Phra Bang in present-day Laos fought between one another for land and highly-regarded Buddha statues which, along with skilled craftsmen and elephants, were the chief spoils of war. Ayutthaya survived as the dominant military and commercial center of its region until 1767 when it was sacked by the Burmese. It was later replaced by the founding of Bangkok in 1782 under a new dynasty.

The vast majority of the country known as Thailand today was up until the beginning of the last century dense jungle sparsely inhabited by tribes amidst which could be found the occasional road, ruin or city outpost. For the most part, life was lived not along roads but the rivers and canals. It was via river that smaller settlements sent their wares to the capital and most significant towns and villages were dotted along rivers. It was for this reason that nirat, the travel poems to be studied here, when they set out what the local landscape was, did so more often than not from the perspective of the poet travelling on a boat along rivers and canals. The landscape then was one of monumental capitals, rivers dotted with villages and then rice fields, and dense jungles populated with tribes and full of mystery.
The monumental capitals were built up from two chief ideals, those of Buddhism and monarchy. Southeast Asian Buddhism was and to a notable extent still is highly intertwined with the institution of the monarchy. The language and imagery of Buddhism was central to the aesthetics of kingship and vice versa. The king was often called a buddhānkura or ‘sprouting Buddha’ or a bodhisattva and his right to rule explained in terms of his barami or kingly merit, the virtues and rewards he earned in his past life. Often this was mixed with what we would now call Hindu vocabulary and symbolism, such as the kings of the current Chakri dynasty being named Rama after the hero of the Rāmāyana or being given epithets of Vishnu. A cakkavatin or ‘wheel-turning monarch’ was expected to provide order in his capital city and receive support from its tributary states, an area which was called his anachak, the area under his wheel-like umbrella of kingly support and munificence. He was also expected to support Buddhism and build and renovate temples. Buddhism, utterly entwined with the aesthetics and vocabulary of kingship to an extent that was perhaps not matched in the rest of the Buddhist world, was made self-evident and obvious in the landscape itself.

The Buddhism of Ayutthaya and early Bangkok was not particularly interested in ‘nirvana’ or ‘emptiness’ or meditation. Indeed, nirvana was generally thought of as only possible during the time of a Buddha. The best that could be done was to uphold the Buddha’s teachings so that one might be re-born at the time of the next Buddha, Metteya who currently resided in Tusita heaven. Far more important a concept than nirvana was merit or bun. Generally speaking bun meant one’s fate as drawn from the
deeds of past lives and was used to explain why, for instance, the king was the king and a poor farmer poor. Central to Buddhist thought and practice at this time, it was an idea as charged and as contested as sin. It could also be an explanation for suffering or could effectively mean ‘status’ or ‘fortune.’ Because it entails such a broad spectrum of individual hopes, power relations, moral explanations and ritual aesthetics it would be reductive to attempt a concise definition of merit. However, as we shall see, we can use a poet like Sunthorn Phu to examine exactly what aesthetic dimensions it embraced and how it was contested and used to contest at particular times.

Particularly important to the local history of Siam in Sunthorn Phu’s time was the devastation of the old capital of Ayutthaya in 1767, a near apocalypse whose trauma still rippled through the kingdom. Early Bangkok was simultaneously conscious of having to continue in the lineage of Ayutthaya yet not repeat its later mistakes. The new Bangkok city-state was under a different dynasty and its economy and centers of power more diversified. At the same time, the glory of Ayutthaya was what had to be re-created in early Bangkok, in its monuments and literature in particular. Sunthorn Phu’s world of early Bangkok in the first half of the nineteenth-century is very much that of old Siam in that he talks of his life and of his adventures in terms of bodhisattvas, temples, merit and ancient kings rather than, say, of nation-states and personal or spiritual growth. It was a time when change was in the air but, in contrast to the latter half of the century when the colonial threat was strongly felt and modernization became a driving force for elites, the court and capital still expressed themselves largely
within the traditions which they had inherited from Ayutthaya. However, Phu’s is much more fully-documented than prior times and he is far more able than poets of prior reigns to contest received practices and ideas within classical poetical restraints. This study then will examine how a particular Buddhist landscape at his particular point in history was felt and contested by examining Phu’s work in a single genre, the nirat.

A brief definition and discussion of the nirat genre

Nirat are a form of poetic travelogue, the earliest extant examples of which in the Thai language date from around the late fifteenth century. Perhaps the most concise definition of nirat as a literary genre is by E.H.S Simmonds:

“A particular type of poem of reflection is the nirat. This is a poem addressed to the loved one by a lover who is absent upon a journey. Incidents on the way or natural phenomena are used to point out the melancholy of separation.”

Frequently, the poet shall begin at the capital city where his lover stays and, forced to go on a journey to go to war or on a pilgrimage, writes about all the villages and sights that he passes on the way. One device that is particularly characteristic of the genre is

verbal play on place names such as ‘Away Village,’ which allows for a pun on being ‘away’ from his lover, such as we can see here from Phu’s *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*:

Arriving at Palm-away Village, yet we have nowhere to get ‘away’ to.
Oh, in what past life did I amass such sins and hardships
That fate has decreed women should detest me, ignore me?
I love, I long and labor – but show me pity they do not.

The poet might also use particular sights, such as a Banyan tree, which allows him to relate his own separation from his lover to a well-known literary character, as we see here from Narin’s *Nirat Narin*:

I arrive at Bodhi tree village and I think of that forest god.
Who took Phra Khot leapt with him to his lovely one.
I ask also the god of this tree,
I implore to aid me, take me so that I may know the savor of my lady for a long night.

This relates the poet’s suffering at having been parted from his lover to the pain of the locally well-known bodhisattva Samudraghosa who was separated from his wife when a
log they were floating on together was cleft in twain. I shall explore these classical
tropes and devices of nirat more fully in the first chapter using the oldest representative
sources. Here, it suffices to say that nirat were like a poetic itinerary of the poet’s
voyage from the capital, at various sites relating what he experienced to his feelings of
having been parted from his love.

However, I argue here that these were also poems about the local landscape
perhaps often more so than they were about love. They allowed the poet to, in a sense,
‘map’ the local landscape. It would even seem that at least in the nineteenth century,
government officials were commissioned to write nirat poems about their journeys in
order to provide personal, poetic accounts of the region. Indeed, Phu and his
contemporaries frequently referred to their poems as ‘set down here in the manner of a
map.’ The poems would not only include lovelorn laments but also information about
the landscape and its figuration in the cultural imagination. For example, on his journey
to the then remote region of Suphanburi, Phu links temples and regions that he
encounters with literary and legendary history:

(138)
The pier of Ten Cowries, ancient,
There is Wat Far To (Temple of Urns), abandoned.
Bodhi trees, a bot and vihara, collapsed in one another.
Phim Philalai built it, a place of Suphanburi.
This links the far-off region to the epic of *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, of whom Phim Philalai is the female protagonist. The poem then was used partially to bring a relatively unknown region into a shared cultural memory. In the same poem, Phu also links the region to the legendary King U Thong, the founder of the original kingdom of Ayutthaya. These poems, then, provide us with information about the ways in which the kingdom’s shared history was tied up with place, sometimes to proto-national history and sometimes with the larger and more millennial or morally-directed timescapes of Buddhist thought.

For the most part, *nirat* have not been looked to as sources of Buddhism in scholarship. Nor have they been often cited as examples of Buddhist poetry in popular culture, unlike that of classical Japanese poets like Saigyo Hōshi and Matsuo Bashō or classical Chinese poets like Wang Wei. It is worth outlining some likely reasons for this omission as it will help clarify later how Phu and his poetry troubles our expectations of what Buddhism and Buddhist poetry in particular can be. The first reason is that these poems are simply difficult to appreciate for a modern audience. Phu’s poetry is often said to be superficial, as merely ‘beautiful sounds without any profound meaning,’ and a
‘sweet, euphonious style of versification’ that demanded very little attention on the listener.\(^3\) The French scholar Gilles Delouche writes of one particular nirat poem:

“We understand quickly that, despite the elegance of the poem, we are not here facing a sincere expression of pain intimately felt: it is overly constructed... and too logical and ordered for it to be taken for anything but what it is in reality, an exercise in style.”\(^4\)

This idea of nirat being an ‘exercise in style’ is very contrary to how, for instance, classical Japanese poetry has been received. To take the case of Japanese haiku, they have been described variously as: a ‘sketch’ of a moment of experience, as ‘fundamentally existential and experiential’ and as a ‘the poetry of sensation’ which produces ‘an enlightened Nirvana-like harmony.’\(^5\) Such poems can be seen to be about the poetic ‘moment’ or about the nature of perception itself, even though such a poetics was arguably not available to the original author. That is because, as I argue below, they can be read as describing a world ‘out there’ which inspires the poet’s internal self. This forms what I shall call an ‘aesthetic commitment,’ a series of implicit and often unexamined associations and expectations modern readers have when they approach a literary work. This phrase is my own but derives inspiration from Foucault’s essay “What is Enlightenment?” In that paper, Foucault unpicks both Kant and

\(^3\) This is Eoseewong’s description of the opinion of other literary critics rather than his own. See Eoseewong, *Pen and Sail*, p.163
\(^4\) Delouche, *Nirat*, p.86.
\(^5\) Cited from Shirane, *Traces of Dreams*, pp.40-45. The quotes are from J.W. Hackett, R.H Blyth and Kenneth Yasuda respectively.
Baudelaire’s thought, exemplifying a mode of scholarship which follows what Foucault calls ‘a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.’ He writes that a ‘critical ontology of ourselves’ would involve a critique of what we are and a historical analysis of ‘the limits that are imposed on us,’ before experimenting, ‘with the possibility of going beyond them.’ Foucault partly uses Baudelaire to excavate what these ‘limits’ of modernity might be, but he nowhere refers to him as an aesthetic thinker, perhaps deliberately avoiding this slippery word. Here I use the word ‘aesthetic’ because I wish to emphasize that I am arguing for a way of understanding Buddhism beyond beliefs subscribed to or practices adhered to or power plays between discourses. An investigation into aesthetic commitments would in particular involve querying changing orientations between self and environment or self and self or self and time, as I interpret Foucault experimenting with in his discussion of Baudelaire’s ‘heroization of the present’ and his task of liberating ‘man in his own being.’ To appreciate and understand what Phu is doing in his work, then, these commitments are something we must first try to uncover and work against. As I shall argue, nirat poems are not much about experience, perception or a personal journey – they are about the landscape itself. Even if a poet such as Phu relates his own memories and experience, it is always via the landscape. Below and throughout this study I make suggestions about how we can, by first querying our own aesthetic commitments, try to fill in the context of Phu’s own and, in so doing, more fully understand how Buddhism was thought through in his time.
A brief biography of Sunthorn Phu

Sunthorn Phu was born in the reign of Rama 1st on a Monday of the eighth month in the year of the horse, 1148 of the Thai lesser era⁶ at two in the morning (or 26th of June, 2329 Buddhist Era or 1786 C.E.).⁷ In the official records of prognostication, it was noted that he had almost magical levels of ability in writing poetry. But beneath his chart, this man whose gifts had led him from commoner to celebrated court poet to ostracized monk back again to grand-father of Thai poetry, was summed up in the glib judgement of the astrologer. It said: 'Sunthorn Phu, drunken writer.'⁸

The social crests and troughs of his life would not even have been possible had he been born only a few decades earlier. After the establishment of the new capital the elites of Bangkok wished to replicate the glories of Ayutthaya but were at the same time more open to innovation and to at least the possibility of valuing talent over birth. An openness to re-orientating tradition is something we shall see clearly reflected in the

⁶ The Thai lesser era began on the 21st of March 638 A.D.
⁷ Damrong, Life and Work of Sunthorn Phu, p.23. The life story that recounted here and in subsequent chapters is based on this biography. Damrong had the advantage of being able to consult those who had actually known Sunthorn Phu. That said, there is much about his biography which is up for debate. The biography as well as extracts of some Phu’s poems has been translated not into English but into French. See La Vie Du Poete Sounthone-Bhou Traduite du Siamais par Camille Notton, 1959.
⁸ These prognostications were kept by the court astrologers as a record of people and their personalities and their respective birth dates and times and such. These were then used comparatively to understand which days were auspicious or which tended to lead to particular qualities or faults in the person.
newly re-furbished classical styles that were becoming sponsored by the court of which Phu was a key figure. The scattered armies of the former capital had been rallied by Lord Taksin (1734-82), the son of a tax collector who after fighting back the invading Burmese armies established his own new dynasty and capital further down the Chao Phraya river at the small village of Khanon Thonburi which he royally re-named as Nakhon Thonburi Mahasamut.Reportedly succumbing to madness and paranoia, Taksin was executed in a coup and replaced by his chief general, Phra Phutthayotfa Chulalok (r. 1782-1809, Rama 1st), the founder of the current dynasty. Rama the First – named after the eponymous hero of the Rāmāyana epic - also founded a new capital, bequeathing to it what is still the longest official place name in the world, an example of the importance attached to royal naming which we shall examine throughout this study. The short form of the name is the City of Angels (Krungthep) and its common and English name are possibly derived from the name of the town which it replaced, Sour-plum Water-village or, possibly, Island Water-Village (Bangkok).9

Phu’s father left the family when his son was scarcely a year old in order to return to his home district of Rayong and take up robes. Phu’s mother found

9 There is some debate, however, about the derivation of the name of Bangkok. The argument that it means Sour-plumb Water-Village derives from the fact that one of the chief temples, Wat Arun (Temple of the Dawn) was originally called Wat Makok or Sour Plum Temple. This was, as are many temples, likely named after the village which it was nearest to. However, changing Makok to Kok would be an uncommon shortening in Thai. It may also come from Bang-koh, meaning a village in an area of islets. However, this itself would be an unusually non-specific place name in a landscape in which islets were common, rather like calling an old English town ‘river town’ or ‘mountain city.’
employment as a wet nurse in the ‘rear palace’ or harem of the newly constructed royal palace ensuring that her son, though not a noble, would be surrounded from an early age by a courtly culture of plays, romance tales and poetry. Soon after his education as a novice monk at Wat Sri Sudaram (then known as Wat Cheepakow), Phu seems to have obtained employment as a scribe at court. This would have given him access to old poetic texts and the historical chronicles of the kingdom. Many such texts were at this time being feverishly copied, re-written, or written again from memory in order to preserve the literary legacy of Ayutthaya, largely lost to fires and looting. One of King Rama the First’s earliest acts as monarch was to commission a new edition of the Ramakien, the Siamese version of the Indian epic the Rāmāyana.10

The great turning point of Phu’s life came when, several years after Rama 1st had ‘royally gone to heaven,’ he came to the attention of Rama 2nd. The king was and is still remembered as a great patron of literature and the arts. It was said that ‘in the second reign whoever was a poet was favored.’ It is uncertain how Phu came to the king’s attention, although Damrong puts forward the possibility that Phu was investigated as the possible author of an anonymous pamphlet that circulated at court. It may have been that, while investigating Phu’s writings to see if their style matched those of the author of the pamphlet, the king was impressed. According to another story, Sunthorn Phu got his first break by working on Rama 2nd’s re-write of the Ramakien. The original

10 The story is quite different to Sanskrit version which stresses the kingly perfection of Rama, however, spending more time over the mischievous, magic monkey king Hanuman.
that had been re-written by Rama the First had been extremely long, an almost
cyclopedic narrative compendium of Siamese cosmology and thought. Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd}
wished for a more artful version. He asked his court poets to improve on the following
verse, in which Sita is about to commit suicide and is saved by the monkey-commander
Hanuman:

She tied her neck, to his great shock.
Shaking, near the end of her life.
Heated panic, a fire increasing
Swinging, jumping straight on
Coming there in an instant.
Till he could untangle the cloths
That Lakṣmī (Sita) had fixed to her neck.
Loosening them, throwing them to the floor.
Then that noble monkey, jumped down.

The King pointed out that, in this version, Sita would be dead by the time the actors had
finished describing what was happening. Phu changed this section to:

Then she tied her neck to the rope
And threw her body to die
Then, at that moment,
Came that Son-of-the-Wind who could come to her aid,  
Just as he wished.\textsuperscript{11}

King Loetlanaphalai was greatly impressed by this change because it allowed the actor speaking the verses to maintain dramatic dynamism. Whereas the previous version had taken a long time to speak, in Phu’s version the tension was built and then quickly resolved. Whether this story is true or apocryphal, it does nevertheless attest to the refurbishing of literary tradition during Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s reign.

One particularly characteristic feature of this period is the usage of commoner language and depictions of commoner life in literature. While the wars following the fall of Ayutthaya still raged, the future King Rama 1\textsuperscript{st} is said to have hid his son and the future Rama the 2\textsuperscript{nd} with a peasant family. From this experience, it is alleged, the king had acquired a preference for the boisterous and bawdy language of commoners – ‘market mouth’ language - above old courtly verses which employed a heavy usage of Sanskrit and Pāli. One of the great literary epics of the age was \textit{Khun Chang Khun Phaen}, the story of a love triangle told in over twenty-thousand couplets. Khun Phaen, who is dashing but poor and Khun Chang, who is ugly but rich, compete for the hand of Wanthong. A court-sponsored work of which Phu was one of the chief writers, it features ladies lusting after monks and dark magical arts for seduction such as anointing

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp.33-4.
one’s lips with enchanted bee’s wax. Indeed, it is likely that this ability to bring common language efficiently into the strict diction of courtly poetry endeared Phu to the cultured king. Despite his commoner origins, he was allowed to head the singing of panegyric songs on the royal barge and to act as a tutor to the crown prince.

But Phu’s meteoric rise at court made his position enviable and, therefore, tenuous. The repercussions of his rambunctious personality made him an easy target for his enemies. In particular was his now well-known love for women. In the old Ayutthaya law codes, there are laws which condemn to execution a man who ‘brings books of poetry into the palace to seduce palace maids and inner palace servants.’ It was precisely with young men like Sunthorn Phu in mind that this law was made. He fell in love with a high-born woman of the rear palace named Chan. Her name means ‘moon,’ a poetic fortuity which would provide Phu with a lifetime’s supply of lovelorn double-entendre. According to the old laws for such an offense Phu should have been ‘executed to die over three days.’ As it happened, he and Chan were merely sent to the court’s prison.

It would appear that the conditions of Phu’s stay in prison were far from drastically penal. Damrong believes that a passage in Khun Chang Khun Paen which Phu contributed to might relate to his own time in prison. Khun Phaen’s ‘noble friends’ petition the lord of the rear palace to put him in a cell with an open-shut window. The

circumstances in fact sound closer to a house arrest and Khun Phaen, like Phu, did not let his time in jail go to waste:

His strength was not depleted, not at all.  
He was industrious in the weaving of wicker baskets.  
Which he gave to Lady Kaew to lacquer after.  
Khun Phaen was environed, encircled, engirdled by them,  
A baht for each, easy to cut and clear.

Damrong believes that this perhaps relates to Phu’s own experience of earning a living, from producing accordion-like copied manuscripts of tales rather than from weaving baskets, while in jail. This brings us to another original aspect of literary culture in the early Rattanakosin that Phu was able to make use of. As well as being a court-sponsored poet at times, he was perhaps more frequently a writer-for-hire. He was able to secure copying-fees, fees paid by scribes on behalf of their noble or merchant masters to be allowed to copy a well-known poet’s original manuscript. These manuscripts were then distributed and copied again, largely by monks. Phu’s poems and particularly his epic literature found their way to the North and South of Siam and even as far as
Cambodia. Copies were commissioned by sponsors and the copy was then usually kept by the temple, where it would be borrowed and read out by monks or by groups of laypeople in their spare time. However in Bangkok it would seem that there was some prestige attached to having made a copy from the original author. One poet, Pumthida Phrayarachamontri (Phu), wrote that he was able to support himself by this means even in the reign of Rama 5th when printing had already begun to be well established.

It is in jail that Phu is thought to have begun his epic work Phra Aphaimani, the ‘Lord of Forgiveness,’ the literary work for which he is most remembered. This and the literary context from which the tale emerged shall be explained more thoroughly in Chapter 5. In brief, it is the story of a Don Juan-like prince, romancing his way from island to island, fighting and seducing princesses, yet longing for his original beloved. It is like a compendium of all the various forms of literature available to the court at that time: Javanese Panji romance tales like Inao, jātaka tales, local legends of strange beasts and miraculous encounters, tales and place names from the Thousand and One Nights.

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13 Some dissertations have been written in Thai detailing ‘translations’ of Phu’s works (some of which involve minor variations in plot) into Southern dialect and into Khmer. See Santi Pakdikam, “Sunthorn Phu nai wannakadi Khemen” (Sunthorn Phu in Khmer Literature) in Kusuma Raksamani et al., Sunthorn Phu. See also Sirinthip Sukirat, “Kwam samphan rawang wannkadi nithan pad tai kap wannakaam sunthonr phu lae phaap sathon kong wattanatam thong thin” (The relationship between Southern literature and tales with Sunthorn Phu and how this reflects local culture).” Unpublished Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University, 2004.
14 These reading practices are described by Treesilp in Klon Suat of the Middle Country. The fact that there were reading groups is attested to by colophons which warn readers who ‘borrow’ the books from the temple library to treat them well. Similar colophons were attached to copies of Phu’s epics stored in temple libraries in the South of Thailand.
and the intricate plots of old Chinese history novels. The main twist on all of these is that the protagonist Phra Aphaimani does not fight with a sword, but with his magic flute which has the power to seduce or send to sleep anyone who listens to it. One Thai scholar, Sombat Jansawong, has written that the general moral of Phra Aphaimani is an appeal to the power of art, music, conversation and diplomacy as opposed to weapons and physical violence.\textsuperscript{16} This would seem to be true; it is also a general ethic to follow ‘the heart’s harmonies,’ to allow different species of creature and races of people to co-exist. This ethic is evocatively demonstrated in one of Phu’s most famous verses:

Until the end of the sky and the seas,
There will be no end to this love, ever-enduring.
Even if you lie beneath the earth and rivers
I ask to meet again this harmonious love.
Even if your cold flesh were a vast ocean
I ask for the felicity of being a fish.
Even if you’re a lotus, then I’ll be a bee
Caressing your petals and blossoms.
Even if you were an incandescent cave,
I’d ask to be a lion so that we might yet be together.
I will follow and preserve this love, my dearest one,

To be partnered only with you for each life to come.17

To make a wish to a lover to meet them in many lifetimes is something we find throughout Siamese literature but this was frequently tied to a wish to meet the future Buddha Metteya together in the future. This verse however is a purely affirmative celebration of love and desire, but one which uses the language and imagery of Buddhist thought to express that love. It is trait we shall see throughout Phu's work.

In any case, Phu did not end up in jail for very long. The Minster of the Rear Palace was in his last days and, as was customary, the majority of prisoners were released when he had passed away. It was to Chan that Phu wrote his first nirat poem, departing perhaps to ordain as a monk until the heat had died down on their affair. He writes:

At Dawn Temple, rays of the moon (chan) gleam, glimmer
Looking back, turning back - holding back not the tears.

Phu journeyed to Rayong to visit his father, and this became Nirat to the middle country.
His father had been the abbot of a forest monastery near Rayong for around twenty

17 Sunthorn Phu, Phra Aphaimani, Chapter 36. There is no doubt that this verse was popular. It was copied with minor variations into numerous romance epics and poems of the time. Phu himself more or less replicates this verse in one of his final poems, Nirat to Nakhon Pathom.
years, while Phu was only 21. Following the conventions of the genre, Phu describes the important toponyms on the way along the river journey on the way out of Bangkok. He describes the ebony tree spirits he prays to for protection, the boisterous markets where horseshoe crabs are bought for cowry shells, the enchanting smells of flowers and the puffed-up arrogance of monkeys. Thirsty at Pattaya Bay and looking at the salty water, he says he felt like a ‘lover-less man outside the palace walls for, if he starts a-wooing, he’ll be whipped to within an inch.’ As the journey progresses far outside the city, the verse turns into something resembling the daily account of a jungle adventure. Phu’s legs swell up so that ‘even a tip-toe tread was a torment’ and Nai Seng, one of his companions, disappears. Phu is ungenerous towards his companion’s behavior, reaching a temple and immediately making the following declaration:

And so I poured water, praying to the temple that:
That man! In this life may I never set eyes again upon him,
He who misled and deluded us, hoaxed and deceived us.
I here bear witness to his wicked heart, such as he deserves.

By the powers of true revelation, I declare, I here accuse:
Let him be branded a Devadatta till his dying day.19

18 Although it is possible that this and other poems were written by Phu long after he actually made the journey.
19 Devadatta was a relative of the Buddha who was responsible for a schism and later tried to assassinate the Buddha. He is the bête noire of many Buddhist stories.
As if his name on the back of the vihara were written in smoldering charcoal,
Like his heart, that black ash of a soot-smeared pot, the crook.

Soon after he reaches his father who he reveals is the chief abbot of the region and who
‘Has furthered his religious functions to the peak, the apogee/ Counting twenty rainy seasons long.’ There in Rayong, Phu lived ‘as an ordained one,’ following the precepts, eating only a midday meal. He donates the merit of his actions to Chan. But he soon succumbs to a fever:

Dozing, half-conscious, I saw fearful, frightening things.
My senses shook, my head swelled, my hair raised.
My reverend father looked for one who knew mantras,
Many people came and went, saying I must be possessed.

Lost, sleep-talking, in delirium I chattered with ghosts,
While those at my side I did not know.
But an old spirit-doctor blew skillfully upon me
Offering and propitiating and, over many days, I did recover.

They had a spirit-medium come when I was in pain,
Who said it was because I had picked flowers on a hill
Without humbling myself or requesting, asking ‘May I?’ lightly
The spirit-lords of the land were vexed and made vindictive.
The old medicine man asked for their forgiveness please
And, to be honest, I knew that it was all just rot
But the villagers believed this man utterly,
So I endeavored to keep it to myself.

Having recovered, he picks flowers (again) and gives them to his two nieces who had helped nurse him, who, ‘Seeing my hurt and pain, massaged and helped me with herbal rubs.’ This causes conflict between the two sisters who, despite Phu’s efforts, will not be reconciled. Finally, he decides to leave, writing a letter promising to return next year to his nieces.

Soon after Phu returned to court, he found employment as a page of Prince Pathamavamsa who was at that time ordained as a monk at Wat Rakang (Bell Temple). On the twelfth day of the Third Month of 2350 or February 8th 1807, Phu followed his master on a processional pilgrimage to the town of Saraburi, composing his second nirat, *Nirat of the Buddha’s Footprint*. To this travel poem we shall turn in the second chapter.

**Why Sunthorn Phu?**

In the grounds of *Wat Thepthitaram*, where Phu spent many years of his time as a monk, there is now a newly-refurbished Museum of Sunthorn Phu. This, alongside a
monument in Rayong, as well as large statues of his literary characters on the island of Koh Samet and along the coast of Phetchaburi, is one of the tourist landmarks for Sunthorn Phu in modern Thailand. Through iPad-driven image manipulation, tourists and locals are able to have a photo of themselves in Phu’s former kuti with the great man himself. The monastery holds regular events such as on the 26th of June, Sunthorn Phu Day, where there is an annual competition for the best Phu character costume.

When I asked some of the monks there what they thought his relation to Buddhism was, they simply replied that the museum was in a monastery because he was an important writer who had lived in that monastery. For all his rambunctiousness and his occasional irreverence towards religion, Sunthorn Phu is now firmly a figure of ‘tradition,’ a category which includes Buddhism, floating markets, old poets and royal buildings. He is remembered as a ‘great writer’ who is somehow connected to this Buddhism of old, but no one can quite say why or how. It is this ambiguous position within Buddhism that makes him such a profitable figure to explore.

To be sure, the most obvious reason to study Sunthorn Phu is that he is considered the ‘Shakespeare of Thailand.’ He himself boasted:

I am a scribe, a strong-man maker of long songs.
From Cambodia to Laos, popular and publicized am I, up until the Capital.
Despite this, there is almost nothing written in English or, indeed, outside of Thai about him. Yet my own initial reason for wishing to take Sunthorn Phu as a point of focus for the study of Buddhism in Thailand is that he bridges over and confuses our categories of ‘religious’ and ‘aesthetic.’ Like Matsuo Basho in Japan or Wang Wei in Tang China before him, Phu was someone who engaged actively with Buddhist thought and practice but who cannot be called normatively Buddhist. Buddhism is both an institution and a massively popular approach to living in the world. Because of this, rather than only look at sutras or work written by orthodox monks, one seam of approaches to the study of Buddhism tends to look at how it is popularly represented, off to the side as it were of those whose repute and remuneration depended on the auspices of monastery, lineage or scholastic expertise. Studying the nirat of Sunthorn Phu is one such approach. His poetry allows us to see what it was to be not just a monk but an unwilling one and his poetry what it was to love, long, hate and to parody in a particular Buddhist landscape.

As Anne Blackburn writes in *Locations of Buddhism*, her biography of the nineteenth-century Sinhalese monk Hikkauvē Samugala, ‘small-scale histories’ such as biographies of single individuals may complement more general studies of Buddhism. Such studies allow us to clarify the conditions of possibility for human action examined at the micro-historical level. Blackburn’s study itself complicates the perceived rupture between pre-colonial and post-colonial periods to show that many patron-client networks, expressions of charisma, as well as ‘habits of mind’ endured well into the
colonial period of Sri Lanka. Hikkauvė is a monk who said what he could, spoke to whom he could to preserve Buddhism. Phu, on the other hand, was a poet first and a monk second. He was not particularly invested in Buddhism as an institution nor, for his eighteen rainy retreats as an ordained mendicant, particularly attached to his role as a monk.

However, part of the argument of this dissertation is that focusing on a poet and his ‘aesthetic’ approach to Buddhism can give us a privileged look at the what and how of Buddhism at a particular time. Phu’s poetry is not normatively Buddhist. Unlike Hikkauvė in Sri Lanka or Prince Paramanuchitchinorot (1790-1853), the cultured and literary Supreme Patriarch in Phu’s time, Phu was not committed by his role to give the orthodox voice of a particular sect or from the center. Rather, he could and did write what he thought would be popular. Phu’s writing, though not normatively Buddhist, did very much deal with issues surrounding Buddhism. His nirat occur very much in a Buddhist landscape and, as such, give us a clearer picture of how such issues and such a landscape were thought through in the popular imagination. We can see, for instance, that non-canonical jātaka epics like the Samudraghosa Jātaka were referenced in popular literature more frequently than the story of the Buddha and that romancing tales of bodhisattvas were used creatively to think through tensions in Buddhist thought as well as if not more so than Pāli scripture. Phu’s Buddhism was not that of a relatively

stable Pāli *imaginaire*, or at least not only of it, and his Buddhism was not that of the Ayutthaya period or the later modernizing period. His was somewhere between the two. He worked not only *with* but *on* the language, tropes, edifices and issues of his day. Using a single writer such as Phu as a window onto the Buddhism of this time reveals a Buddhism that, far from being a Buddhism that was lived soberly and correctly, was wild with racy stories, erotic murals, dark magic and parodies of revered texts. Using a poet such as Phu gives us a window, not into what high-ranking monks thought should be read, but what was popularly being read, what stories and songs people outside the capital actually used to make sense of politics, morality, power and love in the terms that the Buddhism of their time offered.

**Scholarly Approaches to Buddhist Literature**

Giving a short overview here of academic approaches to Buddhist literature will help to clarify why Sunthorn Phu and in fact Thai literature more broadly has almost never been studied as such. The what of Buddhist literature is often defined by scholastic competence in religious languages, particularly Pāli and Sanskrit. As to the how, Buddhist literature is often thought of as being either based around demonstrating morality in narrative or, as is the case in East Asian literature, as concerning perception or arising from perceived tensions between poetry, aesthetics and Buddhism proper. As I shall argue, none of these approaches apply readily to classical *nirat* poetry.
Sanskrit and even more so Pāli scholarship is defined to a large extent by the legacy of philology and this tends to mean that that the what of Buddhist literature is restricted to the Pāli canon. One recent example would be Naomi Appleton’s survey of the Pāli Jātaka, the past life stories of the Buddha. Appleton’s study focuses on the Jātakathavanṇṇanā, a ‘semi-canonical jātaka collection of the Theravāda school’ which dates from the fifth or sixth centuries CE. As she notes, the study of jātaka has long focused on the ‘JA’ both because of its apparent centrality within Theravāda, and because of its early availability in the West. In Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities, Steven Collins largely limits his inquiry to what he calls the ‘Pāli imaginaire’ which, even as the world outside changed, still remained the sourcebook which could describe and prescribe ‘a relatively stable mental universe’ which was somewhere between fact or ideology and literary imagination.21

However, while restricting expertise to Pāli literature has certain advantages, it tends to create the image of a stable Pāli Buddhist literature which existed outside of the particularity of time and place, such as that of nineteenth-century Siam. Peter Skilling questions Collin’s description of a ‘relatively stable mental universe.’ Seeing no such essential stability or cohesion in the world of Buddhist literature over time, Skilling writes that, ‘Vernacular literature is in constant conversation with Pāli and Sanskrit, with niti and narrative, with deities and protectors, with rote and recitation, with rhythm and

21 Collins, Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities, p.74.
metre, with brush and trowel.’ Skilling agrees with Collins that the Pali *imaginaire* was only one ‘source’ that historical agents could draw on. But what that *imaginaire* constituted in itself was in ‘constant fluctuation’ for Skilling. It was really more like a ‘databank’ than a source, and databanks are interactive, changing their source material as the user draws upon them. And indeed, the poetry of Sunthorn Phu does engage with the Pāli canon, but a highly fluxed version of it, a particular databank available to him and his literate contemporaries at a particular time and place. I shall continue in this dissertation to return to Skilling’s useful idea of the Pāli *imaginaire* as not a ‘source’ but a ‘database.’

Scholars such as Collins, Appleton and Charles Hallisey have tended to review Pāli-based Buddhist literature as didactic. Collins begins his discussion of Buddhist thought and narrative with reference to Weber’s notion of theodicy, as a portrait of the world which made the vast variety of individual destinies rational and acceptable. Buddhist literature, in that it depicts a cosmos of moral cause and effect, is one such theodicy. In an essay on morality in Buddhist narrative, Charles Hallisey and Ann Hansen explore what they call, following Dominik LaCapra’s useful term, the work-like force of Buddhist narrative’s powers to ‘configure, and refigure moral life.’ There is a lot to be said for such approaches. Much Buddhist Pāli narrative is unabashedly didactic, as is

much modern Thai Buddhist poetry. However, there were many more ways in which Buddhist symbols, conflicts and values were represented and challenged in literature. As Skilling notes, the *Paññassa Jātaka* (a non-canonical collection of jātaka-like tales) was in some instances far more popular and influential in premodern Siam than were the jātakas of the Pāli canon.  

These texts were sometimes moralistic, but sometimes they were more like sprawling romance stories within a Buddhist jātaka narrative frame. In the nirat journey poems to be studied here, though we do find morality, we often find that accounts are more concerned with the landscape of temples, kingdoms and rivers. We must, then, think of different ways beyond only morality to study Buddhist literature in Southeast Asia.

Buddhist literature has been handled somewhat differently in Chinese and Japanese Studies and there has been more attention, in particular, to Buddhism and poetics. The key instigator of studying Buddhism via poetry was William Lafleur. In *The Karma of Words*, he outlines a perceived tension between the literary arts as mere ‘floating phrases and fictive utterances’ and the un-frivolous practices of Buddhism. The tension between Buddhism and literature is itself often overcome via the Buddhist philosophy of overcoming dualities. The medieval aesthetic of *yugen*, for instance, aims to reveal via sophisticated manipulation of formal poetic elements, ‘the presence of

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\[24\text{ For an excellent and very much under-utilized study of local jātaka tales found in nineteenth-century monastery libraries, which very much demonstrates the creativity and popularity of such re-tellings see Trisilpa Boonkhachorn, *Klon suat of central Thailand: an analytical study*.} \]
nirvana in the midst of samsara.’ Appearing more recently are dissertations by Thomas Mazanec and Jason Protass. Jason Protass’s “Buddhist Monks and Chinese poetry” understands ‘traces’ of religious identity in a literary work to emerge from tensions. In the case of monastic poets in the Song, these tensions center around the problem of emotions, contradictions between poetic and monastic ideals, of ‘aesthetics and ascetics.’ In Japanese and Chinese studies then, Buddhist literature is often marked as in tension or conflict with something else, either Confucian orthodoxy or conservative forms of Buddhism.

But what do we do, then, when Buddhism is to some extent, as Lafleur writes of Buddhism in medieval Japanese culture, an ‘ultimate norm’? What, if unlike scholars of Japanese and Chinese poetics, we have little workable treatises on the literary arts available to us to understand how Buddhism may have insinuated itself into aesthetic aims? What if there is very little perceived tension with Buddhism and poetry and it is simply part of the living landscape? The solution, I will argue, is to think of poetry like that of Sunthorn Phu’s as not defined by morality, tensions, cosmology or perception. It is rather poetry in a Buddhist landscape. Buddhism is in the landscape itself first and with the speaking, perceiving poet second. Before looking at how we might think in these terms, I shall turn to Buddhist poetry as it has been received popularly in modern literature.
**Nirat in modern Thai literature**

In this section, I shall give some examples of modern-day nirat, as well as some examples of modern Thai Buddhist poetry. In a mode that I shall repeat throughout this study, I first begin by trying to pick apart modern-day ‘aesthetic commitments’ before trying to move beyond them via Sunthorn Phu. Here, I argue that modern Buddhist poetry tends to emerge from a very different orientation of the speaking subject towards his or her environment, one that tends to use the environment as a source of inspiration for the internal self. This will help clarify what Phu is precisely not doing and therefore why it is appropriate to understand nirat in terms of landscape theory, which itself largely tries to overcome a modern bias towards seeing the environment as something out there and prior to our witnessing of it.

First, then, this poem from Seksan Prasertakun (1949-) from his poetic travelogue *Children of the Stars*. In that it largely concerns journeys of longing and suffering, Prasertakun’s work has been studied as a modern-day nirat. The following poem is a reflection that proceeds from the poet’s encounter with a waterfall with schools of fish jumping through the falling water:

Now who do you think you are here?
A little fish on the waters?
Or a current of water that’s travelling?
Or a piece of rock sitting upright.
Or are we just someone who has come to admire them?

In the expansive depths of emotion,
How deeply you can get lost there!
In the inside part of inside
Will you open up wide, or shut and die?

I only feel that there is one response to start answering. That’s meditation. You are not water. You are not a fish. Perhaps, in the vastness of time, the fish is the water.

   Mist, rocks – all these interlinked things – they come to dress up nature in its fullness.  

In this poem, the poet is as if in the role of a sage, addressing a pupil. Both see the waterfall before them, but the sage-poet wishes the addressee to gain a new perspective, which is rather like the ‘ontological equivalence’ that Lafleur describes that the poet works towards in medieval Japanese verse, the power of poetry to point towards an overcoming of self-other or self-nature dualities. Compare this with Sunthorn Phu’s description in *Nirat Inao* of a very similar sight:

The sound of rivers fierce, a frightening burst.
Trembling, exciting as they swoop down, slash – *chat-chat* – striking.
The water crests, it catches - collapsing in shivers.

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25 Cited from Thanakharn Juntima, “The Travelogues of Sesksan Preasertkul as modern Thai *nirat,*” p.75
Some falls diffuse, splashing and sprinkling springs...

The most striking difference here is that nature teaches nothing. Natural phenomena are admired in playful language, made vivacious by selective use of language, and that is it. As Nathakarn Naknuan writes, over time *nirat* changed from being about the suffering of being apart from one’s lover to being a more general sense of loss and suffering on a journey. In particular, it became the suffering caused by a loss of nature, society and spirituality. It is easy to consider the first kind of verse as deeper, more layered, more mature and more authentic, less conventionalized.

However, the modern appreciation of such poetic aesthetics has a history to it. Before going on to look at classical *nirat*, we should first examine what caused this major change in aesthetic orientation towards the natural world in Thai literature. Sujitra Chongsatitwatana, in her study of modern Thai Buddhist verse, has argued for the towering influence of the reformist monk Buddhādasa (1906-93). Almost all of the major modern Thai poets were his students at one time or another. Many key figures, including Angkhan Kalayahaphong and Naowarat Pongpaiboon, spent significant time at his retreat in the South of Thailand, *Suan Mokh* (Land of Liberation). Buddhādasa was himself a prolific poet. We can see clear similarities in the respective philosophies on the

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value of nature of Praseartakul and Buddhādasa in the latter’s poem “Sound returns to the bamboo thicket”:

Sound turns and returns to find the bamboo thicket.
No matter how much you blow it returns.
Like vapor from the sea a cloud
Changes to be rain returns to the sea.

Like craving (tanha) leads people to find this world
At the end of its thrall (rit) vanishes you turn off the road
And fly off to bright lands cease quarreling
Not maundering meandering here and there.

The poem is a play on the Tang-dynasty ‘Buddha poet’ Wang Wei’s poem on hearing the echo of a flute. This testifies to Buddhādasa’s engagement with Zen and Chinese and Japanese philosophy and aesthetics. But the relationship of his persona to the environment – so much more airy and therapeutic than Phu’s – bares the unmistakable traces of Buddhist modernism, as do those of his students. In The Making of Buddhist Modernism, David McMahan demonstrates the Romantic and Transcendentalist influence on Buddhist modernism of thinkers such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Schiller, Emerson and Rousseau. While it is possible that Buddhādasa never actually read these writers, they contributed to and participated in a sea change in subjective
representation in Europe, a change which had profound repercussions on the subject-matter of poetry in Europe and, later, was a set of values and orientations towards the world that the majority of poetic traditions of the world could not but engage with. M.H. Abrams has described how, over the course of the seventeenth-century, description and treatises on poetry went from describing art as a ‘mirror’ reflecting nature via established convention to being like a lamp, with the stress on the perception of the subject, perceiving individually and creatively a world out there.

Added to this in the Romantic period was the idea of the poet as someone who can reveal something mysterious and true which cannot be revealed otherwise. It can also be extended towards nature itself – the poet-sage, as in the examples above, is able to tap into some deep truth in natural phenomena which he tries to convey via verse. A similar architectonics, of poet-sage who is with the environment, can be seen here:

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again. Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -- over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

(Extract from “Wild Geese” by Mary Oliver)
This poem, an extract from a poem by the late modern American poet Mary Oliver, ostensibly has nothing to do with Buddhism, but still participates in a poetics of felt crisis of self and possible renewal. It reads like a balm for the mind, an outbreath of calm against the perceived stresses and confusions of the modern world. While not self-identifying as a Buddhist poem, it still carries a Buddhist-modernist flavor because Buddhism for many in Europe and America has grown up as a ‘contested social fantasy’ and as a strategic symbol of counter-modernity. As Robertson argues, ‘religion’ as a category was created partly in order to show what modernity was leaving behind. A ‘religion’ such as Buddhism has the potential to critique modernity, since ‘positive subscription to the idea of religion has largely constituted, in varying degrees, a critique of modernity itself.’ This is part of what is involved in Prasertakul’s poetry as well as that of Buddhādasa. Modernization has left something behind and we can recapture what that is in a more Buddhist engagement with the natural world and, by extension, ourselves. I do not mean to suggest here that the modern Thai poetry above is merely derivative of Romanticism and Buddhist modernism, rather than, as it is more profitably understood, an example of complex conversations between Thai poets, Chinese writers, Thai politicians, European poets and Pāli scripture to name but a few. However, such broad strokes are adequate here for laying out modern aesthetic commitments

27 Robertson, "Community, society, globality, and the category of religion,” p.5.
28 For an in-depth argument against seeing Buddhist modernist thought as derivative of Romanticism, see: Stalling, The Poetics of Emptiness.
regarding nature and landscape in order to later examine what Phu is not doing when
he talks about nature and the landscape.

Since it is all too easy to box off ‘literature’ into a hermetic world of letters away
from the social reality of ‘religious practice,’ it is important to note here that an
‘experience’ orientation or ‘subjectivist’ orientation in writing cannot in itself be
separated from what Buddhism is at a particular time. It cannot be said to be more
about ‘literature’ than ‘Buddhism’ proper. While an architectonic shift in subjective
representation does not mean there is a similar shift in religious ritual or architecture,
we can fairly assume that it means a different way of engaging with the living landscape,
a landscape which is informed by values, practices of representation and habits of
perception. To take a simple example, Prasetakul rarely depicts himself visiting a
temple. Far more frequently, his life lessons are learned from the natural world or from
self-examination. In such a relation to the Buddhist landscape, after all, making merit
and visiting temples is far from essential because the logical conclusion to such a
subjectivist viewpoint is, as he continually stresses, that ‘the vihara is in the heart.’

Understanding the aesthetic commitments that Phu and his readers were bringing to
this work, then, can reveal some quite fundamentally different orientations to the ways
in which subjects thought within the terms that Buddhism offered. It requires, I argue
here, that we turn away from modern expectations of the poet’s mind as like a lamp

29 Cited from Thanakharn Juntima, “The Travelogues of Sesksan Preasertkul as modern Thai
nirat,” p.60.
onto the world and pay attention to the ways that Phu and his poetic forebears landscaped the Chao Phraya and its environs.

This study’s approach: Poetic Landscapes

The most pertinent theory to studying nirat comes not so much from literary studies as from the study of landscapes, largely the academic preserve of geographers and anthropologists. Landscapes, since around the Enlightenment at least, were often like landscape paintings which a single person saw while standing still. Many of the modern poems above could be said to speak and see from such a standpoint, even if that is not what their original authors intended. In premodern nirat, however, the poet is not so much standing in the landscape, as of the landscape. To unpack what this means we must, as Mitchell counsels, change landscape from a noun into a verb. The aim of much landscape theory is to understand not only what landscape is or means or does, but how it works as a cultural practice.30

A particularly useful theoretical tool in studying nirat emerges from Edward Casey’s paper on phenomenological approaches to landscape and place. As he writes, ‘For the anthropologist, Space comes first; for the native, Place.’ Indeed, many of the prior approaches to understanding nirat which we shall later examine tend to make the

30 Mitchell, Landscape and power, p.1.
mistake of thinking of place (of temples, of cities, of towns) as something prior, to which stories and histories are attached or clever word-play poetry versified. Places are, in other words, received passively rather than themselves constitutive of landscape and poet. As Casey writes, we are not so much in places, as of them. Nothing could be a more apt description of classical nirat, as we shall see. In the previous section, I examined ways in which the outside environment is constituted in much Buddhist modernist poetry, as a lamp-like reflection of the poet’s feelings and realizations. In looking at classical nirat, we must endeavor to use methods which work against modern ways of receiving time and space in order to not only list, for instance, what is believed of the landscape but how it constitutes the lived and felt horizons of those who lived within it. To this end, Edward Casey suggests we think of places not as a prior existing thing in space but as an ‘event.’ He writes of how places, in the event of encountering them, ‘gather’ both spatial and temporal dimensions as well as those subjects who encounter them. This is a useful idea that I shall keep returning to, not only because it allows us to think with (rather than about) Sunthorn Phu and other poets in their own conceptions of place but because it is also one way ‘to avoid the high road of modernism,’ as Casey writes, by occupying ‘the lowland of place.’

As an example of how Casey’s thought on place can be utilized to lay out how places ‘gather’ temporal and spatial dimensions, we might turn again to Klong

31 Casey, Edward S. “How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena,” p.20.
Haripunchai. The poet, who is on a pilgrimage to Wat Haripunchai, does not only describe the temple as a place out there. His coming there and the festival which accompanies it are an ‘event.’ The act of witnessing place gathers the legendary history of the kingdom’s Brahmanical founder and Buddhist Queen and to this, using the festive image of Pāli texts, implicitly describes the temple as like the fruition of Buddhist and civilizational development in the area. It not only gathers the poet into the place of the temple but the whole kingdom who have come to the festival in a moment of collective effervescence. In Phu’s later and less celebratory verse, the temple of Golden Mountain in the ruined city of Ayutthaya is certainly not only a place out there. In the poem, it is a way of encountering the perceived glory of Ayutthaya which has since fallen away. Rather than the collective kingdom being gathered in the moment of the poem’s climax, it is only the lonely poet himself who is gathered into this space and time, facing not a moment of triumphant flourishing but faced with the ruins of a once glorious past.

The changes described here, between sixteenth-century Lanna and nineteenth-century Bangkok, should alert us to the fact that nirat poems were always in a state of change, that they were forms of dialogue with both the landscape and poetic forebears. Often we see that his nirat struggle with certain received ideas, such as the image of a perfect dharmic kingdom or what merit truly meant. In her anthropological work on the post-industrial landscape of southern West Virginia, Kathleen Stewart argues that in order to give a true sense of place, we cannot resort to describing a fixed ‘culture’ or practices and representations. Rather, it is precisely in ‘holding open the gaps and
tensions in cultural representation itself that we can glimpse an ‘other’ mode of cultural critique that speaks from a ‘place’ of contingency, vulnerability, and felt impact.’

Phu speaks in his poetry within a bounded world, surrounded by places that involved him in their history and possible future. But this landscape was always possessed of what Steward calls ‘mimetic excess’ – it pointed in some iterations towards the image of a stable world, but at the same time hinted at gaps and fissures, gaps which a poet like Phu was keen to explore. These poems, then, do not only provide us with a static description of a landscape as an idealized space, but the voice of a single individual in dialogue, caught between should-be and is, searching for meaning and expressing personal loss and hope in the shifting but bounded world in which he found himself. This context of ‘gaps and tensions’ is one vital, affective area in which I argue we should place Buddhist thought.

A second useful set of ideas emerges from the writings of the anthropologist Tim Ingold and his idea of a ‘taskscape.’ In “The temporality of the landscape,” Ingold puts forward a series of criticisms of notions of landscape as a way of seeing the world – landscape as an image, representation or gaze composed of specific cultural values and meanings. Ingold’s solution to these various dilemmas involves a turn towards phenomenology, and the elaboration of what he terms ‘the dwelling perspective’. Ingold presents an analysis of the landscape painting of The Harvesters of Pieter Bruegel

the Elder which depicts Dutch harvesters hard at work in the Autumn of 1565. Ingold describes this not as a landscape to be ‘looked at’ but encourages us to move through it, to engage the ‘muscular entailments’ of the hills in the background, the past work made real of paths imposing habitual patterns on people, how the tree there gives character and identity to that particular place and a palpable sense of duration. Time and place then are drawn out in a very involved way. The ‘taskscape’ is for Ingold the sum of ways in which place is made by the kinds of activities in which inhabitants engage, the sights and sounds and smells that constitute its specific ambience.  

Although Phu’s poetry and those of his peers is by no means the kind of deep description that Ingold is advocating it does, contrary to the subjectivism of Buddhist modernism, try to involve the reader in the taskscape at hand. One example, written around thirty years before Sunthorn Phu was born, is the “Verse of the transport of the reclining Buddha image,” likely written by court poets on behalf of King Borommakot (r.1733-1758) to commemorate an event during the reign of his father, King Thai Sa (r.1709-1733). An important Buddha image had to be transported from Wat Pa Mokha (Forest Temple of Liberation) because erosion had caused the waters of the river to creep near the Buddha hall. The hauling of the Buddha image over oiled bamboo vines placed on wooden trunks is described in the following verse:

34 Today known as Wat Talart (Market Temple) in Pamokha district, Anghthong (Golden Lake) Province.
A huge rope makes a pulley, round tight.
Many winches, carefully moving, winding them, seized hard.
The bound leather wires entangle, the hawser rope too.

*Ho-heum!* Drums striking – *eung-euh!* – the Buddha shifting, the drums hitting.

A ditch-canal well-dug and which winds round and around.
Around and about – firm, fixed – trunks of trees, down they go.
Be sure the level is clean and flat! Near to far are
Bamboo vines intertwining – level them, each level right – looking good!\(^{35}\)

To modern sensibilities, it likely strikes us strange that such a pragmatic operation was a
worthy object of poetry. Nonetheless, what is important for us here is only that it
demonstrates a strong imbrication of practical matters, of summoning up in verse the
visceral and auditory atmosphere of this event. Buddhism here is very much a practice
embodied in the taskscape, in the *eungs* and *euhs*, the ropes and pulleys. In such a
reading, then, the fact that these verses ostensibly emphasize ‘form’ over content does
not mean they are merely exercises in convention. Rather, they tell us something about
a way of living in the landscape, a particular way of making the landscape what it is.
What does it mean to live with landscape in such a way that it is not presented as ‘out
there,’ as static and natural or an inspiration for our internal selves, but which

\(^{35}\) Cited from Nattapon Jatyangton, *Development of Thai Literature*, p.160.
emphasizes the tasks at hand, the viscerality of sound, the sweat and communal solidarity of merit being made over mystery or revelation?

What does this mean in practice for studying Buddhism through premodern Siamese nirat and Sunthorn Phu? It means not seeing Buddhism as defined against something else, but as mutually imbricated in the taskscape at hand. It means paying attention to the ways in which Phu pays attention. If the poets of this age were obsessed with the names of things, as they most certainly were, we have to pay attention to this not merely as a literary convention but as a way of engaging with the landscape, even of making and imagining it in particular way. If they are amazed into reverence by the size and gildedness of Buddha statues, we must question how this features in their poetry – how did this particular aesthetics, this particular emotional-volitional orientation towards what was before them work? If ruins and abandoned monasteries keep appearing in these poems, then in what ways did they signify these ruins and in what ways did these monuments mark or mourn the past?

Such an approach does not necessitate doing away with more traditional modes of looking at history and literature. We can look at genre, at social change, at politics and parody. But what I want to get away from in a sense is the conjuring of this as a world of letters or rather of filling in the historical record rather than investigating it as a way of engaging with the living landscape, of paying attention to how Sunthorn Phu and other poets landscaped the Chao Phraya.
Outline of Chapters

Each chapter shall take a single nirat – or separation journey – of Phu’s and explore out from it in different ways. Each chapter shall focus on a particular feature of the landscape such as ‘footprints’ or ‘ruins and temples.’ Because I am also following Phu’s nirat in the order in which he wrote them, however, and because each nirat contains much that is worth noting, each chapter’s affiliation to a particular feature of the landscape is at times rather loose. However, by at least trying to focus in on a particular aspect of the landscape we can track the associations that that feature conjured up for Phu, his contemporaries and his poetic predecessors.

The first chapter “Rivers of sorrow, cities of song,” shall work as an introduction to the genre of nirat more broadly as well as this study’s approach of understanding Buddhism through landscape and poetry. The chapter shall go over the history of the nirat genre, beginning with some of the oldest examples from the beginning of the sixteenth-century. For the Lamentations of Sri Prat, I follow what could be called a literary studies approach, collating a series of tropes and trends common to the nirat genre. For the Klong Haripunchai, I follow what could be called a traditional religious-studies inclined approach, looking at what can be excavated in terms of sects and ritual practice from a nirat of pilgrimage. Finally, I argue for approaches which combine the
two, that sets us neither in the world of letters nor the world of religion, but rather, thinking of *nirat* as writing in and of a Buddhist landscape.

The second chapter “Lines to the Footprint,” begins with Phu’s second *nirat*, which follows his journey in 1807 to the Buddha’s Footprint in Saraburi. Rather than only follow Phu’s *nirat*, this chapter explores more generally the history of Buddha Footprints and the Saraburi Footprint in particular. Mixing historical documentation with early verse on the Footprint, I argue for understanding the Footprint not as an icon but as a point at which a series of lines of travel in the landscape coalesced. Phu’s *nirat* features as one such verse in the history of the lines that led to the Saraburi Footprint.

The third chapter “Temples and the ruins of time,” meets Phu once he had been exiled from court. This is an experience he recounts in the *Nirat to Golden Mountain Temple*, considered one of Phu’s finest poems and one of the most important examples of the genre. In this, Phu’s first poem after his unwilling ordination as a monk, the theme of time as impermanence is explored explicitly, the author’s memories wedded to the landscape. The poem also stands as an implicit critique of Rama 3rd’s reign. In particular, I look at how temples and ruins work in the poem to tell a particular story about Phu and the landscape in which he lived. Comparing *Golden Mountain* with European literature on ruins gives us insight into what actually turns out to be a quite complex meditation on time, but one which takes place in culturally-specific ways of figuring the local landscape and its history.
The fourth chapter, “The forest of quicksilver and spirit-lords,” explores two later *nirat* in which Phu travels with his sons to look for alchemical materials. Understanding what Phu is doing here in his telling of this forested region requires placing it in the highly contested ground between ‘practices of transformation’ and the proper ‘field of merit.’ In his quicksilver poems, Phu continually fails to find what he is looking for. This would seem to give an unequivocal argument against ‘practices of transformation’ such as alchemy, but a deeper look at Phu’s journeys reveal a more ambivalent attitude, one that skirts the tension between the wrong-headedness of such practices and the unavoidable allure nevertheless of seeking out what they claim to offer.

The fifth chapter “The heavens, the ocean and parody in early Bangkok,” looks at Phu’s *Lamentations*, in which Phu has a dream-vision of a beautiful angel who visits him in his monk’s hut. It is a highly unconventional *nirat* which really is a mix of three separate genres – *Nirat*, Buddhist dream-vision literature and journeys of flight - which, I argue, Phu parodies in turn. Unlike the prior *nirat* discussed in this dissertation, this poem is more concerned with the literary landscape than with the local landscape. As such, putting it into context requires exploring the broader world of popular and courtly literature of this time. This chapter provides then a brief introduction to the larger world of epics of romancing bodhisattvas, Phu’s own epic work and the parodic courtly literature that began to take off in Rama 3’s reign. Here I argue that, contrary to the wide-spread view in scholarship that premodern cosmologies were moral and concerned with religious truths, the wider-world of oceans and islands was in fact being
used to contest such received truths, to work with the shock of the new in their own way. Phu’s work used these imagined wider geographies, often in parodies, to place not bodhisattvas and other persons-of-merit at the center, but imperfect characters and personas such as his own who had to rely on their own knowledge and personal industry.

This study admits to modern aesthetic commitments and tellings of time and space in order to stage the experiment of going beyond them with Sunthorn Phu’s *nirat*. It tries not only to describe via literary or historical context but to understand how someone moved in a particular Buddhist landscape. For Chao Phraya of nineteenth-century Siam was, as Merleau-Ponty wrote of landscapes generally, not so much the *object* as one particular ‘homeland of our thoughts.’
Ayutthaya, fallen, has floated back from heaven.
The throne, the palace towers, uppermost and awe-inspiring.
Merit, ancient, of kings constructs halls bright and glistening.
It obstructs the pathways to evil, it inaugurates the open sky.
And they flourish, the hearts of our countrymen.

(Narithibet, *Nirat Narin*)

Oh, this boat has overcome the vortex of the rivers
Yet this heart turns and dallies still without escape.

(Sunthorn Phu, *Nirat to Golden Mountain*)

The newly-constructed capital of Bangkok sought to replicate the glories of fallen Ayutthaya, a place of dharmic and Brahmanic excellence centered around the palace and the person of the king. Bangkok was one of many Eastern cities dubbed ‘the Venice of the East,’ though in fact water transport and water-life was probably even more prevalent in Bangkok that it ever had been in that other vibrantly mercantile capital. John Bowring wrote in 1857 that Bangkok’s highways were, ‘not streets or roads, but the river and the canals.’ Anna Leonowens observed that beyond the palace walls, the beautiful Menam would entertain every traveler with charming scenery ‘as every curve of the river is beautiful with an unexpectedness of its own.’ It was into this landscape of temples, villages, rivers and canals that Phu was born. He also grew up in the palace and
thus also with particular ways of viewing, thinking and writing about the landscape of
which he was a part. After the devastation of the fall of Ayutthaya, cultural and religious
works were being feverishly re-copied and even re-written. Because of this attention to
the literary traditions of the past and because he was later employed as a court scribe,
Phu’s work and his way of thinking and writing about the landscape in which he lived is
informed by a knowledge of the literature of the past which is arguably not matched by
that of his predecessors. In order to analyze his work, we have to put it into the context
of this tradition and the landscape it brought to life.

In this chapter, I give an overview of the nirat genre by summarizing two of the
oldest extant examples, both dating from around the late fifteenth century. The first,
The Lamentations of Sri Prat, I study using a literary studies method following the work
of Gilles Delouche. The second, The Nirat to Haripunchai, I look at more from the
perspective of religious history following the work of Jacques Lagirarde. Finally, I argue
that we should combine these two approaches and try to supplement our
understanding by paying attention to the ways in which these poems landscape the
Buddhist names, monuments and literary conventions around them.

History and Definition of Nirat

The etymology of the word nirat is not entirely clear. It is thought to stem from
the Sanskrit root nir with the suffix asa meaning without hope. Or it could be nirasa
which means ‘seat-less, shelter-less, exiled.’ However, in poetic usage itself it means simply ‘to be far from.’ This indeed is the definition given by the Thai Royal Dictionary, which states the primary meaning of nirat as ‘to be separated from.’

This then would seem to point to the Pāli-Sanskrit origins of the genre itself.

Nirat poems, particularly the earlier extant ones, share some key features with Sanskrit sandeśakāvya or ‘messenger poems.’³⁶ The locus classicus of such poems is Kālidāsa’s (c.4-5th Century) Meghadhūta or “Cloud Messenger” in which a yakṣa hero sends a cloud-messenger to deliver a messenger to his love. In erotically-charged and heavily lyrical language, the yakṣa describes to the cloud the semi-mythic landscape he will pass over on his way there:

At day-break in Ujjayinī, Śiprā’s cool breeze
scented with the fragrance of lotuses comes
prolonging the piercing cries of love-
maddenened sāras-cranes.
Refreshing to the tired limbs of women
after passion’s ecstatic play, it removes
their languor like an artful lover
plying his love with amorous entreaties. ³⁷

³⁷ Verse 33 of Meghadhūta in Rajan, Chandra, Kalidasa: The Loom of Time.
This poem was composed at the apogee of Sanskrit courtly culture, when it was what Pollock has called a ‘cosmopolitan’ language. In the first centuries C.E., Sanskrit, with its universal grammar able to be transported, interpreted and written by any community willing to invest the educative energy to do so, had acted as a vehicle for elite communication and collective cultural imagination. The imaginative maps of Sanskrit converged into a unified global vision of space, one which was ‘meant precisely to occlude local differences, or rather, to make the local universally standard.’ And so Ayutthaya, the birth-place of Rama, could be the name of a South East Asian capital as well as a South Asian one, and thirteenth-century Angkorian kings could claim to be descended from Vishnu. After around the 1100s, Sanskrit ceased to be a cosmopolitan language to the same degree. Similar to the changes undergone by Latin in medieval Europe, while Sanskrit words and poetry continued to carry a certain scholarly, religious and literary prestige, differing kingdoms had begun to write in their own vernaculars. Sandeśakāvya poems in vernacular languages began to proliferate in the large areas in South Asia. These were ‘messenger poems,’ some directly modeled on Kālidāsa’s original but which were mapped onto local geographies, gods and sects. In the Haṃsasandeśa (“The Goose-messenger”) of the medieval South Indian saint-poet, theologian Veṅkaṭeśa (c. 1268-1369), the author’s own geography of South India is

described imaginatively by Rama to his goose messenger. The Vegavatī river is praised, flowing clear and serene in the center of town. Rama urges the goose to do homage and bathe in its sacred waters and the great coral reefs of the Pāṇṭiya country are ‘crimson like a jungle on fire.’ There was a boom in such poems from around the thirteenth century onwards, only a few centuries after the first extant nirats began to appear.\textsuperscript{39} In contrast to Sanskrit where divisions and particular regional geographies are thought to be erased, vernacular messenger poem in South Asian languages, Hopkins writes, had its own ‘lovely contexted map of the real, the ideal and most beloved landscapes, for kings and for the gods, from their patron poet-birds.’\textsuperscript{40}

In that they constitute a form of poetry that ‘links powerful emotions of love, separation, and the desire for reunion to beloved landscape, literary visions of the natural world that echo the separated lovers’ remembered past and anticipated future,’ nirat do closely resemble sandeśakāvya. Like Phu’s nirat poems, Sanskrit and Sanskrit vernacular messenger poems are full of ‘rich fare and lyric excess.’ They feature catalogue-like descriptions of flowers, animals and regions. The rasas, the aesthetic ‘flavors’ of clearly-defined and forceful emotions are, even if they might not always have been known by Siamese poets, most certainly applicable. The śṛṅgārarasa, the erotic and the vīrarasa, the heroic, are present in a way that would have been recognizable to

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\textsuperscript{39} Shulman and Bronner, “The Cloud Turned Goose,” p.12.
\textsuperscript{40} Hopkins, “Lovers Messengers and Beloved Landscapes,” p.47.
\end{flushright}
classical Sanskrit poets. As such, nirat could be called a form of sandeśakāvya poem in a vernacular language.

Having said that, although early nirat poems do utilize Sanskrit and Pāli vocabulary heavily, there is little evidence that the poets who composed them were well-versed in Sanskrit literature itself. There are no translations of Sanskrit, Pāli or Sri Lankan messenger poems known to exist in premodern Siamese. Many of the Tamil and Sri Lankan poets, writing in their vernaculars or in Sanskrit, produced poems which were ‘essays in depth,’ complex plays of locality, identity and temporality by engaging cleverly with the associations of classical Sanskrit. There is no evidence that Ayutthaya poets had even read the kāvya of Kālidāsa however. But what every early nirat poet certainly had read was the Paññassa Jātaka and local, vernacular versions of the Rāmayāṇa or the Ramakien as it was known. It is another example of Pāli-Sanskrit not being so much a ‘source’ but a databank which changes continually as it is referenced. The databank drawn upon in early Ayutthaya and Lanna was apparently quite different from that of Sri Lanka or Kerala. While there may be a link between Sanskrit or Tamil or Sri Lankan messenger poems and nirat, it is just as possible that this was an autochthonous poetic genre, perhaps emerging from boat-rowing songs. Nirat authors were not so much consciously drawing on a canon or tradition as drawing on multiple sources and tropes of which, from a modern scholarly perspective, we can identify Pāli-Sanskrit as being one part. Nirat were poems not of birds or geese surveying from the cloudscape, but sorrowful songs of the rivers and canals.
The Lamentations of Sri Prat

The earliest existing nirat is the Lamentation of Sri Prat, written in about 1488 by an Ayutthaya prince who used Sri Prat as a pseudonym. The poem is considered the archetypal nirat poem, one which has been imitated again and again. In his survey of the nirat genre, the French scholar Gilles Delouche takes the poem as the litmus test against which other nirat are judged. A classical literary study of genre, Delouche’s work takes a definition of nirat and then proceeds to find exceptions to that definition. Although there are drawbacks to such an approach which I shall discuss later, I shall largely follow it here because it is helpful for giving an initial outline of the defining characteristics of the genre.

Sri Prat, having first praised in no uncertain terms the glory of Ayutthaya, writes of how he must part from his beloved:

The sun will fall, the young man said he would come.

She responded that he should not while it was still day.

The dating of this poem is strongly contested. Certain scholars date this poem from the time of King Narai (r.1656-88), ultimately dating this from the semi-legendary biography of the poet himself. The strongest arguments make their case from linguistic similarity between the poem and earlier epic poems the Mahachat Khamluang and Lilit Yuan Phai. These place the poem in the reign of King Boromatrailokanat (r.1448-1478 C.E.). See Manas, “The nature of Nirat poetry and the development of the genre,” pp. 57-61.

Translation by Manas in “The nature of Nirat poetry and the development of the genre,” p.64.
The sun would fall and they each lamented as they each wished to find each other. Each in their rooms, they reclaimed the night, they sought out the night.

This stanza provides us with an example of one important technique in Siamese verse which it is often impossible to translate – polysemy. Thai has an extremely rich vocabulary which is taken from a wide variety of languages, such as Chinese and Khmer, and from religious texts such as Pāli and Sanskrit. The chief poetic treatise of the Ayutthaya period, the Chindamani, advises poets to learn the vocabularies of several languages to improve their abilities at polysemy. The richness of words attests to some extent to what was of importance to them aesthetically and ideologically. There are at least seven words for ‘gold,’ fifty-eight words for ‘king’ and twenty-six words for ‘monk.’¹⁴³ In the poem above, the polysemy plays around a word in the final line, kun, which can mean ‘night’ or can mean ‘to give back,’ as in ‘I will give it back to you later.’ The verse can mean that they ‘ask to get each other back’ or that ‘they get back the night and seek to get each other back.’ The play on meanings is in the ambiguity of whether they get the ‘night’ back or each other back.

Once he has described the parting scenes, the poet must depart from the palace and the city itself. Generally speaking, each stanza will be a description of a single place, each of which will afford a reason to lament his distance from his beloved. Arriving at a

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¹⁴³ Delouche, Nirat, p.37.
temple, village or island, the poet may ask the place or any natural objects he saw fit to be his messenger, or he may ask the gods or spirits to protect his beloved or he may simply express the melancholy of separation. For example:

As I arrived at *Koh Rian*, I asked the Island to deliver my message to you,
At *Koh Khom* I cried out for the Khom people to see for themselves,
That I was blind with passion,
With tears in my eyes, my heart lamented.\(^{44}\)

This stanza, here translated by Manas, allows us to point to another almost untranslatable feature of the language. That is the use of internal rhymes, assonances and consonances and alliteration and, linked to these techniques, the power of repeating sonorous synonyms together. The name of the island – literally, ‘study/inform island’ – is ‘rian’, which slides in a rhyme to the first word of the next line *riam*, an old word meaning ‘I’. In the original, these techniques of internal rhyme give the language a certain urgency and playfulness. In some verses, the poet will mix different sounds and voices, giving onomatopoeic splash sounds, shouting voices, words for ‘joyful’ that actually force the speaker to smile lightly while mouthing them. These effects are so hard to translate that many translators in fact opt to simply avoid the repetition of

\(^{44}\) Manas, “The nature of Nirat poetry and the development of the genre,” p.67.
synonyms, giving us in English only a glib phrase which conveys the basic sense. For example, in the third line which Manas gives as, ‘That I was blind with passion,’ Delouche translates as: ‘I left you, tears darkening my eyes, vertiginous...’ While the basic sense is the same in both, Delouche’s translation strives more fully to replicate the affective power of the poet’s choice of words.45

By far the most characteristic feature of nirat, however, is the technique of playing on the names of particular places, using them as a springboard for lamenting their distance from the beloved. A typical stanza follows:

We arrive, in great hunger, at ‘Provision Water-village.’
Our ‘provisions’ did not arrive in time – my stomach aches!
I think of those rice cakes of yours - so tasty, so expertly-made, my love.
When I open that pot of yours, I am already satisfied.

The name of the water-village is Chanang, which means a terracotta pot with a lid. 46
The name itself then leads the poet to describe a situation which carries on from the

45 But Delouche’s translation ‘pris de vertige’ still cannot do justice to the original ‘wong-wong’ where the long, rounding vowel sound repeating at different tones (middle then high) giving an onomatopoeic sense in the sound of the words themselves of vertigo. I would probably opt to translate the latter as ‘tottering, teetering,’ although this is far from perfect as it has, like so much onomatopoeia, a childish air in English.
46 The name bang means village or town by the river or canal. They are often named after local landmarks or predominant flora.
name of the village: a real situation (as in this case), or an imagined situation, or a remembered situation (as in the second half of the stanza here). The sexual overtones of ‘pot’ and ‘cakes’ work in the original and the translation also.47 A second typical verse is:

When I look upon the waves, my eyes are wet with tears.
I cannot calm myself and wish to be able to die before you.
From the force of waves, we leave Palm-away Village.
I have left you and I cry, striking my chest, calling out, searching for you.

The play here is upon the word *jaak*, which in the first instance means river-village of palm trees. It also mean ‘to leave’ or ‘separate oneself from.’ The double-meaning of *jaak* as ‘palm-tree’ and ‘away from’ is, perhaps more than anything else, what allows readers or listeners to identify this as a *nirat* poem. Precisely the same toponym is used by Sunthorn Phu in a poem written around three-hundred years later, *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*:

47 Although one of the poem’s first modern commentators the Venerable Wonwetphisit thinks that there is no need to think of this as ‘vulgar language.’ The word for ‘pot’ (*maw*) certainly has a sexual connotation today, but this commentator believes that here it is simply a comparison of love with food, a common association in classical Siamese literature. See Phra Wongwetphisit, *A handbook on the Lamentation of Sri Prat*, p.45.
Arriving at Palm-away Village, yet we have nowhere to get ‘away’ to.
Oh, in what past life did I amass such sins and hardships
That fate has decreed women should detest me, ignore me?
I love, I long and labor – but show me pity they do not.

The fondness for this technique of a play of toponyms meant that writers tended to use the same place names over and over again. Favorites were ‘hardship town’ (bang ken) or ‘betel nut village’ (where the poet would recall a time when he and his lover partook of betel nut together) or ‘Thorani Village’ (which bore the name of the goddess Thorani, associated with fertility) or ‘Couple Island.’ These names then were something like the utamakura of classical Japanese poetry, well-known toponyms of a journey which a poet should have something to say about. It was almost not necessary for the poet to actually visit them because they existed more as literary toponyms, as a set of sometimes rigid associations, than they did in the physical world. Similarly, the features of nirat toponyms existed more as extensions of their names and of literary associations than they did as dynamic, populated places. In the Nirat Narin, a celebrated poem written by a contemporary of Sunthorn Phu, the author draws parallels with himself and Sri Prat:

That lamentation which in the past was composed by Sri Prat,
When he was separated from Sichulalak, whom he loved.
The “Twelve Months” where the three learned-ones showed their distress,
Express a sadness which is but a half of mine.\textsuperscript{48}

To a certain degree then, \textit{nirat} were not only conversations with the landscape itself but a conversation with poetic forebears.

Delouche points out that the technique of playing on place names made this very much a local genre of poetry. The chief technique of \textit{nirat} could only work for playing off Thai names. Not long after Sunthorn Phu’s death, during the reign of the great modernizer Rama 4\textsuperscript{th} (r.1851-1868), Mom Rachothai composed a \textit{nirat} of his trip with the Siamese ambassador to London in 1857:

I sit thoughtfully when we reach the Isle of \textit{Fay} (cotton),
And I felt yet more sad and feverish, with a worried heart.
This cotton of which my wadding is made is so tender to the body,
Yet it warms only the body and my heart remains frozen.

The actual name of this Indonesian island is actually ‘Isle of Fay’ in Malay, but \textit{fay} happens to mean ‘cotton’ in Thai. Despite being well away from the Siamese literary landscape, the poet was sure to take up the opportunity of a place-name play-on-words when he could.

\textsuperscript{48} Translation of Gilles Delouche in Delouche, \textit{Nirat}, p.73.
At times, particular places are associated with particular literary events. At Bodhi Tree, Sri Prat draws upon the stories of parting of various well-known protagonists such as Rama and Sita and the South-east Asian bodhisattva protagonist Samuttakote and his wife Phinthubodi. We find the same references used in the nineteenth-century verse of *Nirat Narin*:

I arrive at Bodhi tree village and I think of that forest god.
Who took Phra Khot leapt with him to his lovely one.
I ask also the god of this tree,
I implore to aid me, take me so that I may know the savor of my lady for a long night.

The literary trope referred to here is *um som*, meaning ‘carry off to commingle.’ This occurs when the protagonist, often lost in a forest, pays his respects to the spirit of a tree (especially a Banyan tree) and is then as a reward carried off to his beloved by the spirit for a single ecstatic night. In the many romance stories that were popular in both the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin periods, this trope provided storytellers with a means to have the two lovers meet and fall in love, before beginning the main story of impediment and peregrination. The story here refers to *Samudraghosa Jātaka*, a past life bodhisattva tale which is included in the *Paññāsa Jātaka* (literally “Fifty Jātakas”), a collection (of usually slightly more than fifty) *jātakas* that is assumed to have been first
assembled in Lanna (Chiang Mai) around the sixteenth century. That this tale was widely known and loved even in the fifteenth-century is attested to by its inclusion in two further nirat of Sri Prat’s time, the Kamsuan khlong dan and the Tawatosama:

Before, Phintubadhi was sundered from Phra Kote
The log broke the two apart, cut, lost long.

Samutakote apart from Pin
Thumadi holds out, strives to search,
The sting and worried stab as far he departs,
Yet still he prays to return to her, to be with his budding flower, conjoined.

In temple murals and the vast majority of poems, whole stories were conventionally referenced by a single popular scene from that story, usually one of lovers parting. Samutakote was most often brought to mind by its iconic log-parting scene, in which a log that the lovers were floating on is torn apart. A single place or feature in the landscape could, similarly, be strongly linked to a single literary trope. Several centuries later, the very same Banyan Tree Village is used to roughly the same effect in the Nirat to the Temple of the Prince by Sunthorn Phu:

49 This date is highly contestable and a more recent study places their composition as early as 1265 in Hariphunchai. See Niyada, Paññassa Jātaka, pp.264-298.
50 Quoted from Niyada, Paññasa Jātaka, pp.29-30.
There is a monastery called Banyan Village
A large Banyan tree there, we pay our respects.
Potent angel protectors reside in that tree like
That angel who had once carried off Unarut to see Utsa.
Please, if you know a dearly kissable face, a celestial maiden
Please help carry me to her – that would be wonderful, truly.
Nuzzle nuzzle, tickle and snuzzle young young I in tenderness.

Unarut is the story of Krishna’s grandson Aniruddha and is based on a section of the
Indian epic, the *Mahābhārata*. Again, it is referenced by a scene of *um som*. We can see
here then that this poem almost certainly has knowledge of that text and several others
like it which associate the trope of *um som* with the toponym of Banyan Village. We can
also see that the literary associations were rather fluid, tending to attach themselves to
tropes, scenes and characters just as readily as individual stories.

Once away from the rivers and canals of Ayutthaya or Bangkok, *nirat* poets can
no longer rely on referencing the shared cultural landscape. Sri Prat, once he has left the
environs of the Chao Phraya river and entered the Gulf of Siam, becomes more
desperate, changing from melancholy to despair. Rather than work with toponyms, on
the open ocean he begins to rely more heavily on literary references without reference
to a specific local toponym but to the ocean itself:
The advancing ship finally reaches Sawathakon;

Feverish, I cry then to call you, my sweet one.

Not seeing you, I burn with love all the more.

My breast is devoured in flames, even more than was Rama’s.

The prince Rama used his army of monkeys
To fill the expanse of the ocean, immense.
Like an arrow piercing the air, he went to destroy Ravana.
Who could have got in the way to stop him from killing him?

And although for a long time he was separated from Sita,
They were no less, in the end, reunited again.\footnote{Delouche, \textit{Nirat}, p.54.}

Here the poet refers to the story of Prince Rama using his army of monkeys (or, in some versions, using his monkey commander Hanuman as a bridge) to cross from India to Sri Lanka. Such post-local landscapes were expanded upon with greater length and elaboration particularly by Sunthorn Phu. Here it suffices to say that there were in some \textit{nirat} two sections – the local and shared landscape which was yet still far from the capital and palace and, beyond that, the far-off and unfamiliar.
Sunthorn Phu, then, imbibed this way of writing and thinking about the local landscape from classical sources such as Sri Prat. It was not a river populated by the ‘scattered Edens of fruit-trees’ and ‘ideal paradises of refreshment and repose’ described by Anne Leonowens. It was a river of cultural memory and that cultural memory was inflected by the sadness of separation of the poet from his lover and the palace. In contradistinction to the glittering glory of the palace and its temples, rivers were far-off lines of travel infused with sadness.

A Different Approach to Place Names in *Nirat*

Delouche’s genre-based mode of analysis sees *nirat* firmly as ‘literature,’ principally as writing for pleasure. What follows, then, is an experiment with a different way of understanding the *nirat*’s most characteristic literary technique, the playing with place-names. Names were doing something in this period for Siamese people a lot more than they do for us. To begin with an example, at the beginning of Phu’s *Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint* studied more fully in the following chapter, Phu passes by the canal Sam Sen of which he has the following to say:

I come to Sam Sen and I shall inform you of what I have heard. At the beginning, it was called Sam Saen all throughout the Capital. Folk gathered together to yank out a Buddha image from the waters,
But budge it would not from that earthy abyss of the river.

They cursed it with the name Sam Saen, the name of the river bend.
Yay, but the folk of the capital returned to call it Sam Sen in the end.
Like this, even love surely cannot burn steady
If even the names of the earth can so inexorably alter to be so many.

The name Sam Sen does not have a clear derivation although various theories have been put forth. It may have been the name of an Indian family that lived there (sen being a Pāli-derived word meaning ‘family of’); it may be have been the Thai redaction of ‘Saint Thomas’ (Thomas changing to tham, giving ‘Tham Sain(t)’ then tham changing over time to sam) after a church built in the area by the Portuguese or it could be Malaysian for ‘canal of Muslims’ from Sungai Samsam. At a certain point within the living memory of Sunthorn Phu’s time, the name appears to have changed from Sam Saen meaning three-hundred thousand to Sam Sen. The Nirat of Nai Jat to the Footprint, which clearly follows Phu’s poem as an example, expands at greater length on this legend, writing that the name changed the other way around, from Sam Sen to Sam Saen. Nai Jat writes of the miraculous appearance of a Buddha image in the waters:

52 This information, found online, is apparently contained in an article in a 2014 publication of the Damrong Journal called “The names of Samsen since the Ayutthaya period.” I have been unable to find this article or the name of the author but, as the theories supplied are at least plausible, I have reproduced them here.
53 This image is Luang Por Samsen, currently housed in front of Samsen police station near Khao San Road.
Who floated down the flowing currents of the river

Known to all the commanders, the ruler of the city,

His royal heart aimed to support the religion and

Summoned all three-hundred thousand people in crowds to come

And pull that Buddha, to liberate it from the waters.

They were grappling, dragging, towing it

In the ebbing dirt that did not move

Up until the peasants, their faces pale in fear, yet it would not budge.

When they finally managed to hoist the image out of the water, ‘the earth was like a ditch, a canal of water.’ And ‘so did end’ the name of Sam Sen. The canal was named after the legend, the ‘three-hundred-thousand’ (sam saen) people pulling the image, which created the canal.

Why, then, was the changing of a name – in fact the changing of a single vowel in a name – so worthy of note, such a powerful sign of impermanence? The way in which a language at a specific time works with toponyms varies hugely. In modern English, place names are largely seen as arbitrary linguistic markers. The name itself has little bearing.

But practices of using names to point to, or point into the landscape differ from culture to culture. Steven Feld describes how, for the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, every place lies on a path (tok), so that the naming of places is always a part of a remembrance, in
speech or song, of travelling the tok along which they lie.\textsuperscript{54} Keith Basso points out how for the Western Apache place-names such as ‘whiteness spreads out descending to water’ do not only designate a place, but invite the listener to imagine it pictorially and draw on a wealth of stories, anecdotes of wisdom which can be used creatively to particular social communicative ends.\textsuperscript{55}

Writers and wayfarers of premodern Siam too used names in their own way. Names very much mattered, not only as words to point towards something but also as the premonition of an effect related to that name. The importance of the names of things extended to all things. For example, in the following section of \textit{Nirat to Prince Temple}, Pat describes picking flowers with his young friends and father Sunthorn Phu to offer at a temple:

Wandering and walking, looking for flowers.
We spot them, Sad Flowers on a grassy knoll and, along With Love Flowers, we pluck out seven stalks...
Our reverend father is put in a good mood!
He fixes his \textit{jiwon} robe prettily like he does.
Great fun it is, to skirt round the bridge, go up to the courtyard.

\textsuperscript{55} Basso, Keith. “Speaking with Names: Language and Landscape among the Western Apache,” p.106.
He says that from ‘sadness’ and harmful ‘love’ we must separate ourselves.

“To offer these to the temple is a good thing, children.”

Sunthorn Phu, the reverend father, is particularly happy about this choice of flowers not because of their natural characteristics but because of their names. The belief was that one should leave one’s sadness or broken-heartedness or attachments at the temple. This visit, then, will be doubly effective because they actually have ‘sad’ and ‘love’ flowers to offer. The power of names to engage with places and things in the world, to act as spring-boards for reacting to them extended well beyond the world of literature. Traditionally, during the delivery of a baby words such as ‘stuck,’ ‘fastened,’ ‘hung up,’ and ‘stuck midway’ were forbidden lest they might hamper the delivery. In hunting elephants, a special vocabulary had to be used for success in the hunt and for appeasing the spirits of the forest. Names carried, then, not just a significance (as a signifier) but the premonition of an effect related to that name-word itself. A place itself could signal a curse or a benediction, purely on the basis of its name. Certain place-names would even elicit a moment of wishful prayer, as if the location itself were a shrine as in the following verse of Phu:

We come to Arising Island (Koh Kert), oh for fortune and prosperity to arise,
To have not those who would talk down to you, splinters and thorns;
To be born with luck, well-ordered, quiet and pretty,
Like the name of this island – Arising Island, excellent and esteemed.

Knowing the names of places and things was also a sign of a person in the know. In the *Journey to Prince Temple*, Sunthorn Phu’s son Pat continually has his ‘reverend father’ (*than bidan*) explain to him the names and significances of places. This is not necessarily a way of imparting ‘information.’ Rather, like the learning of a craft, the learning of names was something that involved Phu and Pat in the landscape. Names functioned, as Ingold says of stories, not like weaving a tapestry to cover up the world, but rather a way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers into it.\(^{57}\) This way of using names to point oneself into the landscape is perhaps most scenically described in *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*:

> We’d admire the mountains, the rows of trees in the distance,
> The houses over there - picture perfect.
> See them just, just way over there – till our hearts disappear.
> They plant bolsom apples and beans with bulls and buffaloes.
> Admiring at leisure, pointing out the names of places.

To be able to point out the name of places, to react to them, to tell their history, to understand their meanings and effects was an important way in which the landscape itself was made and understood.

A second important aspect of naming was when the king himself bequeathed names on towns and temples. Towns and villages generally had simple Thai names, names which followed significant landmarks. The names of temples, too, largely followed these simple, descriptive names. But when a king bestowed a name, it signified a huge change in what that town or temple was. The king, like the Buddha, was the ultimate giver of names. In the Northern text *Tamnan Ang Salung* (The Legend of Water Basin Mountain), during the Buddha’s mythic visit to Lanna, the Buddha re-names various locales. As Swearer writes of this book of legends: ‘The Buddha is the name giver, and in the act of naming he creates order. The Buddha’s wanderings establish a map within which particular locations derive meaning as a result of being integrated into a larger scheme of things grounded ultimately in the Buddha.’

So, too, could the king, implicitly like a Buddha, give ultimate, lasting names to places which too were ‘grounded’ in the larger scheme of the refuge of a dharmic kingdom. Rama 1st gave a small islet what is still the longest name of a capital city in the world:

\[ \text{[citation text]} \]

\[ ^{58} \text{Swearer et al., Sacred Mountains of Northern Thailand, p.30.} \]
The city of angels, the great city, the residence of the Emerald Buddha, the impregnable city (of Ayutthaya) of God Indra, the grand capital of the world endowed with nine precious gems, the happy city, abounding in an enormous Royal Palace that resembles the heavenly abode where reigns the reincarnated god, a city given by Indra and built by Vishnukarn.

This change in names not only re-named the place of Bangkok but changed it into something else entirely, grounding it within a completely different orbit and magnitude of significance. The actual name itself gathered together various times, designations, treasures contained within which through the name itself announced at its founding the city’s claim to be a second Ayutthaya, promulgated its manifest rights as a Buddhist and Brahmanic kingdom and prophesized the city’s auspicious future.

The power of a change in toponym by a king can be examined in greater depth by looking at Sunthorn Phu’s particular investment in the change of name of a region along the river between Bangkok and Ayutthaya from Sam Kok (Three Hills) to Pathum Thani. In both the Nirat to Golden Mountain and many subsequent nirat, he elaborates on this change of name:

I arrive at Three Hills Village, a sad yearning for Pinklao.
Great august and pious lord who ruled the land,
Changed it from a land of Three Hills, a Third District,  
To Pathum Thani, Land of Lotuses.  
Oh your kindness, faded and gone, never returning  
But this name you established yet remains for all to know.  
Oh I, Sunthorn, wish to offer up myself  
For in truth I did not live on, like that old name Three Hills - sadder still.  
At the end of my lord, my name too followed.

The designation of Three Hills as a ‘Third District’ in the feudal system of Ayutthaya and early Bangkok meant that it was as far from the King’s ambit as possible. The old name, in rather rough-sounding Thai means Three Hills. The new name given by Rama 2nd in 1815 is in elegantly simple Pāli-Sanskrit and means ‘Land of Lotuses’ – Pathum Dhāni. Changing it to Pathum Thani implies that it came under his munificence, his anachak – the term for a kingdom and means the sphere over which king’s chak, a sun-like disk representing sovereignty – could orbit. The timeless language of Pāli, like the timeless name bestowed by a king in this poem exists in a different reality to that of Phu’s name, as perishable and provincial as the name Sam Sen. Phu elaborates again on Pathum Thani in Nirat to the Temple of the Prince:

Three Hills – a strange and worldly name.  
I ask father and the old man said: “Old folks say  
That King Uthong once had great wealth.
He wished to give it to the people as wages
And have them build a great city-capital, richly ornamented.
When cholera came, his merit had ran out, its life at an end,
All returned in the end to black earth.
And so here has the name Three Hills,
For it describes something very much of this world."
This earth later by our old king was graciously changed.
It is a Mon land who, under protection of his majesty,
The name Pathum Thani was royally given.
In the Tenth month, lotuses come out, every bud.

This verse relates the semi-mythical history of King Uthong (c.1314-1369), the founding king of Ayutthaya who is often said to have abandoned a capital prior to this because of an outbreak of a plague. This abandoned city is sometimes said to be Nakhon Pathom or as somewhere near Suphanburi, but certain legends exist identifying it as Three Hills.
The words in the first line which I have translated as ‘a strange and worldly name’ are lok sa-moot (Pāli: lokiya samudita) and is literally the phrase used to describe ‘assumption’ or ‘conventional’ reality in Buddhist thought. We might be inclined to relate this to Buddhist philosophy in which ‘conventional’ reality is pragmatic perceived reality, as distinguished from the constantly in-flux and interrelated world as it really is.

59 Debates regarding the history of King Uthong can be found in Charnvit, The Rise of Ayutthaya, pp. 81-91.
Here, however, the ‘conventional’ or ‘worldly’ is contrasted against the bequeathing of a Pāli-Sanskrit name by a monarch. Pāli was thought to have immense powers, integrated into the very fabric of reality itself. By implication then, the king having given the Pāli-Sanskrit name Pathum Thani gave it a name in ultimate reality, an imperishable name unlike the story of U Thong and his abandoned kingdom, or like Sunthorn Phu’s own name and reputation.

To conclude this section, we should elaborate further on what Swearer describes as names ‘grounding’ places into larger ‘schemes’ such as the life of the Buddha or of the image of a dharmic kingdom. The qualification I would like to add to this is that such ‘larger schemes’ are never themselves stable even as they try to be and, furthermore, it is precisely in literature that we can most often spot moments in which those schemes are felt and contested. Even as the Pāli-Sanskrit names bequeathed by kings give particular place names in tactile, sensate force a ‘grounding’ in a particular context - a world of kings, Buddhas and righteous dharma - there is always a surplus of meaningfulness in the landscape. Even as Phu points to the world of righteous dharma and kingly names in Pathum Thani, he himself feels betrayed by it. Even as place-names might guide us into a particular ‘scheme,’ we must bear in mind that this field of signification was never static but was lived, felt and continually contested.
While Sri Prat appears to pay relatively little attention to Buddhism and reads as more of a courtly text, *Klong Haripunchai* is specifically a poetic account of a pilgrimage to Hariphunchai temple (*Wat Haripuñjaya*), an ancient city south of the poet’s home in Lanna. *Klong Haripunchai* is believed to have been composed around 1517 C.E. in the Lanna Kingdom, present-day Chiang Mai, although the present text exists in its oldest forms in manuscripts dating from the Ayutthaya period. Examining this poem will give insight into the more strictly Buddhist and Pāli-derived aspects of classical poetry which appear later in Phu’s verse. Rather than the courtly world of letters – between texts and other texts – which is summoned by Delouche’s approach, Lagirarde studies *Klong Haripunchai* as a potential historical record of Buddhism in Northern Thailand in the early sixteenth-century.

The poem begins with a verse which aids scholars in dating the journey and a benediction:

Hand ornamented with flowers raised upon my head,
I bow to the Dharma, Sangha and the dust at my lord’s feet.\(^{60}\)
This is the Year of the Ox, as the Khmers call it.
The Thais call it *mueng pao* and I have written it, a message well-versed.\(^{61}\)

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\(^{60}\) Literally, the verse uses the term ‘earth/sheet’ and ‘dust’. This is perhaps an abbreviation of ‘I bow to the dust at the feet of the lord of our earth.’ It is a phrase of address to the king or the Buddha.
This verse is the key to Lagirarde’s study because it gives an indication of the date of composition. This allows the poem to be put in the context of what historical information (from the Chronicles) and what archaeological evidence there is, where it departs and where it matches up. The poet then goes on to visit Wat Phra Singh (Temple of the Venerable Lion). Here he talks of his desire to go on a journey to ‘make merit’ by making offerings and making wishes at various important Buddhist temples and to local spirits. These, he wishes to donate to his love. Here and in many subsequent verses, he talks of his lover in terms of many lifetimes:

But one star in the sky shines brighter than an *apsara* angel,
She who is the utmost of the lustful heavens, of kingly lineage.\(^{62}\)
All that merit and sin of my lives past - has it pointed toward you?
Ten-thousand life-times missing, only wishing that you would be mine.\(^ {63}\)

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\(^{61}\) A method of counting the years that went in cycles of 60. Calculating these together, the compiler gets the year 2060 B.E. or 1517 C.E. Charnvit notes that the Thai in Ayutthaya were seen as and were keen to be seen as different from their neighbors. Many Sukhothai and Lanna inscriptions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for example, refer to two calendrical systems, one Thai and the other Meng (presumably Mon). See Charnvit, *Rise of Ayutthaya*, p.23.

\(^{62}\) The ‘lustful heavens’ are the *chakāmāvacar*, the name of the six-plane heavens where angels and gods who are still tied to the round of attachments reside. Winai translates this as being a poem referring to the poet’s jealousy of Indra and other gods courting his lover.

\(^{63}\) All translations of *Klong Haripunchai* are my own. Lagirarde does not translate the verses, but only describes the relevant content of the journey itself. Winai has a different interpretation of this verse: “Is it because of the sinful acts of previous lives that still haunt me and make me think of you in this life?” This seems to be due to the particular redaction of the text he is working with. See Winai, *Klong Haripunchai*, p.89.
Lagirarde largely skips over the poetry of love and separation. In reality, Lagirarde writes, ‘it is only an echo of the constitutive suffering which is the essential given of Buddhist discourse.’⁶⁴ A second stanza which is key to the dating of 1517 is:

The Temple of *Maha Avat* (Chedi Luang) – blessed place.
An image of the Great Victor at the Northeast - stately, superb is
The Buddha *Amarakata*, deva-created, worth like that of a whole city.
I offer my homage, I bow my head for the happiness of my lady. (verse 16)

*Amarakata* (*Amorakot* in Thai) or the Emerald Buddha is recorded as residing in Lanna only between 1468 and 1548 before it was taken by King Setthathirat to Luang Phrabang in present day Laos. Judging from this and the astrological time noted in the first verse, this puts the date at 1517. The Emerald Buddha is now the most famous Buddha image in Southeast Asia and the jewel in the crown of Buddhist acquisitions in Bangkok. Yet, as Lagirarde writes, ‘the poet – frustrating his modern readers – accords him (the image) nothing but a rapid offering and a brief salute.’⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Lagirarde, "Un pèlerinage bouddhique au Lanna entre le XVIe et le XVIIe siècle d'après le Khlong Nirat Hariphunchai," p.76.
⁶⁵ Ibid., p.81.
The poet travels around the Lanna capital and down the river on the way to Lamphun (Haripunchai). He makes offerings to various Buddha images and the shrines of local deities and admires the architectural features of temples, making note of those occasions where these sights still stand. Lagirarde takes note of the religious diversity mentioned – the cult of the four Omniscients (the three Buddhas of the past and the Buddha of our era) and Metteyya who will come in the future. Lagirarde points out that many characteristics of the Lanna religious landscape of the time such as the cult of Upagupta are omitted. As such, he puts forward the possibility that the text tries to offer an ‘inoffensive’ and non-polemic version, a version in which ‘all different perceptions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy’ of Lanna Buddhism are erased.

Of particular interest to Lagirarde are the numerous mentions in the poem of temple ruins, particularly those visible from the river around Wiang Kum Kam (Walled City), a former capital city which is believed to have been only abandoned due to flooding in 1558:

Monasteries, more than a hundred, lined up behind me
On both sides of the path (maggha), abandoned.
Perhaps before they were truly beautiful, loved,
A place where many reverends (phra) practiced the four positions. (Verse 65)\(^{66}\)

Later, there are verses on Wat Phra Yuen, another temple abandoned in the verse:

I see not your face but see as I turn, look to
A lonely ashram a place arid, dejected.
A Buddha none come to admire, only I my love.
Far from the scent of rice - empty - making empty my heart.\(^{67}\)

Lagirarde cites Griswold’s research on Wat Phra Yuen.\(^{68}\) In the poem itself, the temple is abandoned, but there are images with inscriptions saying that these were made at the order of the abbot Thera Ananda in 1595, eighty years after the poem was supposed to have been written.\(^{69}\) Finally, these observations lead Lagirarde to the conclusion that a

\(^{66}\) The National Library manuscript says simply ‘where they practiced perseverance (viriya)’ whereas the Chiang Mai manuscript writes where they created/made the four positions (ariyabata), which are sitting, sleeping, walking, standing. The word phra can refer to Buddha statues or monks and most likely refers here to images.

\(^{67}\) Griswold translates this as: “I the poet cannot see the face of my beloved, I see only the emptiness of an abandoned monastery, where all is withered and dry. The deserted statues remind me of myself.” See Griswold, *Wat Phra Yuen Reconsidered*, p.66.

\(^{68}\) A temple to the East of the town of Haripunchai, although the text has it as being to the West which is likely an error in transcription.

\(^{69}\) These observations appear to have been based on a simple misunderstanding in translation. The verse in question does not state that Wat Phra Yuen is abandoned, which would be mysterious because it is in the environs of the city of Haripunchai which the text is intent on describing as a place of dharmic flourishing. Here it simply states that the Buddha image is ‘alone’ and no one comes to visit, probably because they are all at a festival at the main temple.
dating of 1517 is probably too early, as the abandoned monasteries and the attempt at an ‘inoffensive’ Buddhism would seem to indicate a period of ‘decline and fall’ which did, indeed, begin with the death of King Mueang Kaeo in 1525.

In general, one gets the sense that Lagirarde is perhaps somewhat frustrated by the poem itself. Buddhism seems to present itself with an uneven regard for historical accuracy and religious detail. The issue perhaps is also that he is trying to understand the verse from an idea of calendrical time that the poem itself sees as only one way amongst many others of designating time. Second, he is working with a particular idea of what religion is – the political and pragmatic realities of monks, rituals, statues and of subscribed-to beliefs and conflicts between them. Buddhism is not contained in poetry itself. And so Lagirarde is, for instance, surprised that the text barely mentions actual monks or the devotional offerings of laypeople, calling them the ‘great forgotten’ of the text. A literary scholar such as Delouche would know that this was simply a feature of nirat. These were not about people per se. Monastics fall into the background because these poems are about geography, and thus concern important sites and stories about them.

This is in contrast to a prior verse in which temples between and Haripunchai and Lanna are explicitly described as ‘broken.’ See Lagirarde, p.75 and Griswold, Wat Phra Yuan Reconsidered, p.66.

70 In fact, the text quite likely never mentions monks never because the words in the text for ‘monk’ are coterm inous with ‘Buddha image.’ Viriya can simply mean the merit obtained from perseverance.
**Klong Haripunchai – a different approach**

Delouche’s approach to *nirat* is almost solely literary, while that of Lagirarde is religious and historical. Both methods are useful, but simply looking to either the genre-based literary or the strict empty-homogenous historical, we risk ignoring how Buddhism itself functioned poetically in the landscape. As Edward Casey writes in his essay on phenomenological approaches to place, ‘places gather.’ I propose that, instead of expecting to be able excavate empty-homogenous history from this poem, we start with what is in the text itself and try to understand what information, in its own sense of place and time, the text offers.

Let us turn quickly then to some of the more lovelorn sections in *Klong Haripunchai* which Lagirarde skips over:

*A single star of the sky shines brighter than any *apsara*,

Who is the utmost of the lustful spheres, my lady.

All that merit and sin of my lives past - has it pointed toward you?

Ten-thousand life-times missing, wishing that you would be mine. (Verse 5)

Often poetry occurs at the farthest extremes of the horizon of our existential position: the gates of heaven, the furthermost stars, eternity, forevermore. As Heidegger wrote,

71 Casey, Edward S. "How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena" in *Senses of place*, pp.14-51.
the limits in which we (or a speaking subject in a poem) live are contained as within the structures of a built environment, but these are limited not by boundaries but by horizons which are, ‘not that at which something stops... but that from which something begins its presencing.' In other words horizons, the limits of existential imagination, are not walls but creative points of departure that afford growth, movement, longing and hope for the space and time we are gathered into. The poet here has already set up the outermost horizons of the grand Buddhological time and space, which he shall gather into his local landscape. He addresses his lover from afar as a speaking subject but also looks towards the far reaches of morally-directed cosmological time. The good and bad deeds of past lives assign or prognosticate a love that the two must wait for or guard or cherish in the same way that the good deeds of a bodhisattva assign him his fate as a Buddha. The theme continues into following verse:

A single star yet before the dispensation shall end our auspicious aeon.
All four omniscient ones have gone all already and
Only Ari Maitreya has not yet come to take up his lead oh
I wish to touch, to attain you my gem of Tusita heaven, before that time has already come. (Verse 6)

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72 Martin Heidegger quoted in Ingold, Being alive, p.147.
The ‘single star’ (*duang diew*) is used again, but this time not to refer only to the addressee, the poet’s lover. Here it primarily refers to Maitreya, as the single Buddha (single star) left to come before the end of the current aeon or *kalpa*. There is then a deliberate confusion and conflation between his lover and the future Buddha Maitreya. Both are ‘gems’ or angels of Tusita heaven. In this sense, the addressee of the poem is both his lover and Maitreya, both the point of longing for the promise of what is far off and to come. In one sense, the poet wishes to be with his lover before Maitreya comes and after which he will aim for nirvana. But he also aims to attain that Tusita gem (i.e. Maitreya).

The poet proceeds to make the journey itself, the one in the actual landscape navigable by him and which occurred on a specific day and time. He makes his way to Fon Soy (Garland of Sheaves) temple:

Along the path, a monastery near the gates
A jeweled hairpin of the city, called Fon Soy (Garland Temple).
A single star in the night, so close - close like
A lookalike of your soft flesh – yet still you stand out from all counterfeits. (Verse 22)

73 The original language of this verse is dense and not clear. Lagirarde believes the basic sense is that, just as a Buddha image recalls the Buddha himself, the faces of beautiful women recall to the poet the face of his beloved, who is more beautiful than all. Winai Pongsiripian has a very different translation, rejecting the idea that this phrase refers a Buddha image and instead that it refers to the poet’s lover being more beautiful than any courtesan who would come disguised as her (See Winai, *Klong Haripunchai*, p.129). My translation is closer to Winai’s interpretation, though it would seem to me that the poet is comparing the temple’s Buddha image (*duang*...
Already a theme is forming, one of mis-recognition and recognition, of original and copy, an erotic play of presence and absence. Such a theme is far from alien to the world of Sanskrit poetry. Yigal Bronner writes that entire śleṣa poems, poems which played with dual meanings in a single verse, often functioned as complex meditations on similarities between the king and the divine, on recognition and misrecognition, on masking and the question of one’s true identity.74 While there is little evidence of a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit verse in this nirat, the author is most certainly well-versed in Pāli scripture. In at least one interpretation (the one above), her absent-presence is conflated with the beauty of the Buddha image, itself an absent-presence of the Buddha long past. Buddha images and relics are, as Collins writes, not quite like the Christian sense of a relic from the Latin reliquiae meaning ‘(things) left behind.’ Buddhist relics and images continue to serve as points through which the Buddha, his munificence and power, are felt and mediated. They are also traces of his having passed into this temporal world and are hence both signs and effects of the Buddha.75 We could also say that they gather time in the event of witnessing them, gather the long-since-past Buddha into a tangible thing in the here and now which does not provide immediate presence or consummation but rather hope for the far-off future. Or, in this

diew) to his lover and so implicitly saying that an image, even a Buddha image, loses out to its original.

74 See Yigal Bronner, Extreme poetry.
75 Collins, Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities, p.280.
case, they enable a comparison between the ‘temporal connection-and-separation’ of the real Buddha and a statue of him, and of the poet’s real lover and his memories of her.

If this play with time, of the temporal connection-and-separation of Buddhas instantiated in the event of witnessing their images is not clear, it should be in the following verse on a large standing Buddha statue housed in Chedi Luang alongside the Emerald Buddha:

The Aṭṭhāraśa, the eighteenth, first made stood just so tall
While he himself still struggled, that very time -
When the bodhiyān, that realizer of awakening, was still in this very world,
And I see his royal going forth right here, and now pay my respects. (Verse 17)

This Buddha image, eighteen sok or eighteen elbow-lengths in size, was thought to be the same size as Siddhartha Buddha who was supposedly born at a time when people were much larger. Again, in the thematic of ‘counterfeits’ and disguises and stand-ins (and there are many other verses which deal with this in this poem), the poet is given the impression that he is present with the Buddha. The poem stresses different registers of time, more than three times changing between ‘at that time’ and ‘still in this world’ and ‘right now.’ Before the standing Buddha image called the Aṭṭhāraśa, in the event of
his witnessing it, he gathers together the glorious but gone past as almost before him in
the present.

However, such clever conflations of Buddhas and lovers are more or less absent
from the poetry of Sunthorn Phu. *Klong Haripunchai* is rather unusual in this regard and
can perhaps be seen as an example of the particularly learned, creative and scholarly
Buddhism of early sixteenth-century Lanna. There are, nevertheless, many key features
which the poem shares with the much later *nirat* of Sunthorn Phu. As with Matsuo
Basho and other classical Japanese poets, the landscape was marked by shrines and
scenes which prompted greetings and dialogue with various absent-present beings.
Basho wrote greetings to the spirits of the land, rocks, trees and mountains, pacified the
dead, and conversed with poetic masters of the past and characters from well-known
Noh plays.76 Sixteenth-century Lanna is similarly landscaped. Again and again,
encounters with ritual sites in the Lanna landscape engender exchanges with beings that
are not directly present, such as here when the poet pays homage to King Mangrai, the
founder of Lanna:

I see the hall of Lord Mangrai, he of highest power
And I forget not those guardian angels –
I ask for their aid. Guard over me as I implore you

And, when I am near my love, we shall drink a drink together of victory.\footnote{77}{That is to say that, should he be re-united with his beloved again, the poet will return here and make a drink offering to the guardians here.}

Similarly, before Phu ascends a mountain to visit the famous Buddha Footprint at Saraburi he must, like many of his poetic forebears, first pay homage to guardian-spirit of the mountain, Phu Jao Khao Tok:

I stopped in at Khao Tok that leads on to the way.  
To the guarding angels, here arrayed  
I took candles, lit them to praise these gods’ abode –  
Protect us from danger all along the forest way.

Such verses are almost replicated – with the same lines about lighting candles, for instance - from verse to verse across the centuries. The continuation of these step-by-step descriptions of ritual worship exemplifies how the poet brings the listener into the ‘taskscape’ before him. He is not merely inspired by what he sees but tells us specifically the actions he performs there. These texts would have been read aloud, often by a single person to a group and copied as acts of merit. Allowing listeners to hear these actions of merit performed, to put them into the taskscape, allowed them too to participate in that merit.
A second similarity to that of Sunthorn Phu is that the Lanna poet enters what is clearly marked by certain conventions as a wilderness. After he has visited the ancient city of Ku Kham Luang, the poet goes along in a buffalo-drawn cart, lamenting the sounds of the wheels creaking, *euh-eow*; in the forest he encounters snakes, asking them to take a message to his beloved; he feels sympathy for the spirits of Banyan trees which must flee a burning section of the forest (the fire of which makes the crackling-whooshing sound of *fong fai fao fun*) and mourns the sounds of birds and the beauty of trees. Such descriptions of the forest also occur in Sunthorn Phu's verse, often with similar stock phrases and descriptions. The Lanna poet even prepares make-up for his beloved, in an unusual twist on the common trope of courtesans who struggle to maintain their toilette in the wilderness:

Agarwood, sandalwood their cores bright and *kalampak*\(^78\)

I scrape and powder for my chief lady, my soft-skinned one.

Your eyes, tenderly anointed, are as beautiful as diamonds,

Flashing like an axe in the sky ready – ready, to strike down my heart. (Verse 79)

Something similar occurs three-hundred years later while Phu is travelling in the forest on the way to the Saraburi in *Nirat to the Buddha Footprint*. He includes the trope of

\(^{78}\) Both the first and last wood — *Kritsana* and *Kalampak* — are sources of agarwood or aloewood, used for perfume and make-up.
struggling-in-the-wilderness court ladies who ascend their elephants ‘without parting their legs’:

How piteous! A court lady who came along
All her lids and bowls, her white face-powders and turmeric,
Combs, mirrors all – slip, smash to smithereens in the dirt as
Their owner pivots her face to search, tears swelling.

This trope is also seen in much Pāli and Sanskrit literature. For instance, although Vessantara’s wife Maddī actually adapts quickly to jungle life, the epic is still full of descriptions of noblewomen struggling, as in this lament by Vessantara’s mother Queen Phusatī:

“She is used to wearing fine cloth from Benares and linens from Kodumbara. How will Maddī manage when she has to wear clothes made of kusa grass?”

Derived from Pāli and Sanskrit literature, such a trope clearly marked this portion of the journey as the wilderness and, by implication, similar to that of the journey of

79 Cone and Gombrich, The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara, p.22.
Vessantara and other palace-forest-palace travelling heroes and bodhisattvas. It is in this section that the ‘more than a hundred’ monasteries of such interest and suspicion to Lagirarde should be understood not as a description of the known landscape. The ruins here emphasize his distance from the civilized center, out from under the umbrella of kingly munificence.

Having looked at how the time of one particular version of the Pāli imaginaire is gathered into the space of Lanna, we can now begin to examine to what extent what is described in the poem matches up with what we know of historical time. While passing through the ancient city of Ku Kham Luang between Lanna (Chiang Mai) and Haripunchai (Lamphun), the poet encounters a monastery said to have been built as a memorial to the Queen of King Mangrai (c.1238-1311). The poet compares his loss with that of Mangrai and asks for the former king’s spirit to come to his aid:

What was the cause to be far from her, what reason?
Perhaps a nest or a reliquary, I parted or left bereft?
I ask for the protection of Lord Mangrai -
Please divine for me the cause and heal my karma. (Verse 48)

King Mangrai was also the conqueror of what was originally the Mon Kingdom of Haripunchai in 1292. This, only one of the several mentions of King Mangrai as the
victorious founder of the dynasty, is important because the author of this poem is likely the reigning king of Lanna, King Mueang Kaeo (r.1495-1525) at least in poetic conceit.\textsuperscript{80}

If we take the date 1517, Winai notes that the nearby city of Lampang had only been successfully attacked the prior year by the forces of Ayutthaya and the temple of Wat Koo Khao had one of its important Buddha images taken away. This was, then, a time of threat and a time at which the king’s dharmic right to rule was likely in question. King Mueng Kaeo had recently had a palace constructed near Haripunchai in 1512 and had had new defensive walls constructed there in 1514.\textsuperscript{81} The basis of the poem is then likely the king’s procession to inspect these works and to commemorate in verse his attentive re-constructive efforts for that city. Indeed, the poet is sure to praise Haripunchai’s defensive walls:

City of shade and refuge, a wall surrounding,
A continuous line, lotuses built above,
Upon the four mouths floating towers, towering beautifully.
The apertures of this dam-like defense strong, subduing invaders to terror. (Verse 101)

\textsuperscript{80} Winai demonstrates by examining certain vocabulary – such as the poet’s describing his own gifts to Buddha statues as \textit{rajakuson} (kingly good deeds) - that the poem was likely written by a king, or at least by poets of the court in the name of the king. See Winai, \textit{Klong Haripunchai}, p.33.
\textsuperscript{81} Winai, \textit{Klong Haripunchai}, pp.32-3.
When the poet arrives inside the town of Haripunchai itself, he notes that the city was founded by a Brahmin ascetic who traced the outlines of the city in the shape of a conch shell on the ground. The legendary history of the city is gathered succinctly in this verse:

A city of merriment, rousing all in every corner.
By the side of the river where the hermit himself established it,
Known by all ten regions, to all boundaries of the continent – ours,
This blessed land where that Lord stayed and was by Chamathewi ruled. (Verse 148)82

According to the Mulasasana Chronicle, this Brahmin hermit invited Queen Chamathewi the daughter of the king of Lawo (present-day Lopburi), in around 767-68. Once there, she set about establishing Buddhism as the state religion, building chambers for the monks who accompanied her.83 These verses then give us a layered history of Haripunchai, as built like Buddhism itself on what was perceived to be a mysterious and magically-potent Brahmanism. The town and the temple of Haripunchai are at the center of a number of narratives which recount the creation of civilization in the midst of non-civilization, with one account describing the people who lived before

82 In fact, Prasert’s interpretation is that the ‘lord’ here is the Buddha himself, though it seems unlikely that a purported visit by the Buddha would get such short mention. It almost certainly refers to the Brahmin hermit who invited the queen to the spot.

83 Sarassawadee, History of Lanna, p.35.
Chamathewi came as being born inside the footsteps of animals. The first Buddhist queen of the area then came and firmly established the dharma and now true relics of the Buddha himself are housed at the central temple, which are honored as the focal-point of a flourishing dharmic kingdom:

Great relics of the great Victor, the chedi
Like ingots of gold, turmeric-colored, matched with
Tiers of gold, decorated with gems, worth like that of a whole city,
Fiery: firing the ground, the sky bright until the heavens. (Verse 106)

This segment of the long description of the temple follows the convention of comparing the architectural features of important temples to like those of the palaces in the heavens. All of these times then, of a mysterious Brahmanical past, a pioneering Buddhist queen, a conquering founder all reach fruition in the event of witnessing this chedi whose vihāra hall had been ordered refurbished by King Mueang Kaeo in 1514.

What follows next is a description of festivities in the city which reads like the utopian, carnivaleque images of Metteya’s coming in Pāli narratives. The poet

84 Swearer, Wat Haripuñjaya, p.17.
85 Winai, Klong Haripunchai, p.33.
86 For instance, Collins describes how the coming of Maitreya (Pāli: Mettetyya) is often depicted, as it is for example in the Anāgata-vamsa (“The History of the Future”) as something like the ‘unalloyed happiness’ of a festival, in which people’s needs will be looked after almost entirely
expounds at length on how jam-packed, boisterous and merry the temples are. He describes the cracking of gunpowder and fireworks, rice-crackers and candles, praises the singing of the story of Lady Usa, tight-rope walkers and sword shows, the dances of ladies accompanied by drums and flutes. These living people are not interacted with by the poet, however, but landscaped. They are made to serve the image of a flourishing city, an ethnically-diverse land gathered together to a single point in space which itself gathers together in glorious celebration the narratives of their kingdom. This is an example where poetry of ‘beautiful sounds without any profound meaning’ should not be seen as purely superficial. The poem uses onomatopoeia and clashing consonants to describe to listeners the loud, boisterous atmosphere of the festival, to invest them in the taskcape, the sights and sounds which signaled a triumphant culmination which they as listeners could also participate in. The festivities are described in such a way as to put them in the contemporary moment – this is happening now. Similar descriptions can be seen in the Pāli *Vessantara Jātaka* once the prince triumphantly returns from the forest to his capital:

“They entered that lovely city, with its many archways and ramparts, now rich in food and drink, and full of dancing and singing. The country people and townsfolk crowded together, full of friendship... The drum announcing joyful tidings was sounded in the city...”

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Such climatic scenes of celebration are also common to Sunthorn Phu’s poetry and his contemporaries. Just as the whole universe celebrates the Buddha’s attainment of nirvana, the whole kingdom seems to celebrate in the monument of the Haripunchai temple its own collective history and future.

Although creative and full of valuable information on how places were gathered temporally, these early nirat poems, like sandeśa poems, almost always reflected regional identity and royal or sectarian patronage. Here, King Mueang Kaeo’s kingdom is cast as the culmination of Buddhist development in the region. Particular sites, cities fall into the ‘blessed environs’ it describes to form a particular imaginaire which does not occur so much in ‘hard geographical terms’ but in ‘a patterned, re-imagined, accessible socio-aesthetic domain’ which is recognizable to those who live in it. The imbrication of the political with the aesthetic and the landscape is a feature we shall encounter, but with far more contestation and subversion, in some of Sunthorn Phu’s nineteenth-century verses.

Conclusion

Examining the Lamentations of Sriprat has allowed us to study the genre-based conventions by which the landscape of Ayutthaya and later early Bangkok was figured as a glorious capital which branches down into a river of sorrow, of moving further and

further away from the poet’s lover and the palace. Rather than only understanding playing on place-names as a demonstration of literary ability, I suggested that we endeavor to pay as much attention to place-names as the authors of this time. I suggested that place-names, in fact, worked as ways in which the poet – particularly Sunthorn Phu – both figured and felt the landscape, particularly in the way in which it guides poet and reader into a particular realm of signification but, often at the same time, seems to protest against the solidity of that realm. In Klong Haripunchai, following the work of Lagirarde, I attempted to show what information is easily missed when we skip over the ‘poetic’ or ‘aesthetic’ in favor of particular ideas of history and religion. Rather than see nirat as only as a literary exercise, a potential historical document or merely a polemical work of political intent, I have tried to look first at how different realms of time – Buddhist, local and legendary - are gathered by the poet in response to his encounter with various sites and with various beings in the landscape. While still employing literary comparison and historical research, this way of writing about nirat allows us to examine the different ways in which places are gathered in the event of encountering them into emotional, affective presence for a single, wandering individual. Klong Haripunchai also allowed us to see Pāli-derived realms of association for both the forest and the city. The forest was figured as a wilderness of birds and spirits and was by implication similar to the journeys of Pāli-Sanskrit heroes like Rama and Vessantara. The city, on the other hand, in complete contradistinction to the wildness of the forest or the sorrow of the river, was a place of celebration and dharmic fruition. These were
cities of song which gathered together glorious pasts in the present moment of a flourishing kingdom.
CHAPTER 2: Lines to the Footprint

In February 1807, four days before the Magha Puja holiday, Phu left with his master Prince Pathamavamsa (He who bears the lofty name) from the Temple of the Bell. Their goal was to pay their respects at the Buddha’s Footprint in Saraburi Province, about ninety miles north of Bangkok. Pathamavamsa was the eldest son of the Lord of the Hind Court. Rama 2nd was not yet king and Phu had not yet come to prominence. Still only twenty-one years old, he was a simple page and had to row the royal barge along with the other servants:

As for us with a-hey and a-ho we go down the waterways,
And with glad hearts too, beyond all danger.
Yet my chest is in agony, a burning mood.
My forces are frail, my heart unwilling,
The shore flies past my eyes in flashes.
And my shoulders are dying, agony piercing every limb.  

His new wife Chan seems to have already fallen out with him. ‘Ever since the second month, you nursed a grudge against me,’ he writes and begins his journey with a curse of death for any man who dares court her. Phu’s verse gives myriad details of the

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89 Cited from Damrong, Life and Works of Sunthorn Phu, p.31
journey such as would never be found in earlier nirat poems. He describes how his friends jeer at a village of Muslim traders at Takian Canal; or how the watchmen in the jungle at night challenge each other to compose songs; or how a friend tricked him into riding an elephant ‘with oil’ (i.e. in heat) and how he rides it all the same, ‘lest they think I have a woman’s heart.’ Despite these innovations, however, Phu’s nirat is more classical than modern, individualistic or realistic. Understanding it requires knowing its place in the history of literature, politics and religious thought surrounding the Saraburi Footprint itself.

This chapter shall outline the history of the Buddha’s Footprint in Saraburi, especially as it appears in literature of the time. Rather than think of the Footprint as an artistic object, political strategy or any other single object or motivation, this chapter encourages thinking of the Footprint as a point in space where various lines of travel, various modes of embodying voyaging meet. Sunthorn Phu’s nirat, then, is only one place where some of these lines of travel are woven together at a particular time. Understanding where Phu’s own nirat is placed – at an intersection of various lines of journeying, between the medieval road and the modern railway to Saraburi - will help demonstrate his place in the history and development of Siamese literature and religion as well as in changing conceptions of time, space and state.
The Saraburi Buddha Footprint as lines

The Saraburi Footprint, even since the earliest literature, has always been caught up with journeying. It was not so much a thing made or seen as a thing gone to. In scholarly literature, Buddha footprints tend to be looked at as art-historical objects, such as in a survey of Buddha footprints all over the world by De Guerney and of prints in Thailand by Di Crocco. Footprints also form a part of what could be called ‘relic studies’ in Buddhism, exemplified by the work of John Strong and Donald Swearer. As well as sophisticated theoretical considerations of relics and their iconicity, such studies tend to interweave practices towards relics or images of the Buddha with legends regarding their provenance and miraculous effects. Here, however, I am interested in deriving the history of the Footprint via lines of travel as excavated from literary texts. By this, I hope to show how the Footprint itself, as a site of pilgrimage is not only an object onto which beliefs and narratives attach themselves. The Saraburi Footprint is always already an object gone to. In fact, many poets and commentators barely mention the Footprint itself at all. The print in the rock was almost like an addendum to the throne-flights of the Buddha and his followers; the many marching arms of the soldiers of Ayutthaya, Hongsawadi and Cambodia; the shovels, pickaxes and telescopes of Dutch and Portuguese traders building the roads; the festive pomp of royal processions echoing out their festivities throughout the forest as well as the forlorn limbs of poets beseeching the local spirits as they progressed.
What I mean by a ‘line’ here is not necessarily a physical pathway but a laying-down in space (imaginative or real) of rhythms, movement and emotion. Although Deleuze’s work on understanding what he called intensities of becoming is inextricable from his very involved metaphysics, his ideas are useful here because of his refusal to bifurcate text and world and because of his relentless attention to movement (or ‘becomings’) as opposed to static objects and stories. Textual work can, for Deleuze, actually create new ways of becoming, new lines of movement. For instance, Deleuze writes of how the writing of T.E. Lawrence in the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* forms a new idea of travelling in the desert. For Deleuze, this is a mix of Lawrence’s internal abstract ideas, ‘granular’ static images of the desert of sand and light and the rough cadences of ‘phantom German’ which go on to form new assemblages (of language, meaning, intensities, persons, objects).\(^9\) Similarly, emotion, rhythms of language, speeds, longing, desire are mapped out spatially along the lines to the Footprint and move persons just as much as physical pathways in the landscape themselves. More than this, the lines on the way to the Footprint kept forming new ‘assemblages’ out of the old. Lines of travel – of soldiers, of poets, of Buddhas, of railways – kept inter-becoming on their way to the Footprint and these lines which were re-assembled or at least marked in poetry were never only followed but in a constant state of being re-traced.

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\(^9\) *Bogue in “Minor Writing and Minor Literature,”* p.108.
A history of the Saraburi Footprint in terms of kings, armies and roads

Modern pamphlets and history books recount the discovery of the Saraburi Footprint in much the same way. According to the Chronicles, during the reign of King Songtham – “the Dharma Spreader” – (r.1610-1625), a group of monks was sent on an expedition to make rubbings of a Buddha’s Footprint on Sumanakūṭa Mountain. The visiting monks from Ayutthaya, then, were surprised to be asked by Sri Lankan monks why it was they had come all the way to Sri Lanka when, according to their scripture, a footprint had also been left by the Buddha in their own country, at a hill called Suwannabanphot. The monks took this new information back to King Songtham who ordered a search be conducted across the country. A hunter called Nai Pran was said to have discovered that many animals he hit with his arrows would drink from a certain spot and be completely unblemished. He too drank this water and felt all his various bodily ailments drop away. He removed some stones and scooped out the water to reveal the Buddha’s Footprint, with its one-hundred-and-eight auspicious marks. This news of the discovery of the Footprint at Saraburi was soon communicated to the local governor and then the king who took a large royal procession to visit the spot. There, King Songtham ‘rendered obeisance many times with his ten fingers on top of His head and with the five parts of His body touching the ground, and worshipped it with innumerable offerings of finely fragrant joss sticks.’

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91 For example, The Buddha’s Footprints in Saraburi Province by Luang Boribal Buribhand (trans. Luang Suiryabongs) B.E. 2498, Published by Wat Phra Buddha Bat.
From a strictly historical perspective, the story contained in the Chronicles is of course highly suspect. It is very similar to other stories of footprint discoveries in the region, in which persons are led by animals to miraculously discover the footprints. The Burmese footprint at Minbu was discovered after a black dog and a black crow led the way, while it is recorded that the Śrī Pāda of Sri Lanka itself was found by King Vatṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (c.100 B.C.E.) who was led by a deer he was chasing. In other Siamese Chronicles of the time such as the Luang Prasoert Chronicle (c.1680) written in the reign of King Narai the Great, what should have been the momentous discovery of the Footprint is simply not mentioned. Accounts by former residents of Ayutthaya taken as captives to Myanmar state that all the kings of Ayutthaya prior to King Songtham went to venerate the Phra Phutthabat every year without fail. With scant historical evidence, we cannot say precisely when the Saraburi Footprint was discovered proper, although Di Crocco in her survey of Buddha footprints in Thailand seems to imply that, by its lack of markings and its emergence from a natural rock formation, it matches the style of footprints from the second half of the 13th century such as that of Wat Rajabuntham near Lopburi.

92 Strong, Relics of the Buddha, pp.90-93
93 This too is doubtful, as the account given seems largely to paint the portrait of King Songtham as an almost excessively pious king. It mentions the Footprint only to record how Songtham only went there once and then never returned, ‘seeing that those who accompanied him and were employed in the carriage of goods did suffer great hardship.’ The account also relays how the king caused a group of threatening Japanese merchants to faint by roaring at them. See Vivadhanajaya, “Statement of Khun Luanghawat,” p.159.
In reality, the Footprint as a pilgrimage site was not so much ‘discovered’ as an object in the landscape but created and created continually through various strategies and elaborate sponsorship and processions by Ayutthaya kings. Frequently, particularly in the month of March, Ayutthaya kings would make a procession to the Footprint, a truly vast logistical undertaking involving several hundred ornately-designed boats and elephants and guards. It was such immense fanfare that led Geertz to describe Southeast Asian polities as ‘societies of spectacle,’ whose chief purpose was not bureaucracy or the attainment of power which necessitated the propaganda of spectacle, but the production of spectacle itself. As many scholars have argued, even if many polities were highly concerned with spectacle, it is misleading to divorce this from internecine plays of power.94 And indeed this is the case with the Footprint of Saraburi.

The place and time of the finding of the Footprint were more than simply auspicious: they were politically useful. As Anne Blackburn writes in her article on the creation of Buddhist landscapes in Sukhothai history, footprint installations often functioned in part to articulate territorial claims and to forge or at least mark royal authority within a competitive local and regional climate.95 Similarly, Heather Blair shows how pilgrimage journeys by influential lords in Heian Japan could become

94 For a summary of Geertz’s ideas on the theatre state and criticisms of them see MacRae, "Negara Ubud: The Theatre-state in Twenty-first-century Bali," pp.393-413.
95 Blackburn, “Buddhist histories from landscape and architecture,” p.197.
‘strategic practices’ whereby lords demonstrated their influence, power and merit.\textsuperscript{96} The founding of the Saraburi footprint was not perhaps so much to demonstrate power domestically, however, but to stand as a sign of Ayutthaya’s dharmic authority amongst rivaling and rebelling kingdoms. King Songtham ascended the throne in 1610 soon after Ayutthaya had regained independence from the Burmese Toungoo Empire. The breaking away of various vassalage kingdoms such as that of Lanna in the north demonstrate what a fragile hold Ayutthaya had in the region. Immediately prior to the building of the temple at Saraburi in 1624, there had been several failed military expeditions to subdue Cambodia. Several kingdoms at this time were laying claim to one or more of the five footprints left according to scripture in their own kingdom, as a strategy to bolster their claims as true dharmic kingdoms. Burma claimed that Mount Saccabandha and the Nammatā River footprints lay near Minbu. Saraburi was most frequently identified as \emph{Savaṇṇapabbata} (the “Golden Mountain”) or, on occasion as we shall see in the literature below, Mount Saccabandha.

Moreover, the place of the Footprint was strategically fortuitous, even if it is true that King Songtham was genuinely pious, described by one foreign commentator as ‘greatly concerned with the worship of their Gods, as well as with their ecclesiastical orders.’\textsuperscript{97} The Footprint of Saraburi was found close to the ancient city of Lopburi. This was an important strategic stronghold of Ayutthaya, so much so that around thirty years

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\textsuperscript{96} Blair, \textit{Real and Imagined}, p.48.  
\textsuperscript{97} Van Vliet, \textit{Van Vliet’s Siam}, p.261.
after Songtham’s death, King Narai the Great (r.1656-88) decided to move his capital there. In *the Lilit Dan Tamnaan Phraphutatabat* of the early twentieth century, we read that the area around Saraburi is said to have been abandoned following Ayutthaya’s first fall to Burmese forces in 1564. Until the ‘discovery’ of the Footprint, it is likely that it had remained so. After so many vassal kingdoms having fallen away and with the fear of Cambodian retaliation coming in from the east, the building of infrastructure necessitated by pilgrimage to the Footprint was a prudent strategic move, even if it was not recorded in the Chronicles as such. The route required roads, monasteries, royal residences and, undoubtedly, garrisons. A quote from the Chronicles of the reign of King Prasat Thong (r.1629-56), one of Songtham’s successors, makes clear the link between the discovery of the Footprint and ‘strategic’ demonstrations of superiority (both military and dharmic) over rival kingdoms:

In the year of 993 (1631), year of the goat, He made the compassionate order to have craftsmen to leave with plans of the royal capital and of the royal palace of Cambodia, enter the country and build a palace as a place for royals to stay by the banks of *Wat Thepjan* (Temple of the Moon Angel) so that His Majesty might go to pay his respects of the Buddha footprint. And so He took away the old name (of the Cambodian capital) and called it (his own retreat-palace) ‘Phra Nakhon Luang’ (Capital City).  

The copying of the recently defeated Cambodia’s architecture and capital city name in order to build a temporary royal residence for Prasat Thong on the way to Saraburi was a very deliberate demonstration of superiority, some might even say a spiteful one. To have a Khmer-style palace built was to demonstrate one’s command of the losing side’s craftsmen. The fact that it was to be built along the way to the Footprint doubly demonstrated Prasat Thong’s dharmic and military superiority, as well as bolstering his military presence on strategically-important pathways between Ayutthaya, Lopburi and Cambodia.

One ‘line,’ one version of journeying, then, is that of the progression of attacking and defending armies. But, in what Deleuze might have called a new ‘assemblage’ of the same lines of movement, these became the lines of royal processions to the Footprint.

As Rama 4th wrote in his book of the customs of Ayutthaya:

According to the customs that have been passed down to kings, there were three reasons for a royal procession. A royal procession to go to war was one. Another one was to hunt for elephants. To go to pay respects to Phra (sacred sites) such as the Footprint and other such things was also one. 99

In his paper on the footprint, Prince Bidyalankarana, using a surviving bureaucratic text detailing the preparations made for a trip to the footprint by King Borommakot (r.1733-1758), describes the king’s procession to the footprint as ‘like an army moving by water.’

99 Ibid., p.51.
Several officials had to be put in charge of supplying the thirty or so barges with guns and ammunitions, defenses which have been tastefully removed from modern-day royal barge provisions. The river journey took only a single day. The order of supplies for the land portion of the journey runs to ten pages, detailing men, guns and carts as well as one-hundred-and-forty-four elephants and sixty horses.\textsuperscript{100} The Catholic priest Nicholas Gervaise, on a visit to the Footprint in the seventeenth-century, was impressed by the ‘helmets, cuirasses, knee-pieces and armlets of gold’ of rowing soldiers which glinted in the sun.\textsuperscript{101}

One cannot stress enough how important this military aspect of the Footprint was. Although below we shall see many other lines, many other types of progression and journey to the Footprint, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the military and procession journeys were what actually built the Footprint as a destination of pilgrimage. The Chronicles record that, soon after the ‘discovery’ of the Footprint, as well as decreeing that temples, \textit{mondops} and rest-houses be built along the way, Songtham ordered ‘brigades of white men to cut a ten \textit{wa} wide passage for a land route all the way straight to the boat landing…’\textsuperscript{102} This road of Roman-like straightness (sometimes called ‘the road of white men with telescopes’) still exists and is about twenty kilometers long, stretching from the original landing place of king’s boats, the

\textsuperscript{100} H.H. Prince Bidyalankarana, \textit{The Buddha’s Footprints}, pp.7-10. \\
Holy Residence of the Landing, to the Golden Mountain itself. Visiting the Footprint in the 1830s, Bishop Pellegoix wrote:

I was surprised to find a wide and excellent road, paved with bricks, and opened in a straight line across the forests. On both sides of the road, at a league’s distance, were halls or stations with wells dug for the use of the pilgrims.\textsuperscript{103}

At the time of the road’s construction, it was at once a demonstration of logistical capability, command of foreigners and resources, a clearly visible extension of the king’s anachak, as well as the appointing of this as a line to be followed in the future by kings, armies, processions and pilgrimages for centuries to come. It was the creation of this clear and well-resourced line, a road for armies to cross and be seen upon, in the landscape more than anything else that laid the foundations for the Saraburi Footprint as a site of pilgrimage.

\textit{The Bunnowat Kamchan and its sources}

However, the procession to the Footprint is not figured in the poetry of the time as a mock military parade. Here we can begin to trouble the kind of skeptical, historical telling of the Footprint told above which, while useful for understanding the context in which these sites came to be and particularly the motivations of political actors, tell us

\textsuperscript{103} Smithies, \textit{Descriptions of Old Siam}, p.175.
little about how journeys to the Footprint were felt out at the time itself. It is in the aesthetics of *nirat* that we can try to reassemble how emotion and different modes of time were drawn along lines to the Footprint. To investigate how this was accomplished, how grand Buddhological time in a sense overwrote the processions of kings, we must turn to the court-sponsored *Bunnowat Kamchan* (c.1751) by the monk Mahanak. I shall dwell on this at some length because it allows us to look at the Pāli sources from which Footprint-going gain much of their inspiration.

The poem declares in its opening section after having paid homage to various scriptures, kings, Buddhas, *garudas* and angels that:

\[
\text{I shall compose in the manner of *chan*-style verse following my own interpretation,}
\]

\[
\text{Showing thus the past in the ancient chronicle of the *Bunnowat Sutra*.}
\]

This refers to the canonical *Pūrṇāvāda-sūtra*. In the canonical version of this sutra, Venerable Purna requests the Buddha to give him a sermon and the Buddha gives him a talk on the cessation of passions. Purna then goes back to his home and preaches the dharma and later dies having achieved nirvana. That is all. There is nothing about footprints – that was to come later. The *Pūrṇāvāda-sūtra* forms what Tatelman has called the ‘canonical core’ of the Purna story, a ‘narrative grain of sand’ around which
the tradition deposited layer after layer of additional narrative detail. Like Upagupta, Purna was both a type, as a saint – the Buddha, as it were ‘writ small’ – and an individual, with particular stories and narrative strands accruing about his name. The first elaboration of the Purna story which associates him with footprints begins with the Puṇṇovāda-sutta-vāṇṇanā, compiled in Sri Lanka in the sixth century from earlier, no-longer extant texts in Old Sinhalese. Here, Purna’s story begins with a line of travel. These are the travels of his merchant brothers with five-hundred ships. The merchants encounter troubles at sea and call on Purna, who flies over to protect them. As recompense, they wish to offer precious sandalwood trees as a gift to Purna. Purna refuses, asking them instead to build a pavilion for the Buddha. The Buddha and 498 arahants ready themselves to fly to their new pavilion, passing over various lands. On the way, at Purna’s request, the Buddha converts the hermit Saccabandha, who then become the 500th arahant in the Buddha’s flying retinue. The Buddha converts the serpent-king of Nammadā River and leaves a footprint there for him to worship. He also requests that Saccabandha return to his mountain home, leaving a footprint for him as well.

Although to a modern critical eye this might come across as a mere wondrous tale, the sutra involves complicated temporal play in narrating the travelling lines to the footprints. The whole story of Purna is about entourages of 500. 500 ships of merchants,

500 *mondops* to honor the Buddha. When we hear the number 498, obviously the Buddha knows something that the audience yet do not, which is that he will later come across the hermit Saccabandha to complete his retinue. Written into this early narrative of a line that leads to footprints is a story of generosity and faith whose outcome cannot yet be fully perceived by the merchants but which, the narrative foreshadowing assures us, will inevitably come to be in the future. In a similar manner, future pilgrims to footprint who knew this story could imagine that their own journey would culminate in a good outcome, even though they could not yet fully perceive it. Just as the pilgrim will not be able to fully perceive the Buddha in his footprint, they can be assured that he is in a mysterious sense present there as he was in tantalizing glimpses in the text of the sutra – of footprints, of glowing lights - to the merchants. There is then in the earliest scriptures on the footprints a narrative which works on the reader/listener to perceive the Buddha as a present absence in his footprint. The narrative also works to inscribe lines of travel and pilgrimage to the footprint affectively with a promise of just rewards for their labors in the future.

Returning to the *Bunnowat Kamchan*, this dizzying movement of flight is as if superimposed upon King Borommakot’s procession. In this verse, Mahanak describes the Buddha’s retinue flying to the mountain on which he would later imprint his foot:

The Buddha, upon his jeweled throne,
Graciously ascended the firmament.
From the Capital Sawadi with his monks
Just below five hundred of them
In ornate patterns, gilding the Lord,
All over – upon their thrones
Coming across the horizons,
A most exalted succession.

The Buddha is said to be ‘ornamented’ by his followers in the same way that ‘the lord of a flock of hamsa birds’ is by his followers. The poem then goes on to describe the procession of King Boromokot, according to conventional descriptions of different kinds of elephants, animal-shaped boats and entertainments. Mahanak describes the procession of royal boats up the river, then the procession of elephants along the jungle path. He describes also the ‘entertainments’ (mahorasop) such as piece of dance theatre of the Javanese epic Inao, of which he writes:

All the divine, deity-like maidens, fluid, easeful and fine.
Who that sees them would not wish to be,
In their painterly patterns, lost as in a dream.
In Mahanak’s descriptions, the line of travel of the Buddha and his flying throne procession is mixed with that of the king’s army, forming an assemblage of movement and aesthetic appeal drawn onto a line of travel. He describes the royal admiring of the forest and yet more festivities at night. As in *Klong Haripunchai*, these celebrations put forth the king’s procession as not only a trip to worship the Footprint, but implicitly the culmination of the Buddha’s dispensation, happening in the present or at least the continuation of his procession across the heavens. It mirrors to a high degree the description found of processions of Buddhas and bodhisattvas in Pāli narratives after the protagonist’s triumph over tribulation as we can see in this section of the closing lines of the Pāli *Vessantara Jataka*:

> The royal road to Jetuttara from where Vessantara lived was ready, decorated and strewn with flowers. At the departure of Vessantara, the bringer of prosperity to the kingdom of the Sivis, sixty thousand fine-looking fighting men surrounded him on all sides...  

The procession to Saraburi would culminate with the king’s bowing down before the Footprint, then sitting on a stone seat under a Bodhi tree to scatter gold and silver flowers amongst his followers after which more entertainments would ensue. The line of the king’s procession is one assembled from the line of an ordered army and the line

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of the Buddha’s own retinue. To see the king’s retinue – and it must have been an impressive sight for both Ayutthaya nobles and commoners – was to touch excellence, to touch almost the time of the Buddha re-manifested in the present in one’s very own kingdom.

Another important form of a line is added in Siamese redactions of the story that is not to be found in the Sinhalese Pāli texts. These are lines not of progression but parting, itself an especially important mode of a line that led to or led away from the Footprint. In Buddhaghosa’s Aṭṭhakathā version of the Pañcapasūdanī the Buddha, having provided the Nāga kings with a ‘place fit for worship’ (paricaritabbaṭṭhānaṃ), goes to visit the hermit Saccabandha on his mountain:

saccabandhaṃ āha — “tayā mahājano apāyamagge otārito, tvam idheva vasitvā etesaṃ laddhim vissajjāpetvā nibbānamagge patiṭṭhāpehīti.” sopi paricaritabbaṃ yāci. satthā ghanapiṭṭhipāsāne allamattikapiṇḍamhi lañčananāṃ viya padacetyāṃ dassesi, tato jetavanameva gato.

He said to Saccabandha: ‘The people were lowered down by you onto a path to the lower realms. Remain living here, make them relinquish their doctrine and establish them on the path of nirvana.’ He (Saccabandha) too asked for something to worship. The Teacher, printing it on a thick plane of rock as if it were a lump of fresh clay, manifested his footprint-relic. Then, he went to Jetavanāṃ (monastery at Sāvatthi).\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{106} My own translation. VRI/Chaṭṭha-saṅgāyana edition.

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This canonical version supposedly compiled by Buddhaghosa is, then, extremely bare-bones as regards the actual moment of the Buddha’s imprinting of his foot. But the story used in the Bunowaat Kamchan is elaborated. The story told at the beginning section of the Bunnowat Kamchan appears to come from the Puṇṇovāt sūtra gambhīra desana, a Pāli commentarial text of which the oldest copy comes from the Rama 2nd period, but which clearly existed during the Ayutthaya period. Many sections of the poem are more or less liberal, poetic translations from this text into ornately classical Siamese.

In both the sermon text and the introduction to the poem, there is an elaborated account of Saccabaddha’s emotions towards the Buddha’s parting. In the sermon text, as the retinue passes the Saccabaddha Mountain, the Buddha requests Saccabaddha to not return with him but to stay on that mountain and preach the dharma there. This is where the request for the printing of the Buddha-relic is accompanied by descriptions of Saccabaddha’s sorrow and longing:

That day, Saccabaddha did hear that the Buddha’s word that he, the Buddha, would royally depart from that country. Saccabaddha’s longing towards His kindness and power were thick and heavy. ‘Oh anicca! This time I shall be of a sad heart and a sad mind, truly. For Your Radiant Highness will have gone. Now

107 See Wanwiwat Ruttanalum “The Legend of of the Saraburi Buddha’s Footprint in Thai literary Texts Bunnowat Kham Chan and Khlong Lilit Dan Tamnan Phra Buddhhabat.”
surely to be able to see anyone speak as the Lord Buddha, I shall find them not.’  

Saccabaddha then asks the Buddha to put down a place for ‘the flocks of living being, citizens, the great populace, both men and women’ as well as all of the ‘angels and humans’ be able to ‘rest, rely and reside’ upon as well as ‘pay homage to and adore.’

This emotional tone is taken up and again expanded poetically upon by Maha Nak:

That you shall be gone, you who I once looked up -
Then here shall I be of a lonesome, remote-some heart.
I who once heard that sweet-sounding and perfect Dharma, radiant, who -
Shall then assist me? – I shall hear it not.
I who have followed and worshiped you each day and night, bowed down before
Your sacred Feet, those Feet now soon to be vanished from my sight.
Please, I call on Your Majesty’s benevolence,
To print a Buddha’s Footprint here,
To set it down, establish it here at this very station.
Then, though wishing that I may bow and worship you each day,
Yet seeing not Your Reverence, that I may that in your place.  

108 Translated from the Thai. Ibid., pp.48-49.
109 Again, this is more or less a poetic translation of what is found in the Puṇṇōvāt sūtra gambhīra deśana.
This scene of emotional parting is absent in the canonical scripture which focused more on the Buddha’s powers of omniscience, prognostication and his powers of dizzying movement across, above and between human time and space. What is stressed in these (likely) Thai-composed scriptures and poems are those moments of emotional parting. Emotional parting is, as we have seen briefly, the mainstay of most Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin narrative literature. From Inao to the Vessantara Jātaka, the most beloved scenes were ones of leave-taking. This, then, was another ‘line’ which jagged up into the line of the story of the Buddha leaving his footprint – a line of emotional separation and partial connection which later replicated itself in verse contemporaneous with that of Sunthorn Phu.

Peregrination around Saraburi

The Footprint was also near enough to Ayutthaya and Lopburi to be a convenient place for the elaborate processions of kings and local lords, but far enough to provide the sense of journey and arduousness for pilgrimage. In the handful of nirat poems from the Ayutthaya period which survive, it is this sense of the land around Saraburi as beautiful, abundant and far-off that is stressed. Many years later, Bishop Pellegoix in the 1830s described the area around Lopburi as particularly fertile and full of a variety of
birds, an ‘enchanted land where abundance and happiness reside.’ In the nineteenth century, Prince Damrong would describe the environs of the route as ‘very walkable, and very sit-able,’ praising the abundance of hills and caves. This ‘going to admire’ (bai chom) the landscape was another important line that led, in the wandering fashion of peregrination, to and around the area of the Footprint.

Unfortunately, only one nirat to the Footprint survives which appears to pre-date the reign of King Borommakot (r.1733-58). The klong nirat jao fa apai (“Nirat of Prince Forgiveness”) is thought to have been collated during the reign of Rama 2nd from an Ayutthaya period verse by the heir apparent of King Thai Sa (r.1709-32). This nirat, which is itself likely only a fragment, deals with some of the places of his journey from Ayutthaya to Lopburi. A section at the end of the nirat, however, would even by the lonely-and-far-off conventions of nirat, seem to stress the sense of wilderness in the land between Saraburi and Ayutthaya for the young poet:

Lords of this Mountains, piers, forests and jungles,
Lords of the caves, streams of this land,
Lords of bogs and mires in all directions,
Come to take here, these offerings (sangwei) that I show and present.

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110 Quoted from Smithies, Descriptions of Old Siam, p.175.
Angels of the flora and trees, of shining birth-life who, if invaded,
Would guard and maintain this place – here.
And in the skies, you angels, I ask to show compassion to me.
Angels of the earth, show my lady, that she may see.\(^{111}\)

This, like all the early Saraburi-area nirat, do not mention the Footprint itself. Two poems by the famous prince-poet Thammatibet (d.1746), describe the route to Saraburi, the *Kaap ko klong nirat taan sok* (“Nirat verse of the river of sadness”) and *Kaap ho klong prapaat sathaan thong daeng* (“Verse of the visit to Copper River”).

However, these poems are almost entirely descriptive, the first saying its stated aim is to ‘admire the wilderness, caves, forests and jungles.’ It reads like a long list of descriptions, almost a compendium of knowledge concerning rituals, festivals, the toilette of courtesans and flora and fauna.

The *Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint* of Mahanak was perhaps written at the same time as his *Bunnowat Kamchan*. Similar to Prince Aphai, Mahanak interacts with the spirits of the forest, again at the shrine of *Phu Jao Khao Tok* (Spirit-Lord of Falling Mountain), to whom several shrines still exist.\(^{112}\) The prior existence of spirit lords follows what we know about other footprint sites in the region. In both Khmer and

\(^{111}\) From *Prachum Wannakadi Reuang Phra Phutthabat* (Collected Literature On The Buddha’s Footprint), Silpakorn University, 2013. Source: www.vajirayana.org

\(^{112}\) The guardian of the mountain was later adopted as a god by immigrant Chinese who re-named him ‘Gantian Dadi’ (感天大帝).
Lanna landscapes, mountains and striking natural formations were generally associated with powerful spirits. At Doi Suthep, a mountain near Chiang Mai, supernatural figures identified with the mountains were protectors of the inhabitants of the valleys. Buddhist kingdoms brought Buddhism to these areas, drawing protective and symbolic capital to the kingdom by establishing the wish-fulfilling footprints at particularly potent locations.113

All of these poems to Saraburi which do not mention the Footprint would seem to have one thing in common, however. They see the route from Saraburi to Ayutthaya and from Saraburi to Lopburi as a far-off wilderness. Even Mahanak, although he mentions the name of the occasional village, is keen to stress just how far from civilization and safety the route is:

I come to Phantom Village, oh a sunset beyond the Path.114
Might a phantom come to make me lose my way, deceived?
The cool evening time all alone, lost in the wilderness.
Lost on a line of marking stones, marking four hundred sen.

114 The word I have translated as ‘a sunset beyond the path’ is *at-san-don*. This word reads as a word meaning sunset. However, the spelling is that of ‘eight-fold,’ as in the eight-fold path. It is possible that this is simply an alternative spelling of the word for sunset but the theme of being lost on the ‘path’ would seem to bear out the interpretation that the unusual spelling of this word is deliberate and meaningful.
Unlike the templed landscapes of Ayutthaya or Haripunchai which gradually give way to rivers lined with temples and villages and then the wilderness, the route between Ayutthaya and Lopburi and Saraburi is almost entirely conceived of as a landscape of frogs, flowers, phantoms, tigers and local spirit-lords.

But why did none of these early poems mention the Footprint? It may be that this was considered, as a pious and kingly site, unfit for mention in a lovelorn nirat poem. But that is somewhat doubtful because nirat poetry had included the mention of royal and religious sites since its earliest examples. Two other possibilities seem more likely. The first is the very real likelihood that the poets did not mention the Footprint because they did not go there. Sometimes Footprints were ‘forgotten’ for a period and sometimes they were simply not accepted by particular groups as genuine and worthy of visiting. For example, Trent Walker notes how in the translation of a Thai manuscript into Khmer in the nineteenth century, the localized locations of the Buddha’s footprints in Siam, one near Ayutthaya and one near Chiang Mai, are deliberately omitted and replaced with their Pāli counterparts.115 While the Thai text celebrates the fact that the Buddha’s footprints in Siam can be visited ‘by women and men of all stripes morning and evening, by the rooster’s call,’ the Khmer translation laments that ‘we cannot even go near to witness’ the five sites of the footprints. In other words, the validity of sites of the Buddha’s footprints were always highly contestable, either by monks from other

kingdoms or, perhaps, from people within the same court. A second reason is that the route between Ayutthaya, Lopburi and Saraburi was and had perhaps been previously chiefly seen as an area of retreat for kings and nobles, an area to rest, admire nature and hunt elephants. And, possibly, this association trumped at times the efforts of kings or particular noble or ecclesiastical factions to have the area recognized as that of a genuine footprint.

**Early Rattanakosin-period Nirat of the Saraburi Footprint**

Immediately after the fall of Ayutthaya, the infrastructure required to maintain and guard the Footprint and pilgrimage path fell apart. Supposedly, a group of Chinese immigrants stationed at Klong Suan Phlu camp, realizing that the kingdom’s armies were in disarray, proceeded to steal the silver sheet covering the floor of the *mondop* and then set fire to the *mondop* itself. After the founding of Bangkok as a second Ayutthaya, Rama 1st quickly ordered the temple of the Footprint to be restored to its former glory and not long after the first poetry of the Rattanakosin era on the Footprint appeared. In the sections that follow, it will become evident why it was necessary first to give such an extended propaedeutic to the *nirat* of the Saraburi Footprint – because they demonstrate the causal power of the different lines to the Footprint (of the Buddha’s throne-flights and the king’s processions), themselves above the creative power of authors or the changes wrought by the coming of modernity. In these poems, what we
might call modernity, realistic subjectivity or a nation-state consciousness emerges piecemeal, tied together from existing lines.

Phu’s nirat ends with final note to his audience which helps to clarify what marks his nirat as separate from those of the Ayutthaya period:

That which was not, I did not set down here.
Those who cannot go can remember and recite these words.
For those who listen, those who read and read this out aloud -
I ask to share a portion of my meritorious deeds with them all.

The quote above and its claim to present what actually happened to the author as a particular individual at a single point in time are indeed broadly characteristic of ways of telling time and space in modern literature. However, Phu’s verses are still in most respects classical. The Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint begins, like the Lamentations of Sri Prat, with a litany of distance from the beloved and palace, riffing on the names of well-known locales. We have already noted his initial verse on Sam Sen Canal. He also writes of Koh Rian (Study Island) that ‘I (riam) am only more grief-laden (kree-am).’ But, having gone up the river from Bangkok to Ayutthaya, Phu then follows the same royal-rest-spot-dotted route followed by Songtham, Boromokot and Mahanak by river and land. Unlike prior nirat, his social position is made clear as he sleeps amongst ‘both
commoners and captains spread upon the sandy banks’ while ‘he of Narai’s line... slept royally in an enthroned boat, the curtain shut/ Drawn tight bound round on all four sides.’ As in older poems around Saraburi, Phu stops at Khao Tok asking those ‘preserving angels of the hillside’ to protect him on his path. At the temple itself, Phu describes in detail what he sees. Just like Mahanak, he goes from outer to inner elements, describing both architectural features and decorative elements of the mondop.116

What Phu pointedly does not do is make any attempt to describe the Footprint itself. Earlier accounts and poems of the Footprint were keen to stress its status as boripot cetiya, as actually touched by the Buddha. The Bunnowat Kamchan mentions that the Footprint possesses, all ‘one-hundred-and-eight sacred marks,’ even though Footprints are not described as such in the Thai-composed Pāli sermon texts that Mahanak was drawing from. The Ayutthaya Chronicles also mention that, upon the discovery of the Footprint, it had the one-hundred-and-eight-marks which were som duey phra bali, ‘as according to Phra Pāli.’ Clearly, there was an attempt by both texts to assert the authenticity as much as possible according to current ideas of what a Buddha Footprint should look like. However, as Lieutenant Malcolm said of the footprint on Adam’s Peak in 1815, ‘it requires a great deal of imagination to trace it out.’ And, as Henry Alabaster said of the Saraburi Footprint itself: “Likeness to a foot there is

116 Nirat to the Buddha’s footprint, translated by Sawanee Nivasabutr, p.113.
none.” In reality, the Footprint does not have one-hundred-and-eight marks and looks itself suspiciously like a natural formation in the rock. Phu was figuring what he saw in a new way, less interested in making the *mondop* be equal to ‘the palaces of Indra’ and more interested in conveying his appreciation of the finer architectural touches and more interested in the stories depicted in the murals than drawing the Footprint itself into the space and time of Buddhist scripture. However, a much later *nirat*, the *Nirat Wat Ruak* by a monk sent as part of a religious delegation by King Chulalongkorn (r.1868-1910), does describe the Footprint as having one-hundred-and-eight marks.

Even as situated and individual ways of telling of the Footprint were gaining ground, classical descriptions and old claims of authenticity still held sway for some poets well into the close of the nineteenth-century.

Phu also does not describe any kind of personal felicity, nor any kind of heightened emotional state upon coming across the *mondop* and Footprint. Instead, having circled the *mondop* and come bowing reverently with his palms joined, he makes a long list of wishes all for his own benefit:

Should I love someone, I ask that I may obtain them.

May this merit of my practice aid me, without obstacle;

May I know not of illness anywhere in my body,

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117 *Strong, Relics of the Buddha*, p.88.
And may my physical form be as handsome as Indra, king of angels.

This should not be seen as a particularly selfish or irreverent prayer however. The otherwise sober and rather idealized description of a pilgrimage to the Footprint in Nirat Wat Ruak has His Reverence Thammatimon make the following wish before the Footprint:

Should my lovely be parted, life extinguished, expired
Ceased to be close to your mortal coil – broken.
I wish that in each life, lineage, language that should come,
That in each and every life-birth I shall not be taken far, gone
No nor never parted from my lovely one.¹¹⁸

This verse is also like Phu’s most famous verse of a commitment of love over many lifetimes from his epic Phra Aphaimani. It is made without any apparent sense of contradiction that the wisher is a monk or that this was a highly personal wish.

While Phu is not forthcoming about his emotional state on encountering the Footprint, many later nirat poets were. His Reverence Phra Thammatimon writes on seeing the *mondop* of the Footprint in truly glowing terms:

Sorrows assuaged, meeting with merriment – all over,
As if I had consumed the riches of heaven, yet more, more!
Come! I refresh my heart at that moment, all sadness are subjugated, grief oh
Mind bolstered in bliss above all, impotent my sorrows, I at acme of all ecstasies.

In that it compares the *mondop* to Indra’s palace and describes the emotions of joy at seeing it, it is similar to Mahanak’s verse:

I forget seeing the sun, maker-of-light
Forget seeing the moon.
Forget the treasures of lords,
Or the earth and the orbits of kings.

The height of happiness, an abundance of bliss.
The lord and sovereign is made
Overjoyed in his heart, as the people
Donate their tributes.
As Cicuzza notes, in Pāli scripture the footprints are often related in a similar way as relics and the hearing of the teachings. The seeing of the footprints themselves is frequently described as able to lead to heightened states, particularly of joy and knowledge. Those who gaze at them develop a clear and serene sensitivity of mind (cittam pasādeti), which in turn yields long-term happiness, and rebirth in a heavenly world. In a significant part of the Adhikaraṇavastu (“The Story of Muktikā”), a painted portrait of the Buddha is a source of strength and a very similar effect is obtained by viewing it. This, then, is perhaps what we see in these verses which describe their emotions on seeing the Footprint and the mondop that contains it.

No poet, however, is quite so moved as Nai Jat whose encounter with the Footprint is worth quoting here at length:

Right-side circling thrice,
Entering the mondop, body with reverence
Bowed in obeisance with my five parts
I collect my mind, I intend to offer:
A lantern and garland of flowers.
Two eyes sided with tears blurred, I part.

... 

119 Cicuzza, A mirror reflecting the whole world, p.30.
120 This is the pose of benjakapradit, bowing with five parts. That is to bow with two hands, two elbows and forehead.
I shall force my face to turn and fade from view.
The Buddha, a glorious lantern, that gives all living beings joy.
Though I see not He himself, but see I yet his Footprint.
I wish to be able to pay obeisance again, lingering long,
For I shall suffer, far from the print of He-who-realized.
As I return sadness, ten-thousand sufferings, my suffering heart shall ease.
Walking, walking – done, stopped in my tracks with suffering
Wishing not to go far, yet the morning light has come and
He, the prince-bud of the Suriyawong, the lineage of Narai,\textsuperscript{121}
Now ascends the seat of his elephant, resplendent.
I go up, riding the elephant, following His royal going,
Yet my chest echoes in sadness, turning, looking back.
I see just, just over there - those blessings of the Teacher.
It’s as if my heart would shatter, yet still I would still live.
Oh that bell, once so loud, never ceasing,
Still I suffer as its sound vanishes, stores of sorrow.
The more I listen, the more silent - more soundless, struck dumb.
The more I strain to see, the more I am awakened to how far off we are.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121} Every Thai king is a Phra Narai, an avatar of Vishnu. This is a prince, so he is a ‘bud’ of Vishnu’s lineage.
\textsuperscript{122} Quoted Ibid., p.114.
This is one example, then, of the Footprint as a relic, as an ‘emotional vision of a beloved object that fills the eyes with tears of joys, sadness, frustration or satisfaction.’

In such lines of parting, the area covered is far smaller than the geographic bringing-together of peoples on a progression. It is very much a personal relating of experience, between the poet and the Footprint or between the poet and the present-absence of the Buddha. In describing in detail the ritual actions of worship he performs, Nai Jat involves listeners in the taskscape of the Footprint and in the merit made there and the merit felt in his emotional parting. Nai Jat links the sound of the bell to his distancing from the Footprint, gradually growing fainter as his sense of nearness to the blessings of the Buddha grow further and further. This, again, was another important line upon which the Footprint coalesced, the line of individual pilgrims feeling the ecstasy of presence-in-absence of the Buddha, the sweet sorrow of parting.

‘Going for fun’ to the Footprint

The way to the Footprint since the earliest poetry on it has often reveled in the festivities along the way. It will come as no surprise to students of pilgrimage that the voyage to the Footprint was often far from a sober undertaking. Damrong describes it as

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123 Eckel, Seeing like the Buddha, p.1.
the place where people ‘have the most fun and merriment’ in all of Thailand. These verses are not of progression or parting, but peregrination. Like the admiration of flora and fauna, they have no obvious goal besides enjoyment and occur around the Footprint rather than at it or on the way to it. Nevertheless, they too were an important constitutive line that led, in a wandering fashion, to or rather around the Footprint. Indeed, Phu’s own nirat to the Footprint in that it contains few lines celebrating procession or of parting from the Footprint can be read as a long ‘going for fun’ to the Footprint poem, a poem whose chief motive is merely to describe the sites and scenery along the way.

Having worshipped and made prayers for his lover Chan at the Footprint, Phu climbs up the mountain, visiting the caves that dot about the ridges and pathways there. There, he describes what he encounters in Tam Pratoon (Arched Roof Cave):

When all the candles went out, you couldn’t see a soul.
Women as they walked interweaved, brushing up close with the men.

Sounds went out, shouts and eeks echoed about the chambers of the cave.
The boys poked and pinched the ladies who shrieked.
Someone hugged a dear old auntie and her heart near blew apart.
Others were smeared and daubed with black soot, looking like massive cats.

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124 Quoted in Anuman, Miscellaneous Traditions, p.231.
When I left the chamber, I looked about at the faces of my friends –
Blackened and smudged – like strangers! Ho-ho! What a laugh!
Some had gotten fingernail scratches on their arms in long streaks.

Going to the Footprint also meant visiting the caves around and, that itself, often meant opportunities, either for lovers or for thieves. Sunthorn Phu’s is not the only account of fun goings on in the caves. The Three Seals Laws, a compendium of laws largely re-copied from surviving Ayutthaya texts in 1801, complained of many nak leng ruffians and thieves who robbed pilgrims on the way and at the site of the pilgrimage. It further complained of monks who: ‘... having arrived at the Footprint unite (with all the rest of them) and at midday enter the cave singing lakon and lamnan song, flirting with pilgrim-ladies... in the night groups those who should be abstemious enter shouting in a circle around a fluttering chicken like laypeople.’

The earliest poems set in the wilderness on the way to the Footprint establish a theme for the playfulness of pilgrims – that of men and women sporting near and in the water. Thammatibet describes in the following verse the courtesans bathing near the pier:

The ladies scoop the water at the pier, washing themselves
Break turmeric stalks, with yellow water delicately patting.
Combing, tying up hair into tiaras or short-crown styles.
Powdering their faces white, strikingly beautiful –
To allure and entice the hearts of men.\(^{126}\)

This was later taken up by Sunthorn Phu, who describes at length the festivities of pilgrims in the streams nearby.

I see ladies and men swim side-by-side in the river,
Noises pooled - gleeful, glad and gay, full-throated in fun.
I see monks a-mingling with pious lay ladies, grouped.
Whoop-down, splash-paddle! Bubbles a-brim where down they plunge - plop!

Later, Phu writes of what was likely a highly frequent activity resulting from such fleeting movement and exchanges, that of courtship:

Young men and women like us here, I’d count a hundred.
They go down to play floating in the stream, sounds in concert

\(^{126}\) Quoted from Nattapon Jatyangton, *Pattanakarn Wannakadi Thai* (Development of Thai Literature), p.181. For a brief summary of the poetic works of Thammatibet, see pp.164-183.
Touching in twos, seducing boys with their shy eyes, their furtive glances.

The most forthcoming in his descriptions of the goings-on around the river is that of Chulalongkorn’s government official, Nai Jat. He writes:

They collect leaves of trees, weaving them together
Making toy boats, floating them, thinking what fun.
Where the rapids are heavy they compete
Inviting each other to place bets, uproars of laughter.

Nai Jat also comments without any sense of contradiction the courting that went on around the river:

Seeing lovely ladies-in-waiting – a happiness to the heart.
Ten-thousand joys to meet up with motive of great import.
They speak sneakily, saying stealthily – all with great skill -
To tell that boy of theirs where to meet them.
“Tomorrow, when the morning’s rays come
You should come to have some fun in the forest,
To go a-twisting and a-turning, taking up angel-hair jasmines
Of which on the ridges of the lake on the rock ledges, there are so many.”

It is not surprising that many ordinary laypeople used the opportunity of a rare long trip for fun and courtship. However different pilgrims to the Saraburi Footprint had different ideas of what proper behavior on the pilgrimage should be. Eade and Sallnow in the edited volume *Contesting the Sacred*, see pilgrimage as a zone of conflicts, of different ideas about what the pilgrimage and pilgrimage site should be. While poets wrote about love and courtship on the way the king, as the guardian of proper Buddhist practice, predictably took on a more stern ideological view on what should happen at the Footprint. The greatest critic of the goings-on at the Footprint was King Rama 4th (r.1851-68), remembered as the great modernizer of Thai Buddhism. He wrote that families go there mostly because ‘soft-hearted men’ were ‘pleaded, beseeched and implored’ into doing so by their wives and that monks there who wished to preach were not listened to. Such a festival was it that there were people who would boast of ‘going on a trip’ to the Footprint ‘to get fed’, because many laywomen went there donating merit ‘without knowing limits’ and could easily be tricked as they were so ‘lost beyond limit in excesses of faith.’ However, as Simon Coleman points out it, might be wrong to focus overly on pilgrimages as sites of ideological conflict, for the simple reason that different interest groups often do not contend for ideological hegemony but ‘look (and

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128 Quoted from Ibid., pp.54-55.
walk) past each other in embodied confirmation of discrepant imaginaries.’ Indeed, Nai Jat’s nirat features the most playfully decadent descriptions of fun and courtship at around the Footprint and also amongst the most pious and emotional moments at the Footprint itself. Even if there was conflict about what a pilgrimage site should be (particularly by Mongkut), for the most part the poets saw no sense of conflict between the festive, the fun and the reverent on the way.

**Train tracks to the Footprint and decline**

The railroad to Saraburi was opened to traffic in May 1897, connecting what had previously been far-off regions only reachable by ox-cart and elephant through malarial jungles to the emerging nation-state. Of several options for the first major railway line in Thailand, one from Bangkok to Nakhon Ratchasima (Ko Lat) to the Northeast was decided upon with the consultation of a German engineer, Karl Bethge, as a way of beginning the railway while still keeping out of the British and French spheres of influence. Still, new lines to the Footprint were inextricable from military and political considerations.

The *Klong Lilit Dan Tamnan Phraphuttabat* of Naratiip Praphonphong was written in 1913 during the reign of Rama 6th (r.1910-25). As Walter Vella relates in

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129 Coleman, “Do you believe in pilgrimage?” p.359.
130 Ramaer, *The Railways of Thailand*, p.3.
Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism this was a time, following the intense efforts at diplomatic reconciliation and the building of infrastructure by his father, when Rama 6th was keen to develop an indigenous Thai Nationalism. In 1914, he established the Literary Society (wannakhadi samason) to give out rewards for the best traditional-style verse in the Thai language. The Society was to be ‘the guardian of the correct style’ and it is with reference to old poems, in a deliberately old-fashioned style that the Tamnan is written. It does, however, offer a distinctly modern laying down of space and time even as it weaves together older lines such as that of a collective procession from older poetry.¹³¹

According to the Tamnan poem, citizens of the past had to rely on ‘carts, horse-drawn carriages and elephants’ and on the way were ‘hard and tired, po-faced well and truly.’ Such people had had to cut pathways in the jungle from different directions before finally reaching and going along river and finally the old royal road. Now, the new railway ‘freshly cuts right through, outright and straightway.’ In this poem, the region related to in the Tamnan is no longer that of Sacchabhada and the Buddha’s visit, but of the simultaneous, novelistic time of modernity. The region of the poem is no longer related to sacred sites, to Sri Lanka and the places of the five footprints, but to a sphere of nation-states. The poem boasts that even monks in India can come to the Footprint

to worship as if it were nearby. It talks again and again of the benefit of the ‘great citizenry’ (*mahachon*). Laid out on the tracks of the railroad were not merely lines of steel, but a way of figuring history and making it part of the trip. In the poem, the railway and the way to the Footprint is now like a living monument to the munificence and grandeur of kings, all thirteen of which are listed and of which Rama 6th is the heir. Whereas the *Bunnowat kamchan* details at great length festivities and pomp of the king’s procession, the *Tamnan* almost entirely omits this, replacing it with the great and varied populace going to the Footprint by train. The ‘outright and straightway’ lines of the railway now meant that one did not have to move through the landscape to reach the Footprint, but could move across it. It was no longer an arduous journey by boat and foot or elephant, a move from the civilized to the periphery and back to the civilized again, but a move within the auspices of the emerging nation-state and its infrastructure the whole way through.

While the *Bunnowat Kamchan* in sense only weaves together two lines, that of the royal procession and that of the Buddha’s throne-flights to the mountain, the *Tamnan* takes on a variety of different perspectives. The author has clearly consulted the Chronicles, previous poems to the Footprint as well as local legends and such. He gives a methodical look how the place came to be, noting the five footprints in Sri Lankan scripture. All of these sources and stories are allowed to sit side-by-side. One example of this more modern, thorough and skeptical figuring of time and place is in the author’s treatment of the ‘one-hundred-and-eight sacred markings.’ While, for
Mahanak, the external markings themselves signify that the Footprint is *boripot cetiya* and ‘sacred’ (*saksit*), what is ‘sacred’ for Narathiip is something more abstract. He writes that what is really ‘sacred’ about the Buddha is his teachings:

The Buddha is the Buddha because of the dharma that he taught.

No, not because His Reverence was luminous or radiant.

It in his Dharma because it leads us to correct behavior.

And if we follow this behavior – what blessings.\(^{132}\)

What is ‘sacred’ is not his transmission of presence in the landscape itself in the form of the Footprint, but something more abstract, the ideas which can he taught and which should be learned and obeyed. When the poem relates the story of King Songtham and Nai Pran’s ‘discovery’ of the Footprint, the author writes:

Who believes this will believe it, taking up each word told.

Seeing it they say, “This is the Footprint of the Buddha!

He floated here on his throne, he printed it for the world.

And, if you go seven times, you will have a place reserved for you in heaven.”

He who discredits will discredit, arguing and losing friends.
They shall see only tricks, delusions, evil imputations all;
A duplicitous tale told to hoodwink the world it is -
Each word he will twist and paint black.

The poem exhibits an increased awareness and possible skepticism towards multiple perspectives and narratives through which the Footprint’s journey is told. Where the poem completely loses its sense of multiple perspectives on narrative and history is when it describes the benefits of the railway to the great citizenry, its sense of forward momentum in gathering together an imagined community of individuals into the line of the new fast and efficient mode of conveyance. Like Mahanak’s poem, it has the momentum of a procession, gathering together a great collection of people towards a moment of triumph but, instead of gathering them into the time of the processions of the Buddha, the *Tamnan* uses the line to the Footprint to portray a nation with its own railways and important historical sites, at least equal to those of Europe. It is an attempt to create the ideal of a modern nation-state not with secularism but with properly historicized Buddhism and, closely related, kingship as its ruling principle.

The railway provided comfort on the journey, but such comfort came at a cost. The celebrated Thai folklorist Anuman Rajathon, provides a personal account of a trip to the Footprint in the 1960s in which he follows and continually cites the verses of
Sunthorn Phu, by that time firmly established as the national poet, throughout. He writes of how new modes of transport made the voyage more comfortable but at the cost of a sense of ‘vigorous endeavor’ (*kwam klang*). Coming by car the second time around, he writes of how simply seeing the whole mountain and temple structure right there at once, rather than gradually encountering it via as you walked from the train, was far less inspiring. The straight-line utility of European trains was not transplanted wholesale however. Anuman writes of how the train would also stop at the shrine of Phra Jao Pho Khao Tok. People would go out and light candles and incense along the way. They said that if they did not worship, it would be an ill-omen for the train and it might break down.

Since the fall of Ayutthaya in fact, it would appear that royal interest in the Footprint had begun to wane. None of the four kings under which Phu lived (Rama 1st – Rama 4th) made the journey as kings. Rama 4th wrote plainly that he considered it to be only a *utesika cetiya* (a reminder of the Buddha) which should nevertheless continue to be royally sponsored as a ‘characteristic of the nation.’ However, Rama 6th put the Temple of the Footprint in Saraburi on a list of nine official top-tier royal temples in 1915. Many noblemen and noble families continued to have great faith in the Saraburi temple and the tradition of going to the Footprint, particularly those families whom the royal family had charged with the temple’s upkeep. But perhaps more than anything

133 Mongkut’s phrase is ‘*Pen koo baan koo meuang.*’ This literally means ‘it is coupled with our home, coupled with our country.’
else, what caused the decline in the popularity of the Footprint appears to have been
‘replacement’ Footprints set up around Bangkok such as at Wat Amarin Ashram in 1873.
This was instantaneously popular. As Damrong describes it:

People would go in mobs squeezed, packed and crunched to see the Footprint without cease... you would go up to have a look at the monthop and see only the lights of candles and the smoke of incense in crowds...\(^\text{134}\)

This, then, was perhaps what led to the decline of the Footprint as a site of pilgrimage.
On the one hand, it was simply far more convenient for most to visit the replacement Footprints in Bangkok. Lines of peregrination faded as it was no longer necessary, even if you did make the trip, to stay there overnight. While for a while, nothing could perhaps compete with the boripot cetiya of the Saraburi Footprint, belief in such a way of understanding time and place was clearly changing into the skeptical and national. Lines of progression and parting, then, also ceased to be replicated and renewed. With this and the collapse of the ‘vigorous endeavor’ required to journey to the Footprint, the lines that had led to the Footprint began to be less affectively felt or followed.
Nowadays, many still stop by the temple to make a visit on the drive towards the

National Park of Khao Yai but it is no longer a central, defining point of the Thai Buddhist landscape.

**Conclusion**

Thinking of the Saraburi Footprint in terms of lines of travel, as opposed to as an art-historical object or as the object of legends and myths, allows us to examine different ways of figuring movement towards the Footprint at different times. It demonstrates how different kinds of movement, like the movement of armies and the movement of flying Buddhas can be woven together to form new lines, new ways of figuring movement towards the Footprint. Without privileging the political, religious, mythical we can gather together literary, personal and historical accounts not to explain the why or the how of the Footprint per se, but demonstrate how it was continually thought of and enacted as a site gone to at different times. The dynamics of progression in the kings’ processions, the emotional parting of Nai Jat from the Footprint and Sacchabadha from the Buddha, the peregrinations of pilgrims bathing and sight-seeing. These all had different intensities of affectivity with which they made and moved. One aimed at bringing together a disparate nation into the progressing image of both a dharmic kingdom and nation-state; one aimed at restoring for the individual an elusive sense of contact with the Buddha while the other was simply content to satisfy various human necessities and pleasures (seeing the sites, courting, bathing, robbing, begging).
along the way. Different *nirat* gather together both the classical and the new, emplacing the affective not so much onto a place but along paths of movement.
CHAPTER 3: Temples and the Ruins of Time

Much time had passed since Sunthorn Phu’s last nirat and much had happened to him in the interim of seventeen years. He had reached the apogee of what was possible for one of commoner birth. Rama 2nd (r.1809-24) was known for ignoring government business in favor of spending time in his elaborate garden of mini-canals and gardens, sitting and composing plays and poems with his favorite courtiers. Amongst these, Phu had been the favorite. He had accompanied the king on expeditions, singing songs to praise him and had even tutored the king’s sons. Phu had been sent to jail for arrogant and drunken behavior but had always been forgiven his trespasses, so invaluable were his gifts and charm to the king. All that abruptly came to an end with the sudden and unexpected demise of Rama 2nd in 1824. In a dimly-recorded but pivotal few days, a succession dispute resulted in the heir apparent Prince Mongkut being ordained in a quiet ceremony and packed off to a monastery on the periphery of the city. In the meantime Prince Chesda, who had distinguished himself in several military campaigns, found favor with the accession committee and was designated as the future King Rama 3rd (r.1824-51). This was the end of Phu’s days of glory. The new king was sober, pragmatic and pious and anything but a keen patron of the arts. Phu quickly ‘ordained to escape’ (nee buat), finding shelter at the nearby at Rachaburuna Temple where his Nirat to Golden Mountain begins.
In this chapter I follow a single nirat, the *Nirat to Golden Mountain*. I argue that this is a far more sophisticated piece of literature than it has so far been appreciated as. In particular, I argue that it is a ‘tale about time,’ a complex meditation on the nature of the passage of time within the constraints of the classical nirat genre. It is also a veiled attack on the reign of Rama 3rd conveying this through the landscape itself, the temples and ruins of this particular Buddhist kingdom.

**Time in the landscape**

Phu’s *Nirat to Golden Mountain* is a poem about time, but time as told through the landscape of the Buddhist kingdom of Bangkok in the early nineteenth-century. In that it works on the reader or listener to conceive of the passage of time in a particular way, the nirat is like the canonical Buddhist texts studied by Steven Collins in *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*. Collins makes use of Paul Ricoeur’s terminology to discuss the medieval Sri Lankan texts the *Buddhavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*. He argues that such texts are ‘tales about time’ because, rather than using time as an ultimate referent or a canvas onto which the narrative is told, time itself is a proximate referent. Time is ‘a figure brought forward for attention and reflection, a character which should be acknowledged in a list of *dramatis personae*.’

While Collins is examining time as a proximate reference in the vast and morally-interconnected timescapes of Buddhist historiography, Ricoeur was largely concerned with modernist writers of tales of time, such as Proust and Virginia Woolf. It will help to briefly elucidate the historical background of these modernists’ treatment of time in order to parse in particular what Phu’s *nirat* is doing and not doing. An important thinker whose philosophy played a pivotal role in thinking about time and who exerted a big influence on modernist writers was Henri Bergson (1859-1941). For Bergson, modern thinkers had become too attached to thinking, like Newton, of time as an empty container and of privileging ‘clock time’ over the way that time is actually experienced by humans. Understanding time as merely repetitive and sequential successions is a way, for Bergson, for us to tidy up the messiness of time as it is actually experienced. Bergson’s ideas about how time and memory make up our perception of the world are thought to have helped inspire Proust’s idea of involuntary memory in *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-27). Perhaps Bergson’s influence was most evocatively brought out in a differentiation between clock time and human time in modernist literature, appearing most clearly in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) when the memories and psychic meanderings of the characters are interspersed with the chiming of Big Ben.

However, Bergson’s theories also imbricated space with time. An ingeniously simple example is given by Bergson. If we consider the ticking of a clock, the lines of a sundial or counting on our fingers all of these still require emplacing time sequentially onto space. Conversely, a tale of place often entails a particular telling of time. Phu was
an author who reflected deeply on the subject of time and memory, bringing this forth in a new way in his work. But this was not the ‘human time’ – of internal monologues, memory or William James’ ‘stream-of-consciousness’ - contra scientific or repetitive and successive time that modernists made use of. This was Buddhist time and, moreover, not the Buddhist time of difficult Buddhist philosophy but, as we have already encountered, the Buddhism in which time inheres, is explored through human relations to the edifices of buildings and relics themselves. Time is not, then, explored as a privileging of human consciousness as against the perceived coldness of scientific rigor and seeing or the alienation of modern life. Rather, the tendency to explore Buddhist thought through objects and buildings, places in the living flow of the landscape was extended further and with more sophistication than it had been previously.

Phu’s poem was not the first nirat to deal proximately with time. There were a series of what Delouche calls ‘temporal nirats’ in which, rather than the passage of the landscape in successive toponyms, there is a passage of months or years. The Poem of the twelve months is the earliest existing temporal nirat, dating from towards the end of the fifteenth century:

On the twelfth month, we make lanterns to make offerings. All of the boys, the girls enjoy themselves floating them...
In the golden lanterns, brilliant lights, is the fire that they contain.
My heart too, is a lantern that burns in its interior...\textsuperscript{136}

The poem conceives of time as the passage of various festivals and celebrations in the palace. The ‘elongation’ of the poet, as Delouche calls it, from his lover occurs temporally rather than spatially. A much later temporal \textit{nirat} poem was composed by Phu’s contemporary, a civil functionary called Nai Mi (1824-51). The \textit{Nirat of the Months} follows the pattern laid out in the classical \textit{Poem of the Twelve Months}:

In the month of the fifth month, the hot season.
Those humans are as happy as can be
They can all see it, amazed, this time of Songkran.
As for me, with a heavy heart I go to present offerings,
To venerate the Buddha images in the \textit{vihara}.\textsuperscript{137}

As Nidhi also notes, it was customary for Thai authors to use royal ceremonies as a device to mark the passage of time. In temporal \textit{nirat}, Delouche writes, instead of ‘playing with the name of a place, the poet plays with that which passes in front of him,

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{136} Delouche, \textit{Nirat}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{137} Cited from Delouche, \textit{Nirat}, p.87.
\end{center}
and that is the only difference.’¹³⁸ Time is still conceived in terms of objects ‘out there’ in Phu’s nirat but, as we shall see, he adds to this something new.

Because I consider the Nirat to Golden Mountain to be a tale about time, I shall make comparisons with writers concerned with time such as Proust, Basho, Yuko Mishima as well as some of the writings of early colonial travelers on ruins in order to bring out what is particular about Phu’s telling of time in the landscape. These tales of time are never quite the same, particularly Phu’s because his is so imbricated in the landscape itself. Remembering Casey’s advice to consider places not as things ‘out there’ but as ‘events’ which gather time and the witnessing individual together, we shall examine how perhaps more than any of these literary thinkers about time, Phu is not only in the landscape he describes but of it.

Setting the themes of Nirat to Golden Mountain

Phu begins his journey at the temple where he had ordained for three rainy seasons since Rama 2nd’s passing away, Wat Rachaburuna:

It’s the eleventh month, end of the rainy season retreat.  
I received my new robe - great blessings. Cross-legged in the boat, cast-down,  
I leave the temple and view its sacred environs.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.82.
Where I passed New Year, the cold season ceremony and rainy retreat.
Three seasons I lived, without worry, at the temple in the cool hours of the night.
This monastery and hall, perhaps it'll be many days before I shall see them again.
I reflect – a spring of tears. It's because wretched ruffians hound, harass me.
I petitioned my superiors to stay, reached out for an inch of promises
And all I got was a yard of lies - all blocked.
So I bid farewell to the monastery, going a lonely traveler;
Coming a severed spirit, scattered upon the waters.

Wat Rachaburuna was one of the first royal temples of the new capital of Bangkok, re-furbished from a pre-existing temple called Wat Liap and given the royal name of Temple of Royal Reconstruction by Rama 1st in 1793. Phu had stayed ordained at this temple for three rainy retreats but, for reasons that are unclear, was now forced to leave. It may have been his drunkenness and rambunctious behavior. Damrong records an anecdote in which it was said that, under the influence of alcohol, Phu could be so poetically inspired that he would dictate two separate poems simultaneously. Another reason might have been that, as is implied in this verse, there was some pressure from his enemies at court. The time of his setting out is significant in understanding the context of the poem, the time after the three-month rainy retreat when monks cannot travel from a single temple and after the elaborate kathin ceremonies, in which monks are given gifts of new robes by laypeople.
In the final lines, Phu describes himself as a *winyan* or spirit. Originally, this is a word from Buddhist philosophy, *viññāṇa* in Pāli meaning ‘consciousness’ and, more exactly, the consciousness associated with particular sense stimuli. In modern-day Thai it usually just means ‘ghost.’ However, here it likely still carried a religious flavor in the sense of a wandering spirit which, after death, roams about looking for a new birth-body. The theme is clearly set-up here. Like a spirit that no longer has a body, Phu no longer has a home or a benefactor to rely on. Like Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), another famous poet-wanderer, Phu compares himself frequently to liminal figures – both, in fact, compare themselves to wandering crows. Like Matsuo Basho, who travelled to the ‘Deep North’ of Japan, Phu is here implicitly travelling to a far-off and liminal realm, a strange place outside of the commonly shared local landscape to re-capture something in that place an idea of the past that he feels is becoming lost. Basho’s journey, however, is motivated by a certain romanticism about journeying prevalent in medieval Japanese culture, with overtones of ‘following the creative’ and the impulsive way-fairing of classical Chinese poets like Li Bai (701-762). However, Phu reflects on the inexorable passage of time as something he – the poet-lover – can never return to just as, as an individual, he assumes he shall never return to the world of the court. In this opening verse Phu’s sense of having been cut adrift, of being a ‘scattered spirit’ here seems total and irremediable.

This theme of having lost his benefactor in particular is what is mourned in the next few intricate verses. Phu passes the palace in his boat and is put into reminiscence
of those times when he was close-by to his ‘royal patron,’ King Rama 2nd. At his king’s ‘nirvana’ or passing away, Phu compares himself to a Buddha image which has had its head cut off. He has become like a ruin, a thing no longer worthy of honoring. It is in the next verse, however, that Phu’s meditation on fallen time achieves a high degree of sophistication:

Arriving at the pier, I see your boat passing, sitting still.
I think of those times before, tears flow.
I once prostrated before with the ministers, oh worthy lord,
As you went along in that boat that houses the golden throne.
You composed songs, verses
And I received the command, to sing and to celebrate you.
The end of the rainy retreat, I watch the waters on the body of the canal.
I cannot vex, trouble nor disappoint your royal heart any longer.
Bowing at your passing, so close that I could smell perfumes disperse -
Pervading, baking smells that refreshed my nostrils.
At the end of the land’s lord, aromatics of wildflowers -
A blaze of merit ended like the smell of those perfumes.

There are in fact three separate times interwoven in this verse. The first is of Phu in the present, sitting alone near a *phae*, a peer of floating logs. This is in contrast to the second remembered time of when he accompanied the royal barge and sung songs to
celebrate the king. The last layer of time is Phu watching his royal benefactor’s funeral barge passing. All of these possibilities are extended in the next lines. The present – Phu sitting in the boat – links with the past – the funeral procession and those times when Phu read poems for the king on his barge - just as the rhymes of lines interweave and release. He harks back to those times when he would sing poems on the royal barge but that same royal barge, ‘which houses the royal throne,’ could also apply to the funeral barge, as could his prostrating, ‘with the ministers.’ But then the image of the funeral barge becomes clearer as ‘baked smells’ – the potent smells of perfumed woods used to mask the smell of the burning of the royal corpse – thrill his nostrils. The final phrase ‘blaze of merit’ comes from the Pāli vāsanā, literally meaning ‘perfumings.’ In Thai, it often means ‘merit’ or ‘fortune’ but Phu was likely aware also of its original Pāli meaning. It could refer to Sunthorn’s merit, or to his karmic attachment to this king because ‘perfumings’ often refer in scripture to an enlightened individual’s residual conditions which continue like the smell of incense which linger after the stick has been extinguished.

Phu’s linking of scent with memory bears comparison with Marcel Proust’s famous literary experiments with time and memory. Proust was famously stimulated by smell, by the ‘taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me,’ which caused his past to rise up before him ‘like the scenery of a theatre.’ Proust hoped to use a sort of inner alchemy to regain amidst ‘the vast structure of recollection’ the insubstantial fragments and ruins of which he is made.
Phu, on the other hand, is like the perfume which lingers after the death of his king, as irredeemable in his sadness in the here and now as the forever-fallen past and his deceased lord to whom he is inextricably attached. Scent is not an impetus for internal reflection, but actually connects Phu’s self to that of the deceased king. What on the surface is a simple lament for his lost lord and personal lost glory, becomes an intricate poetic meditation on identity. In a later part of the poem, Phu wishes to always be reborn as the king’s servant, so that he may never again ‘know this desolation,’ and be ‘lifeless, an empty vessel wandering.’ His true being – of Phu the great court poet – has faded like the scent of the perfumes of the court and the funeral barge.

What Phu most pointedly does not pass or remark upon next is Golden Mountain chedi in Bangkok. It is true that this would have required Phu’s boat to make a diversion down Mahānāk Canal (Great Nāga-Serpent Canal) to get to the temple from the Chao Phraya river. However, in terms of the history of the time, it is a pointed omission on Phu’s part not to visit the new Golden Mountain in Bangkok in his Golden Mountain nirat. Upon his ascension to the throne four years earlier in 1824, Rama 3rd had instigated an ambitious program of temple restorations in Bangkok. One of those temples to undergo extensive renovation was Wat Sri Saket. Construction was not going well. Rama 3rd had wished to build a large, mountain-like chedi after the image of the Golden Mountain Temple in Ayutthaya, which towered over a flat landscape of fields and canals. The site of Wat Si Saket was thought to be particularly suitable because, like the original Golden Mountain temple in Ayutthaya, it was next to Mahānāk Canal.
However, this is precisely what made construction so difficult. The land was wet and soft and unable to support strong weights no matter how many ingenious strategies were employed. It was later recorded that:

“The foundation was dug till the clay layer was reached. Then pilings of phae wood (Eugenia polyantha) were sunk into the earth completely. Then sung wood were made into pillars and spread out over the interspaces.... When the construction reached the second level of the pagoda, the rocks within the structure began to sink 18 meters. As a result the outer brickwork cracked all around.”

Yet more and more layers of pilings were sunk but, in the end, the project ‘had to be left at that to go onto other works.’ It was left unfinished and still to be called after its old name of Wat Si Saket because there was, after all, no ‘golden mountain’ there but, as Rama 5th later wrote, ‘just a messy clump of trees and bricks.’

Although there are no records of precisely when construction of the Golden Mountain pagoda was ordered, begun or started to go awry, it is noted that a Buddha statue was brought to the temple in 1829, indicating that major restorations had already likely begun well before. That is to say that the failed building of the Golden Mountain in Bangkok was big news in 1828 when Sunthorn Phu put pen to paper about his voyage to original Golden

141 Committee of the 200 Years Celebration of Bangkok, Records on the conservation of the city of Rattanakosin, pp.326-330.
Mountain in Ayutthaya. The temple is called Wat Si Saket meaning Temple of the Royal Washing of the Hair, because it is said that Rama 1st had stopped to wash his hair there in 1782 having returned from a war in Cambodia in order to ‘subdue unrest’ in Thonburi. The temple was, then, particularly caught up in the monumental language by which the ruling dynasty narrated its proud claim to rule which started with the brave rescue of the kingdom by Rama 1st from the grasp of his mad despot master, King Taksin (r.1767-82). Tied up with the history of the dynasty would have been the assumption held at this time that this was not a failure in pre-construction surveying but a failure in the Rama 3rd’s duty to build and reconstruct royal temples and, hence, a failure of his merit.

Phu had, after all, every reason not to be happy about the changes that were occurring after the death of his patron. Prince Chakrabongse in *Lords of Life*, his history of the kings of Ayutthaya and Bangkok, calls Rama 2nd ‘the artist.’ In contrast, his chapter on Rama 3rd is titled ‘the ruler.’ A former military commander, Rama 3rd was pragmatic and pious. More pointedly for Sunthorn Phu, he had a near antipathy to the literary arts. According to one story, the bad blood between Rama 3rd and Sunthorn Phu arose because the arrogant poet caused the ambitious prince to lose face in front of his father. Having privately told the young prince that one of his poems was good, he then publicly corrected that same poem in front of the then King Loetlanphalai, an insult that the prince would never forget. Whether this story is apocryphal or not, it is certainly the case that Rama 3rd was less happy to have unruly poets at his court than his father. He ceased to have plays performed in the palace, quickly dismissing performance troupes
from his court. As Vella writes, 'The only fields of literature that the pious and serious-minded Rama 3 supported were religious literature and history.' He sponsored The Venerable Prince Paramanuchit (1790-1853) to re-copy and complete various classical works such as *Samuttakote Kam Chan*; Buddhist works, such as the life of the Buddha; and historical works such as *Lilit Taleng Phai* (Battle with the Mons). These were not written in the playfully decadent language of Sunthorn Phu, but were anachronistically classical and clever, conservative literary works for a conservative-minded monarch.

The stage is set then with Phu’s journey to the original temple in Ayutthaya which Rama 3rd had sought to re-create in Bangkok. This is a poem of pointed critique of the current reign, using temples and the landscape itself to tell the story.

**Phu’s Realism and Individualism**

Soon after leaving the central environs of Bangkok, Phu comes across a sight that acts as the inspiration for one of his most famous verses:

I come to the spirit refinery,
A bellow of smoke rising from the cauldron.
There is a scooping bucket tied to a high post.
Oh, what sin it was - this devilish water that so burned my heart -

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Made me dim, drunk, a madness of such shame.
I did good deeds, ordained and poured only holy water, asking for release,
Aiming to be as the All-knowing Awoken one.
Until I was released, from this drink, not ruined yet.
I don't go near it, I turn my head away, not too much.
No longer drunk on wine, but drunk on love.
How is one to cut, rend, break the thread of one's own thoughts?
Drunk on rice liquor and, by late morning, it's gone.
But this drunkenness of the heart, it remains in my body every night,
every night.

At the time, ‘refinery’ would in reality have been something more like a few men with buckets and cauldrons making rice-derived liquors by the side of the river. What has likely made this poem so popular – many Thai people can still recite at least a portion of it by heart – is that it ties in with Sunthorn Phu’s life and character which are in many respects more widely-known than his poetry. A womanizer and alcoholic yet the favorite of kings, his was the classic artistic problem personality.

Yet, the fact is that we and modern Thai readers are likely reading in anachronistically a love of problem personalities that was not intended in the original.
For this reason, this is perhaps a good point at which to go over what other scholars have never failed to point out about Sunthorn Phu in the context of the history of Siamese literature – his realism and individuality. Delouche writes an entire chapter on
Phu’s ‘personal confidence,’ describing him as one who ‘talks with himself, of himself’ and of whom we come to know ‘his personality, his loves, his qualities and his faults.’  

Manas speaks of Phu’s ‘secular revelation – a continent of very human experience.’  

Nidhi Eoseewong, in his survey of Thai literature and history *Pen and Sail*, links changes in the economy to changes in literary representation writing that, while the *nirat* of the Ayutthaya period had been of the amorous laments of a typified lover, by the early Bangkok period the lover began to be of a ‘real experience during the journey’ coupled with an increasing ‘reality of locations.’  

For Nidhi, writing within the unavoidably prevalent strain of Marxist academic writing that swept Thailand in the 1970s, the fact that Phu talks of ‘low’ things like music, women and commerce perfectly represent ‘the widening consciousness of the bourgeoisie’ and bourgeois readers could empathize with Phu’s character since he was imperfect.

Nidhi is right to point out that Phu was more individualistic than prior *nirat* poets, but Nidhi’s mode of studying literature via changes in the economy and readership, modelled largely after that of Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel*, implies a teleology from premodern ways of writing to modern and realistic. Even if we were to accept these ways of writing as progressively more realistic, Phu’s mode of writing is very far from the kinds of proto-novel that Watt details in eighteenth-century England,

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144 Manas, "The nature of Nirat poetry and the development of the genre," p.176.
146 Nidhi, *Pen and Sail*, pp.171-177.
such as those of Daniel Defoe. We should here then try to break down what changes in representations of reality in poetry and what does not change with Sunthorn Phu. Rather than see modern writing as merely ‘a privileging of the instance against the general’ (such as the description of Chinese junks in the landscape of early Bangkok), we should understand it as a particular arrangement of the relationship between the instance and the general.\textsuperscript{147} That is to say that there is not an increase in ‘reality’ but a cautiously new configuration in the way that reality is represented. While moments like the description of turning away from drink in the above verse and other examples have been taken up as examples of personal revelations of Phu’s character, such moments are in fact few and far between. By no means does Phu’s nirat or his work more generally offer examples of, for instance, what Bakhtin called the ‘psychological time’ of the novel, in which the surrounding world becomes a ‘mere background’ for the hero’s inner tribulations and changes. In the end, Phu’s persona is still subordinated completely to working within the classical frame of the nirat, whose purpose is to tell a particular tale of the landscape.

This can be seen clearly when we take the above verse in the context of the poem as a whole. Imbibing intoxicating liquor is against one of the cardinal five precepts. The \textit{pañcasīla} are commitments to abstain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct (often read as adultery), lying and intoxication. Throughout the

\textsuperscript{147} Hayot, \textit{On Literary Worlds}, p.17.
poem, we see the five precepts being broken one after the other along the Chao Phraya. At Vietnamese Village (Baan Yuan), Phu notices the ‘prawns and fish, crammed and caged’ as well as the ‘fish traps set in a line, all in order,’ breaking the first precept against killing living beings. Rama 3rd had recently, in the tradition of Buddhist kings issuing edicts which demonstrated their royal compassion towards animals in their kingdom, ordered a tax on fish traps as well as abolished the practice of leasing out islands for the collection of sea turtle eggs. At Big Island (Koh Yai), Phu writes that it is a place where ‘malicious folk persist/hiding themselves to attack passing boats,’ in order to steal from them. At Cotton Tree Village, he relates how those who commit adultery will, as it was commonly depicted in Ayutthaya mural paintings of hell, have to climb up a thorny cotton tree. Those men or women in the ‘sixteenth level of hell’ see their illegitimate lover at the top of the tree and climb to the top, ‘thorns injecting spikes, snapping in scores.’ Once they have reached the top, their lover would appear again at the bottom forcing them to continually repeat the process. At Talk Village, Phu writes against the ‘well-flavored’ words of those who are cruel or lie, referring to the precept against speaking falsehoods. It is in the context of demonstrating that this is a landscape where the five precepts are being systematically broken then that we should understand Phu’s famous verse describing the riverside spirit refinery, not as a personal confession per se.148

148 This systematic breaking of the precepts is not unique to Phu’s poem. As Steven Collins notes,
What Nidhi calls an increase in the ‘real experience in the journey’ should then be replaced with a more cautious increase in relating one’s own experiences but only as they relate to the story being told of the landscape. As Nidhi points out, there is a gradual shift more generally in Thai Buddhist literature which accelerated during this period away from a morally-guided universe over many lifetimes to explorations of individual’s lives, filled with the relationships of the protagonist to others and set in the context of their particular time. For example, Paramanuchit’s life of the Buddha omits the many previous incarnations which previous versions had elaborated on to dwell more particularly on the individual life of Siddhartha in ancient India.149 While there certainly was an increase in the tendency to depict individual, time-specific lives in this period, however, it simply gives the wrong impression to say that Phu’s poems are more drawn from ‘real experience.’ They are, rather, re-workings of classical forms and, as such, Phu’s personal recollections are subordinated to telling the tale of the landscape itself – he is not in the landscape but of it.

As for what Nidhi describes as an increased ‘reality of locations,’ it is also true that Phu and his contemporaries gave somewhat more detail of contemporary life than had been the case in earlier Ayutthaya literature. For instance, Nidhi points to a change from describing Ayutthaya in the poetry of that time as a sort of heaven, to nineteenth-

\footnotesize{in the Vessantara Jātaka the five precepts are also at different times in the narrative shown to be broken. See Collins, Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities, p.528.
149 Nidhi, Pen and Sail, p.272.}
century descriptions of a flourishing merchant capital in early Bangkok. Nidhi also notes an increased interest in human activities and accomplishments in the contemporary moment itself as against the activates of various kinds of deities. For instance, some poems describe in detail Chinese junks. However, again, this gives the impression that we are moving towards the ‘real’ descriptions of the modern novel. But nineteenth-century nirat were very different. Most importantly, there is nothing to suggest in these poems that Phu lived in a nascent phase of modern telling of time and space. In these poems and those of his contemporaries, there is no sense of the world of sequential, physical cause and effect which is assumed in any narrative to take place historically and geographically relatively independently of the activity of any given story. This is what Benedict Anderson called the ‘novelistic’ time of modernity which manages to establish the imagined communities of nation-state by teaching people to think about the world as the product of shared spatial and temporal logics. Even contemporary detail, like describing merchants and junks, served the purpose of telling the story of the landscape in a particular, classical and morally-inflected way.

A dharmic kingdom in decline

Particularly important to Nidhi’s increased ‘reality of locations’ is Phu’s descriptions of Chinese merchants and Chinese junks. But these are nothing like, for instance, what Barthes called the ‘reality effect’ of a realist novel’s inclusion of ‘useless’
descriptive detail. Descriptions of the Chinese and their merchant activity had for Phu an important function in telling the landscape in a particular way. Phu’s aim in this poem was to tell of the landscape of a Buddhist kingdom in decline and, later on, to imply what he thinks a truer dharmic kingdom would be. Phu is telling time via place not in modern time, but in the time of his own Buddhist kingdom and its decline.

The first time that Phu mentions the Chinese in *Golden Mountain* is after having praised Rama 3rd in what first seem rather perfunctory terms, wishing that he will stand for as long as a famous stone pillar:

I arrive at the monastery called Border-Boundary Temple,
Yet I don’t get to catch a glimpse of its famous stone pillar,
An essential pillar, that divides this land,
Its name widely known until the ends of the earth and celebrated.
I call upon the virtue of the Buddha to assist me -
That, even though we are all fated to die, fade away and be born again
That you, my sovereign, shall have life as long as this stone pillar,
Life as long as the sky and earth.
Going past the temple, we see a raft
Like a floating peer, parked, selling wares.
They have silken cloths, purple and gold.
Things all white and yellow, from Chinese boats.
Phu’s poem is in fact the only mention of what he refers to as the ‘famous stone pillar.’

The temple, known as Boundary Pillar Temple had in fact already had royal status conferred on it in the reign of Rama 2nd and had been re-named as Wat Dusitaram (Temple of Tusita Heaven). Phu deliberately used the old, obsolete and local name in order to ‘praise’ Rama 3rd. In fact, just like the names Sam Sen canal or Three Hills, this name had already passed into oblivion and, quite possibly, so had the actual boundary pillar for which no evidence would appear to exist today.\(^{150}\) Having offered his praise of the king in terms of mock steadfastness and fixity, Phu immediately juxtaposes this with a description of Chinese junks, markers of rapid change and commercialism.\(^{151}\) This juxtaposition perhaps refers not so much to a description of the ‘real’ landscape (though it does do that too) but, in the context of what the poem is trying to do, to Rama 3rd’s promotion of all things Chinese and almost extreme support of Chinese immigration.

The Chinese population of Bangkok increased hugely over the course of Phu’s lifetime due to the massive immigration of laborers for Rama 3rd’s largescale canal works and temple renovations. There was also a massive increase in trade with China. In 1820, 140 Chinese and Siamese junks engaged in trade, and tonnage of the China trade was estimated for the 1820s at 35,000 tons out of a total tonnage of 63,000 for all junk trade. William Ruschenberger, a medical officer in an American envoy in 1836, reported

\(^{150}\) It was not uncommon for poets to call places or temples by their old names, often simply because it would fit the rhyming scheme better. However, calling this temple which had only recently been royally re-named by Phu’s patron, seems to be pointed and meaningful in context.

\(^{151}\) Ministry of Religion and Education, *History of Temples Throughout the Kingdom*, p.244.
sighting a line of Chinese junks of 200-600 tons stretching over three kilometers in mid-stream anchorage along the Chao Phraya River. Sir John Bowring wrote in 1855:

It is estimated that in the kingdom of Siam there are more than a million and a half of Chinese settlers; in the city of Bangkok alone there are supposed to be two hundred thousand. In fact, all the active business appears to be in their hands.

In the context of Golden Mountain, the sight of Chinese merchants and vessels is always a sign of impermanence and change. Phu here juxtaposes the pillar, as a sign of apparent permanence and the boundaries of the kingdom, with ‘Chinese boats.’ Very much unlike Rama 3rd, Phu was throughout his oeuvre ungenerous towards Chinese immigrants. In Nirat to Nakhon Prathom, he writes in caustic praise of a Chinese tax farmer who had become wealthy because of the boom in his tax collecting business. In Nirat to Phetchaburi, he criticizes Thai women who marry Chinese men:

When Thai men asked for their hands in marriage,
They refused, their hearts as hard as iron.
Having money to tempt them, like the Chinese,
Their iron was heated up and gently softened.

153 Ibid., p.146.
Whether or not Phu personally disliked Chinese immigrants or not is not something we can ever know, but in the context of the poem itself and the landscape it describes, they are clearly marked as signs of impermanence and change in the kingdom.

Later in the poem, when Phu approaches the old capital of Ayutthaya, he stops to observe a *kathin* celebration at Wat Phra Men (Temple of Meru Mountain). This temple was built in the middle Ayutthaya period and, after the fall of the capital, had fallen into disrepair. It was ordered to be restored by Rama 3rd, who installed one of many ‘Chinese cottages’ (*keng cheen*) that were built in old temples renovated during his reign. The temple is the site of raucous celebration during Phu’s visit:

At the banks of Wat Phra Men, the ships head-to-head alongside. Some start singing, dancing, making merry. They all sing about boy-girl-duo song flirt back and forth, rowdy and raucous. Some sing verses celebrating the ascetic’s robes they’ve come to offer. Some play the xylophone in rapid volleys like Seng. There are lanterns, it's all a-glow like Chinatown.

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154 Chalerm Sukesom, *Wat Na Phramen Phra Aram Luang* (Meru Mountain Royal Temple). Although key refurbishments are recorded as having been carried out between 1835 and 1838, it is clear in this verse that the temple had already been partially restored by this time.

155 Seng is presumably the name of a musician who was famous at the time for his skilful use of the *ranaat* or bamboo xylophone.
What I have translated as ‘Chinatown’ is Sampeng, which was the designated dwelling place for the Teochew Chinese since the establishment of Bangkok as the capital city. This section of celebration, then, is juxtaposed to the silent and somewhat mysterious ruins in the next section of Ayutthaya. Instead of finding inspiration or solace, Phu is confronted with a transplanted Chinatown. Designating the Chinese as a sign of ugly commercialism and change was a mourning of the traditional dharmic kingdom and an implicit critique of Rama 3rd’s well-known support of Chinese immigration and commerce.

The designation of Chinese immigrants as markers of undesirable change becomes clearer if we contrast them to what Phu has to say about communities of Mons, an ethnic minority who were associated with the importation of Theravāda Buddhism to Southeast Asia. Passing Kret Island, which is still identified as Mon community island, Phu writes the following verse:

At Kret Island, we arrive at a village Mon since long ago.
The women put up their hair prettily according to their culture.
Now, Mon women pluck their top hairs like a doll
All powder their faces, soot their hair like Thai folk.
Ah, how common it is, for things to change and never truly be fixed.
Just like these boys and girls who discard fashions.
Note that, while the Chinese are always already a sign of change in the kingdom, the Mon are a people who should be something traditional and semi-permanent, but who too are changing their ways. Elsewhere, Phu writes that while Thai and Lao girls ‘put on airs and pout,’ Mon girls are better behaved. The history of the Mon communities in the context of the landscape is worth exploring further. While Rama 3\textsuperscript{rd} was a strong supporter of Chinese immigration and culture, Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd} had been a great supporter of Mon immigration. The Chronicles of Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s reign recount how secret correspondence had been set up between the Bangkok palace and the Mon town of Mottoma, to the far west of Bangkok. The Mon chiefs wrote that the local lord, under the control of the Burmese, was continually harassing them, getting them into all kinds of ‘hot water.’\textsuperscript{156} Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd} arranged for a huge number of Mon families to secretly immigrate into his anachak and went to great lengths to ensure that their journey was successful. Dwelling areas were set up for them and houses built in Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi as well as Koh Kret. It was in fact this influx of immigrants that caused Pathum Thani to become a ‘first district’ and have its name changed from Three Hills.

The name Land of Lotuses is perhaps so significant to Phu because of what it could signify about the future of the kingdom. It is recorded in the Chronicles that Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd} sent his favorite son the young Prince Mongkut to ensure that the Mon’s perilous flight eastwards through the jungle would be a safe one. And Prince Mongkut, like his

\textsuperscript{156} Devawongse Varoprakar, \textit{Chronicles of the Reign of Rama II,} p.168.
father, would have a life-long attachment to the Mons and what they represented for the future, particularly of Buddhism. He was proud of his Mon ancestry and had a belief in the purity of Mon Buddhist practice. His new order of monks traced its genealogy back to Mon history rather than Siamese history, chanted Pāli texts as pronounced by Mon monks, codified monastic innovations which were modifications of Mon practice and even tried to encourage wearing robes in the Mon style, until Rama 3rd expressed his displeasure at this practice.\textsuperscript{157} Phu, though he does not indicate any particular preference for schools of Buddhism, was nevertheless part of a school of thinking which included Rama 2nd and his son Prince Mongkut that thought of the Mon as an ancient and noble people who practiced a pure form of Buddhism and who, like lotus buds, would bloom forth the future of the kingdom.

Sunthorn Phu’s support for Prince Mongkut can also perhaps be seen in his description of one temple in particular. Having passed by a village of Vietnamese traders selling prawns and fish, which causes him to be ‘tortured, heavy-hearted’, he spots Khemā Temple ‘with gold – resplendent.’ Wat Khema is named after a female disciple of the Buddha, Khemā in Pāli or Kṣēma in Sanskrit. She was a chief consort of the Buddha’s sponsor King Bimbisara, known for her beautiful golden complexion and vanity. However, likely because of their extreme attachment to the metal, Khemā appears largely to be associated with gold in Siamese lore and that association is borne out in

\textsuperscript{157} Reynolds, "The Buddhist monkhood in nineteenth-century Thailand," p.86.

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this verse. It is in what follows, however, that Phu’s support for Prince Mongkut is implied:

The festival was over just the day before yesterday.
Oh, those times before, when my late royal lord
Tied his boat to the chapel, worshipped thankfully,
Admiring the Buddha tablets – long have they reigned -
All eighty-four thousand we did salute.
Oh, now I cannot worship at such festivals
Because I've fallen, fated to become a nobody.
It's because of little merit, I reflect, I offer up thanks.

The key line is the ‘festival’ that Phu has just missed. The temple itself is believed have been founded in the early Ayutthaya period, perhaps as early as 1350. The temple seems to have had a special place in the heart of Rama 2nd. He bequeathed royal temple status on it and sent Prince Mongkut to spend a rainy retreat there where he was given the kathin robe by his mother Somdet Phrasirisuriyenthra (1767–1836). Because a set of temple renovations were completed in that year, the 1828 kathin festival at Wat Khemā is in fact recorded. Prince Mongkut, now a monk, would have attended this festival and again received robes from his mother. Although Phu in the verse refers to phraboromkot which means a royal urn and here signifies a recently-deceased king, in keeping with the
play of different registers of time in the poem, he can be read as at once remembering Rama 2nd’s visit to this temple but also mourning the fact that he was not there to witness a celebration attended by Prince Mongkut. By implication then, he is also mourning the fact that Prince Mongkut did not become his new royal lord, meaning that he ‘cannot worship at such festivals’ anymore.

The succession of Rama 3rd was surrounded in controversy and many, including Phu, appear to have found themselves on the losing side of a succession dispute. Chakrabongse argues against Vella who writes over the accession in 1824 that Prince Mongkut ‘had the clearest rights to the throne.’ According to Chakrabongse, many ‘Western writers’ took this opinion.\(^{158}\) While the history behind this is rather murky, it simply beggars belief that this was an uncontroversial moment. All successions are messy, especially when there was as yet no right of primogeniture as in Europe and new kings were decided by various princes currying favor with factions at court who would then squabble to have their principle benefactor installed on the throne. Although he apparently designated no heir, Rama 2nd made no secret of the fact that Prince Mongkut was his favorite son. The Chronicles of his reign record that Mongkut’s first ordination ceremony, in which the young prince recited a section from the *Vessantara Jātaka*, was followed by ‘more elaborate mirth and merriment than there ever has been before.’\(^ {159}\) In the middle of the month of July 1824, Rama 2nd is recorded as having become

\(^{158}\) Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life*, p.143.

\(^{159}\) Devawongse Varoprakar, *Chronicles of the Reign of Rama II*, p.98.
grievously ill. Rather than recount this as the reason for Prince Mongkut’s sudden ordination, it is recorded that there was the bad omen of two royal elephants dying one after the other and as this signaled ‘a time of great misfortune’ there could not be any more ‘wasting of either years or months’ in ordaining Prince Mongkut.¹⁶⁰ Fifteen days before the death of his father, the young prince was ordained in a conspicuously private ceremony and whisked off to nearby Wat MahāthĀt (Temple of the Great Relic) and then soon after to Wat Samorai, a temple further away on the fringes of the capital.¹⁶¹ It is likely, as Reynolds writes, that Prince Mongkut was ushered into the Sangha when it became clear that a succession crisis was developing and his chances for succession fading.¹⁶² On the 1st of August Prince Chetsadabodin, who was the son of a concubine rather than an official wife like Mongkut, was ‘sprinkled’ with holy water, designating him as the Third King of the Chakri Dynasty. The death of the king and coronation of King Rama 3rd were sudden and unexpected. There is no doubt that there were winners and losers at court after this turn of events and, perhaps more than any one, Sunthorn Phu was one of the latter. A clear of indication of this is given in Phu’s brief poet autobiography in Lamentations. He writes:

Rahu sealed my fate, foreordained it was –

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.189.
¹⁶¹ Prince Mongkut, after he had become Rama 4th had this temple royally renamed as Wat Rajatiwat.
Mine is like the story of the Brahmin Gamani-Canda.

This refers to a story which had clear parallels to how Phu felt about his own fate. In the canonical *Gamanicanda Jātaka*, the bodhisattva is born as *Adasa-mukha* (Prince Mirror-Face) but his father passes away when he is only seven. Only after a series of trials through which he demonstrates his wisdom is he permitted to rule. The name of the *jātaka* refers however to an advisor to the prior king who decides to live in the country but who is then beset by the unfair accusations of peasants.\(^{163}\) Although in the *jātaka* the king does, unlike Prince Mongkut, become king at an early age Phu is likely referring here to the general sense that circumstances have not permitted him to advise a young, wise king and that, as a result, he has been cast out amongst commoners who do not treat him as his wisdom deserves. It is likely that Phu had always supported Prince Mongkut as the heir to the throne and this was the reason for his own hasty ordination at *Wat Rachaburuna*. Indeed, when Mongkut finally did become king in 1851, he was sure to re-instate full honors and titles back to Sunthorn Phu.

The ruins of time at Ayutthaya

In this section, I look at what is a rather small portion of *Golden Mountain* as a whole but which, because it is the climax of the poem and because it is in many respects quite original, deserves extended treatment. When Phu finally arrives at the original Golden Mountain temple of Ayutthaya, he finds it in ruins. To try to understand this in context, we should look first more widely at what ruins can signify in literature and the landscape more broadly, as well as the different ways Ayutthaya as a ruined site worked in the local imagination.

Ruins can say a lot. The United States would, if it had significant stone ruins, likely perceive of its pre-colonial history very differently. Instead of the Egyptian pyramids on dollar bills could be Navaho ruins, generating a completely different seam of thought of what the nation was and could be in the future. Put succinctly, ruins offer a way of seeing and engaging our feelings at the deepest affective level – where we see ourselves in history.¹⁶⁴ In her essay on ruins in English literature, Sarah Beckwith analyses the fictional work of Rose Macaulay to unpack ‘a veritable grammar of ruin.’

Ruins can give us: ‘the morbid pleasure of decay,’ ‘righteous pleasure in retribution,’ ‘egotistic satisfaction in surviving,’ and ‘masochistic joy in common destruction.’ The great ancient ruins of Southeast Asia prompted many nineteenth-century Western travelers to wax lyrical on the mysteriousness of their past as well as the ravages of

¹⁶⁴ Beckwith, “Preserving, Conserving, Deserving the Past: A meditation on Ruin as Relic in Postwar Britain in Five Fragments,” p.197.
time. For Henri Mahout writing in 1864, the sight of Angkor Wat was like a magic show, an enchanting scene where one was ‘transported from barbarism to civilization, from profound darkness to light.’ Stamford Raffles wrote in the 1820s of the contrast between the great civilization that must have created the monuments of Java and the sad simplicity of those who now lived there, for whom the grandeur of their ancestors ‘sounds like a fable.’ Raffles here was saying something about what he thought civilization was and, implicitly, what could be returned to the region again. Although Phu was writing in a tradition of understanding the landscape not as a journey into the unknown but as a shared landscape, all of this – particularly a dialectic of loss and redemption - is implied in Phu’s climatic section at the temple of the Golden Mountain in Ayutthaya.

Although there is some controversy over which kings built the various layers of renovation that make up the Golden Mountain temple of Ayutthaya, the consensus would seem to be that it was built in 1387 by King Ramesuan (r.1369-95). Later, during the Burmese-Siamese war of 1547-9 as a defensive manoeuvre to fend off an anticipated attack by the Burmese, the Great Nāga Canal was ordered to be dug around the temple by King Maha Chakkraphat (r.1509-1569), after which the canal of the same name near Wat Saket is named in Bangkok. When King Bayinnaung (r.1550-1581) of the Burmese Kingdom of Hongsawadi successfully invaded and briefly took control of

165 Cited from Savage, Western Impressions of Nature and Landscape in Southeast Asia, p.318.
166 Ibid., p.292.
Ayutthaya, it is thought that he built the high-standing *prang* to commemorate his victory, one which like the *chedis* of Pagan was not built to accommodate monks so much as to stand tall in the landscape.¹⁶⁷ The *prang* that stands today was constructed using the original base in the reign of King Borommakot (r.1733-58). During the Ayutthaya period, the temple seems to have been best known as a place of celebration. During the *kathin* ceremony in the eleventh month (when Phu is travelling), the Mahānāk Canal would flood the surrounding area, meaning that the temple itself could only be reached by boat. The people of Ayutthaya would float over there on boats to offer robes to monks and then race toy boats together, play games of composing songs by suggesting a topic or first word (*len sakawa*), all accompanied by what many foreign observers described as the ubiquitous orchestra of music. The association of the Golden Mountain Temple with festivities seemed to still hold in the early Bangkok period, as we can see in this poem of Luang Pon Hom Prakart (Won), composed in 1890:

Old stories there are that tell of Golden Temple
At the side of the Great Naga canal, by the ashram,
Before was a place of diversions and of good deeds,
Meeting all us people, we folk of Siam...¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Thepmontri Limpayom argues, to the contrary that the first tall prang was built not by a Burmese king but by King Naresuan (r.1590-1605) to commemorate his victory over the Burmese and the kingdom's independence. See Thepmontri Limpayom, “The Great Chedi of Golden Mountain as a Monument of a Warring Age.”
¹⁶⁸ Quoted from Parichead Sukprakarn, “The Golden Mountain of Ayutthaya,” p.76.
The poet describes the temple as one of a great ‘party,’ actually using the newly-imported English word; he describes the ‘pleasing sounds’ of pipes and poems; the fun of jumping in the water and of good deeds (kuson) and worship done. Golden Mountain Temple in Ayutthaya was, then, particularly associated with yearly festivities. It is this absence of festivities, this sad silence which Phu had previously used to describe the ruins of Ayutthaya. In the Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint, upon coming to the old capital of Ayutthaya, Phu laments its fallen state:

All palaces, of kings and of nobles, all idle and empty.
I see birds cheep and chatter upon flora and conifers.
I see palaces, royal residences, now nests for crows.
Like cemeteries - forests dense, coiled and voiceless.

This focus on sound is in contrast to a later poet Nai Jat, who compares the imagined past of Ayutthaya more conventionally to visual simulacra of heavenly abodes: ‘as if a vision of Tusita palace had gently fallen here down,’ that which had ‘sparkled, shimmered’ has now ‘vanished, gone.’ In contrast, Phu imagines the once glorious city in terms of sound – its ‘whirling whirligig of wild whirring sounds’ and the ‘resounding raucous’ of the orchestra – and then contrasts this with the ‘lonely silence’ of the forest
and chattering of birds. In contrast to the association of Golden Mountain Temple with noisy festivities, a poetic elaboration on solitary silence is what Phu uses to great effect at the temple as it is in his own encounter with it.

So far in the Nirat to Golden Mountain, Phu has described the kathin festivities at almost every temple he passes. He describes that of the Wat Phra Men immediately before encountering Golden Mountain. It is significant then that in a poem full of celebration, when Phu comes to a temple famous for its old festivities, no one is there:

It’s the morning of the Precepts Day,
Practice dharma, celebrate and pray. I go to the chedi that’s called Golden Mountain,
Floating far up there in sky.
In the midst of a field, luminous, standing solitary and solid there
In the water that plays and sparkles.

The water that ‘plays and sparkles’ would seem to indicate that the temple is as it is recorded as having been in the Ayutthaya period during the kathin period, as flooded

169 This is, course, a liberal translation. The original manages onomatopoeia and internal rhyme to imitate the boisterousness of different sounds by, amongst other things, rhyming ‘sound’ (siang) with ‘palace’ (wiang).

170 Ubosot or in Pali uposatha day is a day of special worship, on each quarter phase of the month.
and only accessible by boat. Following this, Phu follows convention by listing the most striking architectural features of the temple:

From the base, a staircase, locked round and around in squares;
A chedi, sermon hall and court.
And around this round and outspread area, a wall encloses.
On the chedi, the lines overlap on three levels,
The edges of their corners jutting out beautifully.

This section then more or less follows the conventions of phananna or descriptive passages. To take an older example, in the Discourse on Merit written by the monk Phra Mahanak from Wat Tasay in Ayutthaya features a detailed description of the mondop in Ayutthaya over the Buddha’s footprint:

From four similar sides spring gables,
Arrayed in arabesques of tendrils,
Interlaced with luxuriant vines,
Trimmed in borders of crystal and gold...^{171}

But, having led his listeners to expect a conventional descriptive passage, Phu then goes on to do something quite different:

Going clockwise, my mind strives –
Finishing the three turns, I bow and revere.
There is cavernous room for offering candles,
And a wind that turns round and around –
A miraculous sort of circumambulation.

There is nothing strange about mixing in the ritual actions that the poet performs as he describes the temple. What is original is first the fact that he is not describing a gilded, royally-refurbished temple but a ruin. Then, his description of a ‘miraculous sort of circumambulation.’ The first half of the verse, when describing architectural details, uses hard-sounding, consonant-heavy language: ‘*thi peun taan bat tat ban dai/ kong kong lay lom rop pren kob kan*’. Towards the end, when Phu describes the wind and candles, the sound of the language itself becomes softer: ‘*duey phraphai pat wien yu hien han*’. This creates a poem which seems to melt into the soft-syllables of air just like the hard fixity of the temple. Phu too seems to vanish. Having circumambulated, he notices that the wind too circumambulates. He then goes on to implicitly compare himself to the temple itself:
Forgotten! The summit top loped off.

Oh, this great chedi is abandoned of love - such pity, a spring of tears.

Like this, fame and glory will waste away before the eye can glimpse,\textsuperscript{172}

Persons of class and standing will come to anguish.

This is ‘impermanence’ – that all shall vanish.

Just as Phu had in a previous verse compared himself to a Buddha image with the head loped off, in this verse he compares his own fame and reputation with the dilapidated state of this ancient temple. \textit{Anichang} or \textit{Anicca} in Pāli literally means impermanence, though in classical Siamese poetry it usually means something like ‘Alas!’ Here is a rare example where it actually refers to the poet’s meditation on the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence. We can understand this more particularly by comparing this with Japanese literature, famous for its love of the fragile and evanescent. There is a love, particularly following the Kamakura period, of ephemeral phenomena in nature – cherry blossoms, snowflakes, autumn leaves - an aesthetic which carried over into the modern Japanese novel. At the very end of Yukio Mishima’s series of novels \textit{The Sea of Fertility}, the protagonist Honda ascends a mountain to visit a temple. The frailty of his ageing body is contrasted effectively with the vivaciousness of evanescent life on the way up the mountain:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Na than ta hen} – translated here as ‘before the eye can glimpse’ - is a phrase which can mean ‘within this very lifetime.’
\end{quote}
'As he sat down and wiped at the sweat once more, he saw a butterfly, the first. It was an outline in the distance, and cobalt adorned the russet of the wings as it came nearer.'

Such a love of the fragile and evanescent did not permeate Siamese literature. Phu’s verse does not work by pointing out fragile things but by making a stone edifice seem to disappear. Even as he experiments originally with a poetics of impermanence, it is still connected to building and sites out there - he is not in the landscape but of it, or rather disappearing from it.

Phu is then saying something about a past that shall forever remain the past, both his past and the past of the kingdom, which can never return to the glories of the time of Golden Mountain, even as Rama 3rd has recently tried to. Just as they did for the early European travelers to Southeast Asia, ruins elicit from him a mourning of a lost civilization but here in terms of the local history of Ayutthaya and Bangkok which for him is imbricated in the landscape itself. Part of why ruins are so powerful is that they evoke a lost past that irredeemably remains the past. But, as Beckwith points out, they are also the perfect impetus for a dialectic of loss and recovery and redemption, the discovery of a past and a possibility for the future. This appears to be what Phu touches on in the next few verses:

[173 Mishima, The Decay of the Angel: The Sea of Fertility, p.228.]
As I bow before the Buddha and spot red royal lotus flowers,
I find relics in the stamen!
Victorious joy, jubilantly I worship them.
Carefully, faithfully I invite the relics aboard our boat.

Phu does not describe exactly what these relics look like or guess at whose relics they might be. They likely look like the crystal particles that form in ash after a cremation. Phu might consider them to be the relics of the Buddha, or of the kings of the past who built and renovated the temple, such as Ramesuan or Boromokot, but their provenance is perhaps deliberately unspecified because what is going on here is a more general sense of separation and presence such as was encountered in poems on the Saraburi Footprint. Occurring not in the poet’s mind but in relation to sacred objects – in this case, a relic rather than a Buddha’s Footprint – they engender in Phu an almost magical sense of plenitude, as if he caught up with all that he had lost. Having taken the relics on board the boat and kept them under his pillow however, he is shocked to find them gone the following morning:

But I don't catch sight of the relics - more shock to the heart.
Incredible remorse! I had wished to admire those relics.
I feel as if my heart will break, tears flow.
Because I have little merit, they've floated off, faded far away.

We could say that this implicitly refers to the loss of the possibility that Prince Mongkut, who would have supported Phu, would be king. Just as he missed the *kathin* ceremony at Khemā Temple and lost his chance to serve Prince Mongkut, he has lost those relics. It could also refer to the feeling that he was living a life that reaped stores of great merit, which he thought that he had lost but could now for a fleeting moment regain. Whatever implicit meaning there is appears to have been left deliberately vague. There is only the general sense, which was common in poetic encounters with relics and Footprints, of near and yet so far.

**Concluding section of the poem**

As in the majority of his *nirat*, Phu speeds home in a single day, following the current down the Chao Phraya back to Bangkok. The first sight he sees is the famous landmark Wat Arun or the Temple of Dawn. He writes:

Stopping at the pier of the royal Temple of the Dawn. Gradually my heart recovers, upholding the precepts of the Victorious One.
A temple has existed at the site of Wat Arun since before the establishment of the capital, then known as Wat Makok (Sour Plum Temple). It was then re-named during the Thonburi period as Wat Jaeng (Announce or Morning Light Temple). Its status and size today derive largely from refurbishment begun by Rama 2nd who changed the name to Wat Arun and made it a royal temple. Rama 2nd’s relics are stored there. Again, even in these final moments of his voyage, Phu places his faith for the future – for a new dawn - in Rama 2nd or the kings of the past, rather than Rama 3rd.

Phu’s closing statements are worth examining before concluding. First of all, he makes a claim that hearing or reading his poem can in itself be an act of merit:

This nirat of the old capital of mine
Can be a thing delightful to behold.
Just like going to pay your respects to the Buddha-image,
To pagodas, relics to our religion -
It's a thing you can do to inspire you on the Path.
According to this way, if you're struggling, you can get relief.

Such messages were not uncommon in, for instance, temple manuscripts of the time which the scribal monk would write in the introduction that both copying and hearing the text could be an act of merit. This was a time, then, at which hearing not only the sacred language of Pāli, but also a poem on Buddhist themes in the vernacular, could be
of merit. Indeed, Phu seems to have striven here to write a self-consciously Buddhist poem which, as we have noted, lists the five precepts and reflects on impermanence in an original way and uses temples to tell the story of the local landscape in a particular way. Perhaps its popularity stems from the fact that, as Ian Watt says of early novels in England, it was ‘a work that could be praised from the pulpit yet attacked as pornography, a work that gratified the reading public with the combined attractions of a sermon and a strip-tease.’ Rather than scandalize with sex, which Phu would do later in Lamentations, this nirat perhaps scandalized with its undertones of political dissent, while still having enough classicism poetically and enough Buddhist words, thoughts and flavour to give the audience the sense that it was like listening to a sermon.

At the close of the nirat, Phu denies any personal reality to the journey he has just related. He writes:

I don't really have a lover.
I left on this nirat journey devoid of a lovely other.
That poets lament and languish
Is a custom followed in poems and verses since times past.
Like a cook mixing up a red curry,
Who puts in various vegetables of all sorts and meats,
Together with peppers, coriander leafs - so I do with a woman.

I must sprinkle in some sad-heartedness to make it savory.

This was not in fact the first time that a poet had claimed that all he had just related was merely following ‘convention.’ The earliest such expression is that of the late Ayutthaya poet Prince Thammathibet in his “Royal Procession rowing song to the River of Sadness”:

Finished and done, this lament in verse,
A complaint said towards a lady,
Written according to the convention.
For truly I have no lover.

But this copying from Thammathibet perhaps has another layer when we consider that that Ayutthaya prince-poet did have several lovers, some of whom were the king’s own concubines, an act for which he is recorded as having been whipped to death for. Of course, even saying this will only make the audience more suspicious and that is perhaps exactly what Phu wanted. As a writer-for-hire who now had to make his money from charging money from those who wished to make a copy of his poems, a sense of slight scandal could only be good for sales and building up his popular persona.
Conclusion

In 1878, Nai Thim Sukkhayang (1847-1915) the author of *Nirat Nongkhai*, a poem about a military expedition to the northeastern frontier of Nongkhai in 1875 was tried for treason. Finally, he was sentenced not to death as the accuser recommended, but to eight months in jail. The court, which included King Rama 5th, actually referenced the work of Sunthorn Phu, saying that Phu had always remained true to classical convention. Craig Reynolds is of the opinion that Sukkhayang’s greatest crime according to the thought of the time was use of ‘ugly’ non-elite and non-classical language. I would suggest another key difference between *Nirat NongKhai* and Phu’s work. At least in his *Nirat to Golden Mountain*, Phu was always careful to keep to the convention of masking his criticism of the reigning king in a story about the landscape itself. Whereas Nai Thim used directly ironic and harsh language to describe the failures of the military command, Phu, while he still incorporated what would have been considered more common language at the time, was careful to weave plausible deniability into each criticism he makes. Yet, at the same time like the best satire that has had to deal with draconian censorship, it is obviously there. Kings were keen to make Buddhist monuments partly because they stood as undeniable, concrete proof of their dharmic right to rule, the very history of the kingdom itself written in the landscape with the history of their munificence and that of their ancestors. Yet, as I have continually stressed, places such as temples and other monuments are not so much things out

there as events. Temples gather time, they tell a story about time and, with each
encounter, there is the possibility of a new story, a new gathering of past and future.
Phu’s poem is one such collection of events, of gathering time in the moment of
encountering place. In the *Nirat to the Golden Mountain*, he tells a story about time
through the landscape itself. He tells of an order which appears to have forgotten him
and which is unfaithful to the traditions of the past. Time here is lost and may never be
regained, but he holds out against hope none the less for the sighting of a relic, for a
new dawn for the kingdom.
CHAPTER 4: The Forests of Quicksilver and Spirit-Lords

In the following years of Rama 3rd’s reign, Phu’s life seems to have changed little. Still an ordained monk and still ‘impoverished’ according to his own report, he moved from temple to temple, from patron to patron. In the 1840s, while in his 50s, he began a series of journeys which he recounted in nirat poems of his search for alchemical materials, for gold and for everlasting life. Setting off probably in 1841 with several of his sons, Phu heads to the far reaches of the province of Suphanburi. There he enters a dark jungle, filled with tigers, alligators, bandits and tribespeople. Journeying still deeper into the forest, Phu encounters a large snake ridden by a spirit child; a glowing herb whose smell induces humans to stupor and death; speaks in dreams with the guardian-spirits of the forest; meets an old couple well into their hundreds and the corpses of many monks and animal trappers abandoned. Both Nirat Suphan and the later Nirat to the Temple of the Prince are unusual in that they mix what would appear to be the real journey of well-known place-names and lovelorn laments of a

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176 Cholada considers this to be the most likely date some of the content, such as the names of characters, is similar to that or Nirat Pathom. Phu also mentions this journey in Lamentations, written in 1842. See Cholada, Nirat Suphan, p.73. Cholada’s lengthy study is largely concerned with Phu’s inventive use of meter in this long poem. Thai literary scholars tend to chiefly concern themselves with questions of poetic technique which is perhaps to some extent appropriate because this was certainly something that occupied the minds of classical poets. Prince Damrong relates a story that Phu wrote the poem in the difficult khong style because people had started to say that he could only really write in klon, a less restrictive meter. In fact, running to 462 stanzas, Nirat Suphan is the longest khlong poem in existence. The very last verse of the poem boasts that the poem makes use of a variety of different verse forms including ‘dancing frog’ and ‘naga-bound,’ a boast which lends credence to Damrong’s account. However, I am not here concerned with questions of poetic technique and meter but with the content of the poem.
conventional nirat alongside more fantastical adventures. Because so much of what takes place in these nirat occurs not on the river or in the city, but in a realm of association associated with the forests and wilds, understanding Phu’s geography via Nirat Suphan requires understanding the wider realm of associations that constituted the forest in nineteenth-century Siam as well as making use of theories of dealing with the forest in literature more broadly. Taken in the context of debates in Buddhism at the time, these adventures seem ultimately to give a didactic argument against technologies of transformation, such as that of alchemy or more broadly, practices which promise rewards outside of a particular field of merit. However, these poems also maintain the tension between the ambiguous allure and danger of these controversial practices of power.

Approaches to the forest in literature and Buddhist literature.

While loci such as the capital, ruins and the rivers have received less attention, the forest has attracted considerable scrutiny in Buddhist studies. In The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets, Stanley Tambiah outlines the changing historical manifestations of a belief in the ‘vitalizing force’ of the forest from the past until the present. In Thai political history, the ‘forest’ was known a place of phu mi bun, men claiming to have special merits and abilities who at times staged rebellions against the king and palace. The forest was also a place where forest-dwelling monks practiced,
those of an ‘untarnished reputation’ which the center reached out for in times of uncertainty.\footnote{Tambiah, \textit{Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets}, pp.76-77.} In Tambiah, this structural dichotomy of civilization versus forest was in a continual dialectic, at times strongly opposed and at others mutually re-enforcing. In his celebrated paper on the forest in Khmer literature, “Songs at the Edge of the Forest,” David Chandler begins with a similar binary, associating the forest with ‘wildness, animality, poverty, anonymity, and loneliness’ as against villages of ‘cultivation, sociability, and bestowed identities.’\footnote{Chandler, “Songs at the Edge of the forest,” p.43.} These forest-versus-civilization binaries, much like those of magic-versus-religion, potency-versus-salvation or periphery-versus-center, are so often invoked because they are highly convincing interpretive frameworks with which to understand the forest in the geographic imagination. Often, they appear to fit the material perfectly. To take one example, in the Ayutthaya-period epic poem \textit{Lilit Phra Lor}, the forest is described as almost the direct antithesis of civilized palace life. Lord Tiger Spirit, a spirit-lord who dwells in the depth of the forest, is figured as the inverse of a human king. Instead of being a king of nobles and monks, he is attended to by animals and sprites. Unlike the clear and stable identities and relationships of the court, Lord Tiger Spirit is able to shift his appearance at will and, through aiding two love-struck princesses in their amorous pursuit of Prince Phra Lor, is able to wreak havoc on the stable relationships of the court. Here, the dichotomy is clear: the court is order, the forest is disorder.
However, as Chandler seems to hint in his own paper, while such a neat
dichotomy between the wild and civilized is a useful analytic device, it is also deceptively
simple. In the end, Chandler writes, the Khmer texts he studies pose questions about
the nature of misfortune and disorder but do not provide full explanations for them. He
writes:

In a sense, the texts ‘answer’ questions that no one dared to ask, but in the end,
what do they explain? No more, and of course no less, than songs at the edge of
the forest as night comes on, the time entre chien et loup.179

The ‘tidal mystery’ of the ‘why’ and ‘what to do’ of disorder and exploitation is allowed
to some extent to remain unsolved in these texts. Part of the value of understanding the
forest or practices of transformation via literature is that it provides us material which
shows not only fixed attitudes or beliefs but the fundamentally ambiguous terrain in
which difficult questions are lived and felt. Or, as Penny Edwards writes in her paper on
the forest in the Khmer imagination, the forest is not so much a place which is
necessarily the opposite of civilization but where notions such as ‘civilized’ and ‘order’
and ‘proper’ themselves are questioned:

179 Ibid., p.44. The phrase entre chien et loup, between dog and wolf, refers to one of the
examples given by Levi-Strauss in what he saw as a fundamental structural dichotomy between
civilization and non-civilization or raw and cooked, a dichotomy which he saw as being at the
heart of many human myths.
The forest as depicted in both “Kaun Lok” and the Wat Srolauv chronicle is a highly ambiguous terrain, that speaks not so much to a bipolar moral geography (srok versus prei, or civilized versus wild) as to complex dialectical terrain, where notions of civilized or wild contract, and shape-shift in relation or reaction to violations of moral or societal norms.\textsuperscript{180}

To give one example, Ajarn Mun (1870-1949), who is thought to be the founder of the modern forest monk movement, taught that it was precisely in the forest and encounters with tigers and spirits where one must practice. In contrast to the examination-focused Buddhism of the state and capital, Mun taught that the forest or even the shade of a tree was one’s true ‘university.’\textsuperscript{181} The forest here is not the opposite of civilization but is still nonetheless the site at which questions of civilization, education and genuine spiritual practice are contested. This is the complex ‘dialectical terrain’ from the perspective of a particular historical movement, but the forest as a site in which important issues are contested can also be seen in a single individual’s work, as I will argue it can be seen in Phu’s forest poems.

Our general attitude towards the forest, for Phu as well as for literature in general, shifts substantially over time. We can see this clearly in, for example, Stephen Knight’s analysis of the changing faces of Robin Hood, which went from a subversive

\textsuperscript{180} Edwards, “Between a song and a prei,” p.143.

\textsuperscript{181} Kamala, Forest Recollections, p.78.
drama in renaissance-period England to a nursery tale in the modern period. This was precisely because attitudes towards what ‘the forest’ meant changed, from a dangerous place of possible political subversion to a comforting refuge of nature. To counter our own expectations of what the forest represents, we must place Phu’s poems in the context of what we know of the areas he travelled to and how they were thought about in his time. As well as this, to work against particular modern assumptions of what anxieties and desires can be explored in the forest, I compare Phu’s poems with more modern accounts of journeys into the forest such as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Noi Inthanon’s (1906-63) *Down Into The Forest: The Tiger at the End of the Buddhist Era* (1949). In such works, the forest does draw on a similar wealth of associations of dangerous animals, minority groups and magical or subversive practices, but these speak to a different historical moment and a fundamentally different orientation towards the wild and the forest from Phu’s.

**Entering the forest**

In the mid-nineteenth century, the forest and wilderness encroached very near to the outreaches of even Bangkok. Several place-names preserved into modern times such as ‘Elephant-catcher’s cottage’ (Baan Tap Chang) testify to just how close a malarial jungle of elephants and tigers even was to the palace. As we have seen in previous

\[182 \text{ Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*.}
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202
chapters, even though it might by today’s standards be thought of as rural, the area of the Chao Phraya river was conceived as a navigable land with its own known history, its canals and well-discussed place-names. Suphanburi, about one-hundred kilometers north-west of the capital as the crow flies, was felt to be far-off and largely unknown.

Beginning his journey at his residence at Wat Theptidaram, Phu passes along familiar sights. At the pier, he asks to leave the ‘husk’ of his love at the pier, to be done with his attachments to them, pushing them off like a floating candle. He passes by Wat Saket where his mother’s corpse once was and asks to be able to share his merit with her. Passing by different temples such as Wat Arun or Dawn Temple, he remembers his time spent at each place and his former lovers. Unlike a classical nirat, where the poet would leave his lover expecting to return, Phu is pointedly asking to take leave of his attachments to the past. Searching for alchemical materials after all, he is moving on to something higher. As he and his group journey further up the river, he begins to spot alligators ‘long and large, chasing crawling and pouncing... playing in the water, overturning on their backs.’ Spotting alligators signals that his group’s boat was moving closer to the wilds.

But perhaps more than anything it is the names of the villages whom he begins to encounter that inform us he is entering an out-of-the-way place. He encounters a town formerly known as Limestone Furnace, a town known for the burning of limestone. Like charcoal burners, burners of limestone tended to practice their trade in
out-of-the-way places. He passes through Unmarried Ladies Village where he writes that all the women there have no husbands, presaging that this is a strange, semi-mythical area. He comes across Wrecked Ship Village where he notes (in fact accurately) that the area had once been a beach by the sea. This is an area, unlike the familiar landscape of the Bangkok Chao Phraya, of misfortunate and mysterious happenings. Eventually, he passes by Hideout Town:

(161)
We come to Hideout Town, hidden in an estuary, wooded.
A place where people have fled their corvée-masters, since olden times.
Thick as thieves hiding houses alongside the Karen.
If a pursuer comes, friends there help kill them, all to stay hidden from the authorities.

The mention of Hideout Town in fact accords with what we know of Suphanburi at the time. There was very little centralised society before the end of the century and Suphanburi was a key area for people to flee to escape the authorities, either because of crimes or to escape taxes and corvée duties. In the Second Reign, there had been a policy to encourage low-level officials to establish villages in the forest and hills to extend production of goods that the capital wanted from the forest. In the Third Reign, it was found that some villages had become robber lairs and so the policy was
revoked. At the time of Phu’s journey, such dens of thieves must still have existed in the area. Robber gangs, particularly cattle rustlers, were a fact of life at this time and would seem to have been particularly rife in upcountry cities. In *Khun Chang Khun Phaen* Ai Thit, a servant of Simala, who is sent back to Phichit to report on the love charm, follows ‘the route, which he would recall from his time as a buffalo thief.’ The father of Khun Chang is killed by a large, highly organized, robber gang that was well connected to other gangs.

Despite these dangers, at this time during the Rama 3rd period there were intermittent attempts to bring the region more firmly under the capital’s control. Especially when the British took over the lands of Lower Burma after the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, Siamese officials felt that the kingdom needed to better cement its control of this area to the west of Bangkok, both as a defensive frontier and as an important trading route. Indeed, Phu’s journey was preceded the year before by that of Nai Mi, a government official who went to the region to collect taxes in 1840. Nai Mi also recorded his journey in a *nirat*, making it seem possible that *nirat* could serve as personal counterparts to government reports, poetic and personal data of a given region. In his own *Nirat Suphan*, Nai Mi consistently bemoans how difficult it was to

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184 Ibid., p.122.
185 Phu himself later wrote in *Lamentations* that he had been commissioned with government ‘business’ (*tura*) and had journeyed on a boat. Though he does specify what this business was, it
extract taxes from the populace. And this most certainly accords with the historical record. In her history of the region, Warunee Osatharom gives examples of several documented criminal cases dating from the Rama 3rd period of people fleeing to Suphaburi to escape debts.  

186 The local officials and judges appear to have been particularly corrupt, often sheltering known criminals, with whom they presumably had connections, from the ire of the capital courts.  

187 It was only in the 1880s, when Rama 5th sent soldiers to suppress criminals in the region and appointed an official known for being efficient at bringing criminals to heal that the region appears to have begun properly to come under central control. Phu and Nai Mi describe the area at a time when bringing Suphanburi to order was desirable but when such order had yet to come.

Phu also describes the landscape in terms of the ethnic minorities he encounters there. Particularly, he encounters Karen and Lawa people. This is similar to descriptions which mark the protagonist’s journey deep into the forest in the epic Khun Chang Khun Phaen. Khun Phaen, wishing to gain potent magical items (a sword, a horse and a spirit son crafted from an unborn foetus), goes deep into the jungle ‘passing through villages of Karen, Kha, Lawa, and Mon.’  

188 The Karen and other forest tribes also appear in Noi Inthanon’s modern sci-fi novel Down into the Forest: The Tiger at the end of this Buddha

is possible that these and other journeys recorded in his later nirat were in a sense ‘mapping’ projects ordered by the court.

186 Warunee, The City of Suphan, p.259.
187 Ibid., p.265-270.
Era (1949). But by this time they take on a more distinct political significance. In Inthanon’s novel, the tiger-hunting protagonist encounters Karen who have been continually forced to move on by wars, deforestation and by the authorities. In Inthanon’s novel, then, as in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, indigenous people are trod under foot. This is not something that occurs in Phu’s work. The Karen and Lawa come across as happy with their life in the forest and are without exception welcoming towards Phu and his party. They are understood, as were most people outside of the capital at this time, in terms of particular superficial accoutrements, such as the Lawa and their ‘dangling’ bags. This is not, then, a place where what could be called a colonising imperative is troubled. But still, as we shall see, Phu’s forest is still a place of disorder and illicit desires according to his own particular Buddhist-inflected figuration.

The town of Suphanburi

After a long journey, Phu comes to the town of Suphanburi itself. Suphanburi is an ancient city, founded even before Ayutthaya. It became important particularly around the 12th Century C.E. It was an important cross-roads between Ayutthaya and the Theravāda Mon kingdoms to the West. As the Ayutthaya city-state gradually cemented its grip on power in the region, Suphanburi’s significance lessened and, by the 16th century, it was merely a ‘fourth city’ in the feudal order, useful primarily as a
defensive outpost. In Phu and Nai Mi’s time, around 1840, the town was the trading center for a large area of forest in all directions.

The town is portrayed by both Nai Mi and Phu as one with an illustrious past that was at that time in a state of decline and disrepair. This is brought out by Phu in his association with the town and the epic of *Khun Chang Khun Paen*, a court-sponsored epic which both poets take for granted was based on real events in this region:

(138)
The pier of Ten Cowries, ancient,
There is Wat Far To (Temple of Urns), abandoned.
Bodhi trees, a *bot* and *vihara*, collapsed in one another.
Phim Philalai built it, a place of Suphanburi.

Phim Philalai is the infant name of Wanthong, the female protagonist of the epic. This literary association, then, is used to paint the portrait of a once important town with an illustrious heritage which has now fallen into disrepair. The name of the pier itself testifies to the fact that the town of Suphanburi was a trading hub, as cowry shells were often used as currency.

Both of these nineteenth-century poets single out one temple of Suphanburi for special attention, Wat Palelai. Believed to have been first constructed in the fourteenth-
century CE, the temple is named after the Pārileyyaka Forest which the Buddha retreated to when the Sangha were in discord. Phu describes his worship there as follows:

(146)
Ascending the hill, we bow to the dual legs
Of the Buddha of the Pārileyyaka Forest which seems to smile
His hand lifted, dangling his feet above lotus flowers
Beaming, grinning – like the Buddha himself.

(147)
With candles and incense, flowers I do worship.
I reflect upon that time when the Buddha did there tarry and
That blessed monkey found wild olives, mangoes to Him did tender;
And that blessed elephant found a bee’s nest on a branch which he did render.

This story refers to the Buddha’s time in the forest when a monkey and an elephant had offered honey and fruit to him.¹⁸⁹ In the context of Phu’s poem, this image of the Buddha in the forest would seem to presage his own self-imposed exile to the forest. In

¹⁸⁹ The story exists in several versions in the Pāli canon. For an extended analysis of the possible meanings of this story as it appears in the canon see: Ohnuma, "An elephant good to think – The Buddha in Pārileyyaka forest."
the next verse, he makes the unusual wish to be a *pratyeka Buddha* (*pajek phut*) on this earth, a self-realising solitary Buddha who does not form a Sangha and who were thought to dwell in forests and caves. Phu presumably makes this wish because he too is about to enter the forest. In Pâli literature, protagonists like the Buddha were often aided by nature as was Vessantara, to whom the trees bent low and offered their fruits to him. While such miraculous cases of nature recognizing and assisting persons-of-merit are not something that Phu would have expected for himself, the idea that the forest is a place where one’s true merits could be made manifest does then seem to have persisted into this period. If Phu were to successfully gather the life-prolonging mercury, it would be a manifestation of his superior merit.

Nai Mi gives a much fuller account of his visit to the temple. His account reads like a petition to repair the temple, which in fact it probably was. He writes that the wall is in disrepair, that someone had ‘slapped some plaster on it’ but that it looks tattered; that water sprinkles through the ceiling and devil’s weed scatters about the grounds. He writes:

> If I had a position of high merit (*vasana*), I would come and build it.
> I would not allow it to be messy and abandoned, I would aid and assist.\(^{190}\)

\(^{190}\) Nai Mi, *Nirat Suphan*, pp.24-5.
Indeed, such a petition was sent to Rama 3\textsuperscript{rd} at around this time, though large-scale royally-sponsored work in the area was not begun until Rama 4\textsuperscript{th}’s reign. Like Phu, Nai Mi argues for Suphanburi’s importance in terms of its literary connections, writing that Wat Palelai is precisely the temple in which Novice Kaew (Khun Phaen’s infant name) skillfully recited verses of the *Vessantara Jataka*, of the chapters concerning his wife Matsi and their children in the forest. This temple is therefore ‘important’ (*samkan*). For Phu and Nai Mi, the area is also mixed up in the semi-legendary history of King U Thong, the founder of Ayutthaya. Nai Mi writes that U Thong had once been the king of Suphanburi. Phu does not write this, but later involves King U Thong in the area’s local lore:

(235)

The elders tell us the story of Stingy Village,
Of King U Thong who came to that place of flat fields.
He stopped in for leather straps to tie, but this they would not give him.
He cursed this River-bend Village, and it changed to be Stingy Village.

The area in Nai Mi and Phu’s time is then one of abandoned and forgotten *chedis* and temples, some lost deep in the jungle and their locations known only to local tribes.

Around these hidden *chedis* and dilapidated temples circulated vague stories of glorious ancient kings and of powerful spirit-lords. These temples were not, as they were later by
Prince Damrong, to be researched, identified and catalogued. Rather, they were to be hauntingly left be until some future king might decide to restore them into his anachak, his umbrella of kingly munificence.\textsuperscript{191}

Rather than, like Nai Mi, describe the physical disrepair of the temple, Phu takes the rather unusual and bold step of describing the poor behavior of monks in the region close to Suphanburi town. In a temple near Suphanburi, Phu writes that he spots a ‘circle of monks’ who are, ‘Close in on each other, proudly o-ho-ing, chests out breathing big.’ He describes their improper behavior in the following verses:

\begin{verbatim}
(230)
They kick a rattan ball, play with chickens, fight them.
Their robes are casually hung, passing around their begging bowls as a betting kitty, clutching it at their sides.
Wandering about after with their losing chicken, grinding their teeth, whipping and boxing it.
The abbot has set up boats for racing, playing it for his own pleasure.
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
(231)
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{191} The attitude of letting ruins and images left hauntingly can perhaps be found in Carl Bock’s experience while living in Siam in the 1880s. He searched in nearby ruins to find a heap of figures of Buddha which he paid to have placed in front of his hut to ‘the admiration of everyone who passed by.’ But soon the locals blamed him for having caused a recent tiger attack by ‘defiling their images.’ If icons and ruins could not be properly supported with sufficient monastic staff and ceremony, they had to be left alone.
A waste of candles, a waste of incense, a waste of faith.
A waste that my mind, my heart bowed for them
A waste and shame for the order, for all monks.
A waste and shame for the eyes and ears to witness and to know.

It was in fact unusual to criticize directly the behavior of monks at this time because to do so would itself be an implicit criticism of the king’s *barami*. Phu perhaps feels able to do this precisely because Suphanburi was felt to be a region sufficiently far from kingly authority. This was not the kingdom then but the forest, a place of disorder and improper behavior. Such descriptions, especially of monks and laypeople being unkind to animals, become commonplace in the rest of the poem. However, to understand what Phu is doing here we should first look at his own desire for mercury to grant him a prolonged life.

**Magic and alchemy in Nineteenth-century Thai Buddhism**

In both *Nirat Suphan* and *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*, Phu is on a quest to find alchemical drugs. How to find drugs, apparently, he had read in an obscure ‘manual’ or, as he writes in *Lamentations*, from a certain Master Thong from Chung. Prince Damrong notes that the area of Suphanburi was known for magic and alchemy as well as for large deposits of mercury, which Phu describes sometimes at length as so large that ‘my children walk tripping over it.’ Like all good things in the Siamese imagination,
mercury is ‘glittering and gleaming, lustrous and brilliant.’ What Phu expects to get from the mercury is described by Phu (writing as his own son Pat) in the *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*:

Father read on a great leaf, I overheard,
That once he’d eaten the mercury he’d be beautiful, dazzling.
He dreamed that they would all be hacked off right at their sprouts – his greying hairs,
That he would be as he was as a young buck, his flesh with a yellowish glow.

This description, incidentally, is replicated in the epic *Phra Aphaimani*. Phu’s works display a consistent fascination with spells and supernatural powers, as do those of the Thai graduate students and academics who write about him.

We cannot know

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192 This description is told to Lady Laweng, one of the female protagonists of *Phra Aphaimani*, by a half-bodied angel. When Lady Laweng escapes into the forest she finds a saltlick which she is informed produces the breast-milk of Torani, a goddess of fertility, the waters of which will confer the following benefits:

Long life, rejuvenated and joyful, like a young lady or man.
Skin just like that of gold, soft and splendid.
Even an old man of three-hundred years
Still would not be dim nor clouded, but fresh and white,
Their flesh fragrant, with a sweet scent both succulent and stirring.”


193 A list of graduate papers related to Sunthorn Phu include such titles as: “Analysis of Superstition on in the Narratives and Poems of Sunthorn Phu,” “An Analysis of Belief in Phra
whether he himself actually believed in or condemned such practices personally, but we can know that he felt that elixirs and mercury were good to think with in his poems.

The alchemy that Phu describes in these poems is rather unusual, and not quite like the alchemy we might expect. In some iterations other than Phu’s, it bears resemblance here and there to medieval Indian alchemy, so fully described by David Gordon White in *The Alchemical Body*, in that it is concerned with manipulation of the physical and somatic world via the mutable metal of mercury. However, far more than this, Phu’s ‘mercury’ or ‘elixir’ (and Phu often uses these terms interchangeably) functions much more like a Buddhist image or amulet which a wearer must procure, wear and pray to daily in order to gain protection and good fortune. As such, it is less like a complex science manipulating reality and more like a series of practices which involve conducting proper rituals to ‘invite’ the mercury, which will only come if it feels the practitioner is sufficiently morally worthy. We see an example of such a ceremony in *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*:

Paper flags pitched proud, fluttering in the flow of wind.
Rice and sand scattered, subduing and subjugating.
Large candles pitched, anointed with perfumed powder.

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*Aphaimani,* “Buddhist Theravada Philosophy in Phra Aphaimani.” See Wilasini Inthawong, “*Satanphaap karmseuksa wannakadi rueng phra aphaimani radap banditseuksa pi karn seuksa 2510-2550* (The state of the field of literary studies of *Phra Aphaimani* at the graduate level in the years 1967-2007)” in Kusuma et al., *Sunthorn Phu*. 215
Candles, all one-hundred-and-eight, circled about us,
Like a boundary line, strong as a dam.
Mantra of Great Wahudee, we officiate,
Dispelling protections, withdrawing Vedic spells which obscure.

The fact that Phu is using this ceremony to dig in the ‘diamond-strong earth’ that protects the elixir hints that he is essentially trespassing, trying to take something which is forbidden. Equating the search for alchemical materials with trespassing is played out throughout these poems.

While I have been unable to find manuals on alchemy dating from Phu’s time, there are some modern manuals which match his descriptions almost exactly. In his handbook *The Immortal Mercury*, Ajarn Burapa Padungthai writes that mercury must be invited with ‘moon honey,’ honey gathered at the time of the full moon so that it has absorbed the rays of the moon which the mercury will wish to feast on. This is described in the *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince:*

We take a scoop of honey water in a glass, placing it beside flowers.
We light large candles, as our manual instructs,

194 Because these manuals come much later than Phu, it is entirely possible that they are in fact following his descriptions and that is why they match up well. However, in the absence of old alchemical manuals, these modern-day guidebooks serve adequately well to fill in our understanding of the practices that Phu himself in these poems describes only very tersely.
Wishing to find that acme of mercuries.
Hands together - sitting, calling and praising,
Joyful, the candles lustrous, luminous, radiant.

After they have performed this ceremony, in a flicker and a flash, the mercury comes to ‘suck’ on the honey. Phu and his boys rush to snatch up the mercury, but it slips out of sight. The mercury, then, has a life of its own. Indeed, throughout *The Immortal Mercury*, the author personifies the mercury ‘living’ in the cave, it is ‘disturbed’ by light and electricity (from a torch, for instance), it comes up to ‘bathe’ in the moonlight on full moon days. Most importantly of all, it knows well the moral character of the one who searches for it and will not permit itself to be ‘invited’ (and the same word is used to mean ‘obtaining’ a Buddha image or amulet) by a person who does not, for instance, practice the precepts. To know if the mercury of the resident spirit-guardians are satisfied to let you invite the mercury to your person, you should light candles. If the spirits are not satisfied, the candles will blow out before they burn out, which is what happens on numerous occasions to Phu:

(269)
The wind loud, cracks into the sky, now with rain thick.
Sluicing sounds, mice run around thinking an elephant passes.
The candles blow out, returning to darkness. Vexation - once again tigers will stalk us.
Again and again, Phu is refused permission to obtain his mercury or his elixir of life. To pick apart what the quest – and the continual failure of the quest – for mercury is doing in this text, we have to understand both the debate surrounding such practices in their particular historical context.

Alchemical practices of different kinds had been popular in the region long before Phu. They are now more associated with *weikzas*, practitioners mostly in present-day Burma who aim to greatly extend their lifespans so as to be able to meet with the future Buddha Metteya in the future. Spiro, for example, describes a practice in which one must make an alchemical stone, then swallow this stone and be buried in a pit. The aspirant must then stand in the ground attacked by evil spirits and animals and seductive maidens for seven days. If he succeeds, he will be a fully-fledged *weikza*.\(^\text{195}\) Such practices may have flowed down from China or Northeastern India, but the degree of such crossover is a matter of speculation.

By no means was alchemy a ‘peripheral’ activity throughout history. Schober writes of how the *weikza* Shin Eizagona is said to have aided the kings of Pagan in manufacturing their pagodas with his alchemical abilities. Attitudes towards practices such as alchemy shifted over time. While many Pāli texts in fact deal with alchemy specifically, the Thai *vinaya* (edited in the reign of Rama 5\(^\text{th}\)) disapproves strongly of

\(^{195}\) Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*, pp.169-70.
such practices, describing them as ‘animal-like knowledge.’\textsuperscript{196} Such practices were, then, often a point of contention in continual efforts to draw a line between proper and improper Buddhism. Although different kings or sects at different times took different attitudes towards them, they were across time as Collins writes, ‘essentially contested concepts,’ practices which tended to elicit strongly opposing views as to their appropriateness.\textsuperscript{197} Phu’s time was something of a cross-roads for attitudes towards what Kate Crosby has called ‘technologies of transformation.’ Such practices would include Phu’s alchemy as well as \textit{borān kamaṭṭhāna}, pre-modern methods of meditation which aimed to achieve a transformation not only in the practitioner’s mind but also their body, leading to supernatural powers and enlightened states. These earlier traditions of meditation did not tend to separate the spiritual from the somatic and, moreover, could involve as a spiritual practice completely changing your physical form so as to, for instance, live for thousands of years. Prince Mongkut’s new \textit{thammayut} order of Buddhism stressed moral discipline, purity of scripture as well as an acceptance of Western science which completely eschewed a mix between the religious or spiritual and the somatic. The physical and medical was the reign of science and religion only the domain of the mind and morality.

As has been argued in many theoretical works on the magic-science-religion divide, what is magic and what is religion – or dharma, or meritorious – and what is

‘magic’ or subversive and credulous is largely the result of social conflicts and discourses of power. Randall Styers has written that most theories of magic in western scholarship have been erroneously predicated on this ‘essential binary’ between, ‘a natural world subject to nonhuman causality and the artificial, transitory world of human language, meaning, desire, and value.’ That is to say that, although later arguments against practices such as Phu’s alchemy were predicated simply on their non-effectiveness to influence the causal world, in early cases and in Phu’s narrative the argument against them is not so much that they do not work but that they are improper. It is likely that Prince Mongkut would have thought of transformative alchemy as he did of astrology, as a useless superstition. This is not the way however that Phu sets up his poetic narrative. Instead he explores the moral impropriety of such practices with recourse to what he sees in the landscape of the forest.

**The forest as a land of disorder**

Throughout the poem, Phu expresses moral decay via the treatment of humans towards animals. While still around the environs of Bangkok, he laments the state of a buffalo that must pull along a canal barge. He donates merit to the buffalo, wishing that all animals may be at peace and that in their following lives that they may overcome Mara. As the poem progresses and he find himself deeper in the forest and several

times he finds the corpses of those who have transgressed in various ways. He comes across two monks named Thet and Ket who had been in the forest catching pheasants in a box trap and were for this, their ‘terrible karma,’ attacked by a tiger:

(239)
The two trapping birds in a pillar cage, hiding themselves.¹⁹⁹

The tiger had ripped open their stomach, insides spilling out,
It ate the liver, their hips until you can see the bones at their lap.

These bhikkus violated their precepts and so had to reap their punishment.

The image of the corpses is likely inspired by art of the time, both on the murals of temples and manuscript illustrations, of the corpses of monks found in the forest.²⁰⁰ Not long after, they come across the corpse of a ‘trapper of kingfisher birds, toppled and rolled down.’ Phu releases the trapped birds from their ‘punishing fate.’²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ *Pa-niet* is a kind of trap for birds and (in larger versions) for tigers and elephants. It is basically a cage made of wooden pillars which the hunter tries to get the bird to enter by scaring it or by enticing it with another bird, then shuts the door.

²⁰⁰ In reality, tigers will consume the entirety of a carcass with the exception of digesta, bones, horns and plucked hairs unless they are disturbed. This would seem to indicate that this image of a corpse attacked by a tiger was inspired by art rather than Phu’s personal experience. See Fabregas, María C., Carlos Garcés-Narro, H. Bertschinger, and Gary Koehler. "Carcass utilization by tigers: implications for calculating prey requirements." *Journal of Zoology* 301, no. 2 (2017): 141-149.

²⁰¹ The monks and the trapper were most likely trapping these birds so as to sell their feathers, which would then be sold on to Chinese merchants in Bangkok.
It might seem hypocritical that Phu is so scathing of those who are after all only trying to make a living by trapping birds in the forest. Later in the poem, he himself is more than happy to partake of some ‘delicious’ forest deer curry. The fact that game were hunted for meat in the same forest is beside the point because it was precisely the trapping of animals that was thought cruel and a key example of immoral behaviour. This is why Rama 3rd ordered a ban on fish traps but not on slaughtering chickens. A similar mode of ethical reasoning can be found in James Laidlaw’s study of modern-day Jain communities. Laidlaw describes the Jain community’s ethic of *ahimsa* (meaning non-violence to all life) as an ‘aesthetic sensibility’ rather than a fully consistent ethical code. The ethic of *ahimsa* does not seek per se to minimize death or to save life but is rather comprised of a series of learned attitudes and practices, all orientated towards the apex of coming to perceive the value of life as a Jain saint does, who finally realises that he must starve himself to death to avoid doing harm. While this particular sensibility of *ahimsa* is not present in Siamese Buddhism, it would seem that the reason why trapping animals is thought particularly cruel is that it means that those animals will not be free to practice their gradual moral and spiritual progress. This is why Phu wishes that the beast-of-burden buffalo may yet overcome Mara. Phu makes use of this language of traps and snares as the impediment to the proper goal of life when he writes of himself as ‘snared’ by love for women, which caused him to now be shackled by his attachment to his own sons:

That is the snare, children, the lure
That trapped your father – a disappointment is this body, now old.
Once I had aimed oh-so for the ladies, now I but pray for moksha from re-birth.
But these young boys of mine, troublesome they are and as if allergic to my counsel.

It is said that there are three ‘snares’ that keep laypeople attached to the worldly life – children, possessions and wives. This language and imagery of traps and snares in life and in the actual forest then helps paint the image of the forest as a place of disorder not because of crime or untamed passions or displaced minorities, but because it is a place where people and even animals are not free to develop themselves spiritually. It is a place not conducive to moral-spiritual growth.

The behaviour of these monks and trappers then, lost morally deep in the forest, is brought goes alongside Phu’s own journey for alchemical materials. This is made clear when the final corpse that Phu comes across is one he can identify with most of all - the bones of a monk who had been practicing alchemy:

Pitiful it is, he that has perished, at the end of his merit.
His bones still in his sacred robes, I collect the cloth.
Satchel and bowl, broken into bits, we put in the fire.
He is dead without a master, never knowing a teacher to show him the proper way.

(360)
The fluid metal led him only to madness, that which he so sought.
Mercury can disseminate its rancour, a poisonous reaction.
Smelted and melted in fires fierce, to the touch like acid.
Poisoned smoke, empowered smoke - it infects with its evil.
You cry and you shout, finally falling apart to nothing at all.

This would seem to make the attitude of the poem towards the search for alchemy rather clear. Phu is showing the futility of his own desire by via analogy with the futility of the desires of others. This is also what seems to happen in Nirat to the Temple of the Prince. Phu takes on his son Pat as his writing persona, narrating his father’s quest for the elixir of life. Pat’s lusty nature is described in a variety of comic situations such as gazing lustily at the ‘two stalks’ of women who row up to them to sell them sugarcane and of having the misfortune of having his ‘holy endurance’ broken because he encountered women wearing pink clothes. The text clearly asks us to draw an analogy between Pat’s youthful, misguided lust and the desire of his ‘reverend father’ for the immortal elixir. Alchemy or technologies of transformation are, like misguided lust or trapping animals, merely ‘snares’ which hinder our proper moral-spiritual progress. And so, as in so many stories about a ‘hunt’ into the forest, Phu is forced to realise the problematic nature of what he seeks. However, the right and wrong of Phu’s quest is
not as didactic as it might first seem. To understand the complex ‘dialectical terrain’ of
desire which Phu explores in this forest we must look at one final and most
characteristic feature of Phu’s forest.

The guardian spirit-lords of the forest – Phu Jao

On his journey to Suphanburi in 1892, a journey undertaken in part to dispel the
myth that anyone of royal blood who journeyed to the area would perish, Prince
Damrong noticed that there was particularly strong belief in jao or local spirit-lords.²⁰³ It
was a commonly held belief in Phu’s time that the forest in particular was ruled over by
spirit-lords who had to be appeased with offerings. Even kings, when they went on a
hunt for elephants, had to first ‘open the forest’ with an elaborate ceremony of offering
for the resident spirits. Although his account is certainly based on what were prevalent
beliefs and practices, Phu’s encounters with the spirit-lords are unusual and, as I shall
argue here, would seem to hint at his ambivalence towards a system of merit that was
based on patronage.

The very first spirit-lord that Phu encounters appears when he sees a python
which is ‘as big as the pillar of a house or a ship’s hoist.’ He describes the encounter in
the following verses:

²⁰³ Warunee, _The City of Suphanburi_, p.276.
We are stuck in the shallows, some punting, some pushing the boat.

On the shore, many trees, tigers, rocks and bushes.

In the waters, a snake hissing, turning – unavoidable.

In a moment, we saw smoke closing off the path ahead.

My children saw something like a person sitting on the snake

Flashing there, while the snake was swelling and cresting.

I knew what to do – I took my betel nut and leaves to offer to the spirit-lord.

The snake, rippling and glistening, slid off and disappeared.

The giant python ridden by ‘something like a person’ is easily appeased by only a conventional offering. The spirit-lords that Phu later encounters are less easily impressed. More than tigers or snakes, what stands between Phu and the object of his quest are spirit-lords, the guardians of the forest and the arbitrators of its treasures.

De Certeau argues plausibly that the forest is such a powerful locale to explore a wide range of almost subconscious anxieties because it is so full of guardians of the limit. We must always be on the lookout for what these guardians signify more fully. As he writes:
“Stop!” says the forest the wolf comes out of. “Stop!” says the river, revealing its crocodile. But this actor, by virtue of the very fact that he is the mouthpiece of the limit creates communication as well as separation: more than that, he establishes a border only by saying what crosses it, having come from the other side. 204

Crossing the frontier, de Certeau argues, ‘causes the re-emergence of the alien element that was controlled in the interior.’ That is to say that, upon passing the boundary into the forest, some troubling issue that was not dealt with in the normal world will have to come to light and be resolved. For instance, in Noi Inthanon’s *Down Into the Forest*, the narrator and his gang go on the hunt for a huge tiger ‘with elephant-sized tusks and its stripes as if smeared with phosphorescent paint.’ As they journey deeper into the forest, their modern technology of jeeps, compasses and rifles become useless and they must come to accept a place of enchanted protective strings and powerful holy men. The *pakow* (a white-robed renunciate) who seems to control the tiger with a sacred string tells the gang of hunters from the shadows:

‘Now you see, all your efforts will come to naught. You have no hope. Believe me. This tiger will continue to harass you, it will continue to eat humans, until Kanchanaburi and Thailand lie desolate – just as I foretold. Because humans are the ones who started this.’

The ‘alien element’ and anxiety that is brought out by the guardian of the tiger is then an anxiety about humans and their ‘civilized’ attitude towards the natural world, which has trod underfoot forests, animals and alterative knowledges and ways of life. But Phu, living in an essentially feudal world, uses his own ‘guardians of the limit’ to explore a different set of problems.

The first significant spirit-lords that Phu encounters is that of the ‘Two Brothers,’ which would seem to be the resident spirits of two rubber trees on either side of a canal. This shrine, in fact, was a real place. Several Thai researchers have testified there were indeed two large rubber trees at the side of the canal, only one of which now remains.\(^{205}\) The area is particularly rich in the mercury that Phu wishes to dig for, so much so that to go past these slabs on the river involves scraping oneself against the mercury. ‘Strange it is!’ Phu writes, ‘that this boat, floats along without us paddling.’ Phu’s local guide then tells him of the famous story surrounding the Two Brothers:

(263)

I ask our guide and he tells us of mad Fak,

He who hit his mother, made her run from her house – a deed most terrible -

\(^{205}\) Chanarut Srisunasit on her visit in 2000 found that there was indeed once a sala for the Two Brothers but the brothers told the villagers (presumably via a medium) that they were soon to be re-born and, from that time on, the sala was not repaired and eventually disappeared. See Cholada, *Nirat Suphan*, p.128.
And so those two brothers did aim to recompense.
In an instant, the tree cut, fell, broke his neck. Fak died because of his karma.

The idea is set up here that these spirit-lords are merciless arbitrators of correct behavior, guardian spirits who know one’s true karma.

Phu proceeds to conduct an elaborate ceremony asking the Two Brothers for permission to dig for the mercury:

(265)
To we who have come this first time, be not angry. Forgive our transgression, we beg you.

We ask for a large, beautiful mercury piece of you two tree lords.

Phu and his party do everything they can to appease the spirits, the boys singing songs ‘as lovely as sweet breast milk.’ But still the spirits demonstrate, by felling silently a tall tree nearby, that he is not welcome to dig. Phu responds to this with vindictive anger towards the spirit-lords:

(270)
I look at my boat above the waters with a vexed feeling.

What misfortune, all because of those sibling spirits.
I will battle them, invite fire to come. It will utterly envelop all -
The field, the port, the forest - all must be destroyed, every part.

(271)
We who are upright, honest, who practice the precepts.
May the earth and the skies bear witness to this, may all know -
I wish for this ancient mercury only to lessen the sadness of this world!
For what do you lords hide that which rightly belongs to humans?

If we think of the Two Brothers or siblings as guardians, what is it they say ‘Stop!’ to?
Most clearly they are saying ‘stop’ to his search for mercury. However, there is some ambiguity here. The spirit-lords in each case do not tell him why they will not permit him to dig for mercury. In each case, they simply forbid it. But if the ‘alien element’ is something which cannot be questioned and which does not emerge in normal, ordered life but which comes to light in the land of disorder, it is at least partly revealed in Phu’s passionate raging against being blocked from what he believes he is owed. The ‘alien element,’ could be extended to form a question: What right do spirit-lords (or natural lords) have to question my merit? Am I really getting what I deserve? In other words, Phu, who cannot directly criticize a system of merit which is ultimately based on feudal patronage, is raging against these spirit-lords who deny him what he seeks in order to obliquely express his frustrations at a feudally-ordered system of ‘merit,’ where one’s
just deserts are handed out at the discretion of lords. This interpretation will become
more evident when we examine the concluding sections of the two poems.

The fantastical concluding sections of Phu’s quicksilver poems

As they near the chedi said to be where the quicksilver lies, guided by a Lawa
tribesman, there is a particularly long description appreciating the flora and fauna of the
forest. Such long descriptions were common in both nirat and narrative literature. In
narrative literature like the Vessantara Jātaka, a long description of the forest generally
preceded a dramatic turning point, as if to lull the audience into a false sense of security
and to set up for the chorus of carnage with an extended verse of verdant lyricism.
David Atherton has noted how, in contrast to the city where the relationship of words
and especially royal words to their significations is rigorously policed, in the forest words
are often allowed to play for the sake of their sounds, a ‘wild unleashing of words,’ a
fitting place for the anti-civilization, free-zone of the forest.206 What Phu does here is
freely mix fantastical flora and fauna with known names. Cholada notes that some
names such as ‘chili birds’ (nok prik) and phrodok birds and nok yang kork are only found
in other literary works which describe the Himaphan Forest such as Samuttakote

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231
Kamchan and the Mahachat Kamluang. In one verse, Phu freely mixes fantastical animals with rabbits and moles running in the forest:

(369)
Rabbits, moles role and ride side by side on a flat road.
Children jump and chase them, zig-zag running.
Taktakro turn round and round, blocking the children
Who fall, raised on their knees with wincing faces, staggering on forward.

The takkrato is a creature with a lion-head, lion-body and elephant trunks. It is inserted into this verse without much remark and is perhaps, via the ornate sounds of the words themselves more than anything else, meant to signify that they have come to a strange realm, somewhere between the Suphanburi Forest and the fabled Himavanta Forest.

In both poems, the concluding section is where the nirat genre, which Phu had hitherto played fast and loose with, is entirely abandoned except that poem purports to be an account of a real journey from the perspective of the author. The endings of both of these quicksilver-quests feature elusive edifices, one a mysterious chedi and the other an abandoned temple, which Thai scholars have throughout the years tried to find.

\footnote{Cholada, Nirat Suphan, p.299.}
but have been unable to.\textsuperscript{208} What follows is a summary of the sudden and unexpected incidents of the concluding section of \textit{Nirat Suphan}.

Together with his Karen and Lawa guides, Phu travels through a tunnel which leads into the mountain, leading to an area encircled by mountains.\textsuperscript{209} There is a cave and a waterfall there, as well as an ‘ancient’ \textit{chedi} covered in sparkling ‘diamond-mortar.’ Phu describes the whole area as ‘an unusual paradise.’\textsuperscript{210} They find places to sit, a dais that surrounds the walls of the cave ‘carved consummately by a craftsman,’ indicating that this whole area was likely once a royal residence. Through a gap in the wooden door of the \textit{chedi}, covered with protective warnings written on palm leaves, they spot lights ‘sparkling and vanishing.’ They once again perform an elaborate ceremony to ask for the local spirit-lord’s permission with ‘all my children lying down flat’. But the spirits seem unappeased because soon a troupe of elephants appear outside the mountain making \textit{praem-praem} trumpet calls and breathing angrily through their trunks, making a \textit{foot-faat} sound. Phu notices that the elephants have many types

\textsuperscript{208} The abandoned Temple of the Prince some researchers, such as Sujit Wongtet, believe is simply a name on a treasure trail and was probably invented by Phu. Others have actively sought out its location according to Phu’s descriptions. In 1965, Nai Pleung Nakon and Nai Hem Wechakon travelled the route described in \textit{Nirat to the Temple of the Prince} to find the poem’s eponymous temple and believed that they found it at Wat Khao Din (Temple of the Hill) in Ayutthaya Province. A request was filed by supporters of the temple to change its name so that tourists might re-live Phu’s journey in full. See Ruengthai Satjapan, “\textit{Nirat Wat Jao Fa and learning about culture}” in Kusuma Raksamani et al., \textit{Sunthorn Phu}, p.123.

\textsuperscript{209} No such area exists in Thailand, so this is doubtlessly gleaned from Indian-derived Jātaka tales, in which many perfect kingdoms are described as naturally walled by mountains.

\textsuperscript{210} ‘Diamond mortar’ is not actually mixed with diamonds but with sugar. This makes the mortar particularly strong, suitable for closing up things which are not meant to be opened and gives it a luster.
– dwarfed-type, hump-backed type - perhaps indicating that these are not wild
elephants after all, but a curated range of different elephant types associated with a
king. The Karen guide blows his pipe, ‘billow-mouthed, huge and wide’ and the
elephants beat a retreat. The group try once again to open the door, with everybody
pushing. For a brief instance they see inside, the interior smelling freshly of ‘aster
flowers and daisies.’ The interior room is misty and smoke-filled, indicating that there is
mercury there because mercury was thought to generate a mist to veil itself from the
rays of the sun. Yet, finally, the door shuts, ‘echoing, re-joined thick and fast to the
frame.’

At this point, when Phu has given up all hope, he hears the ‘gladdening’ sound of
a soh-style song with someone singing, the kind of singing one would hear at court. In a
sudden ‘sting of pain’ and ‘flash of light,’ the hall is returned to its former glory and Phu
is at an audience with the spirit-king. He sees the king, perhaps King U Thong, together
with his court ladies and two ‘top-knotted boys.’ The king tells Phu that he has heard of
him and asks him to sing him songs. Phu sings songs in praise of the Rabbit Lord, the
moon which is attended to by the stars like the king with his white-faced ladies who
bow down before him in multitudes. The king then tells him that this had once been a
glorious kingdom but had succumbed to plague:

(416)
The Lord replied with a story, a tale of ancient times.
That this ancient place was once a palace, that he himself had built.
Mountains surrounded like fortresses that glorious palace, but a plague came.
It is now in a forest abounding in wild elephant herds which protect our possessions.

The king claims that there is no ‘elixir of one-hundred-hundred-thousand years’ there,
indeed that such a thing does not exist. For Phu, a monk, to worship the ‘glittering
mercury’ is ‘improper.’ The spirit-king continues:

(420)
Please do not look for this alchemical stuff – stop wasting time.
Turn yourself to the path of merit – and share some with me.
Don’t try to live for a million years – like a crazy person!

So far, this seems didactic enough. Phu is being asked to abandon ‘technologies of
transformation’ or potency, practices which will allow him a boon above his allotted
merit in this life. Instead, he should accept things as they are and continue to practice
the ‘path of merit.’

Indeed, things only ever seem to work out for Phu in these poems when he
diligently practices merit or compassion for others. In *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*,
at a Mon temple with a prominent banyan tree, Phu and his gang encounter a ghost
which makes a sound like rain on a roof, which climbs the banyan tree shaking leaves,
appearing only in glimpses as ‘a peering head, a white torso.’ Only Phu, as a seasoned monk, knows how to appease the spirit. Sternly covering his shoulder with his robe, he inspects the cemetery and finds the corpse and sends merit and \textit{metta}, causing the ghost to disappear in a circle of fire. Similarly, towards the end of \textit{Nirat Suphan}, Phu cannot escape the mountain-palace because of the guardian elephants outside. It is when Phu finally works for the safety of his group and calls on the powers of the Buddha to protect him from the ‘furious’ guardian elephants that he is successful in escaping from them:

\begin{quote}
\textit{I wish to stop them just as the Buddha won over the demons.}\textsuperscript{211}
Please subdue my enemies who surround me.
And, by the power of your good deeds assist me, I beg of you.
I feel dozy and it is as if I see about me many monks, multitudes of them in every direction.
\end{quote}

Spreading \textit{metta}, he asks that the ‘spirits who reside upon the highest summits’ be free from all sadness, consuming bliss ‘in each \textit{kalpa}’ and he prays that there be gargantuan

\textsuperscript{211} The demon Mara had come riding in an elephant to confront the Buddha, which makes the situation seem similar to some extent to Sunthorn Phu’s.
trees to provide shelter and fruits for ‘every living thing.’ Only then is Phu able to escape back into the forest.

And yet, all of this seems very unfair. It is significant then that the guardian between Phu and what he seeks is an ancient king. The king informs him that the *chedi* that he had tried to enter is reserved solely for his top-knotted children:

(417)

In the *chedi*’s cloister hidden, gold sleeps.
With mercury and diamond-mortar mixed, sealed.
And there is food - beans, milk, cured meat.
All this for our top-knotted children
Who shall, when born again, build pagodas of gold.

The king also instructs Phu to teach his two children ‘poems about Lord Lasatien’ and the *Ramakien*. In other words, the king demands that Phu teach his children (just as Phu had done in real life for Rama 2\textsuperscript{nd} and his children), offer him merit and in return offers him nothing at all, except to escape from the king’s own elephant guards. This is where there is some ambiguity about the attitude of the poem towards alchemy. Even if it exists, you can only get it if you have enough ‘merit’ and those who arbitrate whether you have enough merit are themselves covetous and chiefly only concerned with the welfare of their own kin. The rather callous way in which Phu is treated by the spirit-king
can then be interpreted as a stand-in for Phu’s sense of felt promise which, particularly after the death of Rama 2nd, fell out from under his feet. In *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*, an abandoned Buddha-image, the guardian of the elixir of life also denies him what he seeks. The image lets Phu know that he not permitted to dig in the ‘diamond-strong earth’ by conjuring a storm, a ‘tung-tang-tum roll, like a person’s voice,’ and ‘a devastation of rain.’ Phu must apologise to the Buddha image and the guardian spirits, saying that since he had ‘known times of sadness, hardship and disease,’ he could not help but try. Although the text would seem to promote simply ‘making merit’ and spreading *metta* as the only proper practices for a monk, there is some ambiguity here which seems to hint at the unfairness of this system of merit itself, an unfairness which Phu was keen to obliquely express throughout his life.

The concluding verses of both of Phu’s alchemy poems express two different attitudes to these endeavours, reflecting the ambivalence contained throughout the poems. The concluding verse of *Nirat Suphan* gives a clear, cautionary moral message:

(462)

I wish to give this as a lesson to all my beloved children and my grandchildren.
That they may know of this wasteful, needless, futile hardship.
The life-prolonging elixir, that particular specimen, I your father ask that you not search for it.
The poems ends with the lesson that Phu has apparently learned, that one must follow the ‘path of merit,’ and help those close to one, as Phu helps his ‘beloved children and grandchildren’ by writing this cautionary tale for them. As Charles Hallisey has pointed out, both Buddhist tales of this time and literary tales obsessively explore character’s proper moral relationship to their family and patrons. In *Lilit Phra Lo*, for instance, there is a protracted scene in which Phra Lor’s mother begs and implores him not to leave his proper place in the palace to pursue the two princesses in a far-off kingdom. Improper desire, such as Phu’s search for quicksilver and elixir, destroys proper relationships. Phu has, after all, taken his boys on these absurdly dangerous adventures. In *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*, the narrator Pat and Phu’s other novice-monk sons are locked in their own desires for ‘dancing’ and ‘debonair’ Mon ladies just as Phu himself is locked in his desire. However, an alternative attitude to these quests is suggested at the close of the *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*. Phu, writing as Pat, writes in celebration of desire itself:

We are like insects (*phu*) flying for the lotus.
For one hundred miles, partly revealed, smelling, flying towards.
But this flower is the foot of the spheres of our nearest heaven
And we cannot ever overcome, we insects, to reach that which we admire.

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212 Hallisey, “Between Intuition and Judgement,” p.150.
This final verse is Pat’s address to his lover, but it could equally apply to the quest that he has just followed his father on. This then is the ambiguity of Phu’s moral stance on alchemy and perhaps desire in general. Whether it is appropriate or moral or productive or not, one cannot help but hope for more than one has.

Conclusion

In Nirat Suphan, Phu uses the place of the forest, as both a real place and one of literary associations, to explore the depths of his own desire. He is forced to confront fully what that desire truly means. Like trapping animals or lust, it is only a ‘snare’ that keeps one from the proper path. His quicksilver poems are on the surface tracts against ‘practices of transformation’ as against working within the proper field of merit. Because this is a poem, however, his quests for quicksilver and elixirs are open to multiple interpretations. We could say that Phu has used a debate that was live at this time concerning proper Buddhist practice to examine desire itself. Alchemical materials could be read as a stand in for: fame, long-life, wealth or any boon of fortune which the merit-governed world of the capital and court has failed to provide him with. The forest here then is not simply the opposite of civilization, but a place where proper moral-spiritual practice and the nature of desire are questioned. In the end, Phu should return to ‘the path of merit.’ And yet, the entire poem has been one of longing for something above and beyond one’s given natural and feudal fortune. In a system of merit so rigidly
governed by powerful families and patronage, Phu’s forest poems counsels against any practice that pretends to afford one a boon beyond merely making merit by austerities and donating it to others. At the same time, he offers a poetic exploration of just why one must necessarily do so. It is, after all, human nature to long for the ‘spheres of our nearest heaven’ and, inappropriate and disruptive though it may be, this is a path that Phu is continually driven to follow.
CHAPTER FIVE: The Heavens, the Oceans and Parody in Early Bangkok

About a fifteen-minute walk from Phu’s kuti hut at Wat Theptidaram (Temple of the Divine Daughter) stands Wat Bowonniwet (Temple of the Excellent Abode), the center of Rama 4’s new, traditionalist-modernist order of monks. The murals of the vihara are something quite astounding. Painted by the monk Krua In Kong, about whose life we know very little, these murals take the traditional cosmology which appeared in murals of a canopy of stars and angels, of Mount Meru and different continents as well as the lives of the Buddha and replace them with a new perspectivized chiaroscuro style. Instead of angels, popular narratives, saint’s lives and sacred mountains, these murals show depictions of Western life, of horse races, jugglers, the United States Congress building, as well as steam ships and railways. And, gathered around a large blooming lotus-flower in a park, Victorian couples marvel at the discovery of a new species of giant lotus flower. Krua In Kong’s mural mixed new knowledge of European life with the traditional frame of temple art to tell a message – even in the scientific world of Europe, Enlightenment was happening. But the work of re-imaging Buddhist cosmology as depicting different nations and their practices, of new technologies and of trade had

The blooming lotus flower would seem to refer to the recent discovery of Victoria amazonica, a particularly large species of lotus found in the Amazon and first classified in 1837. It also of course refers to Buddhist Enlightenment. And so scientific discovery too is a kind of enlightenment in the new age. Several other images would seem to hold symbolic value, for instance a juggler demonstrates the principle of gravity. An engaging introduction to Krua In Kong’s murals at Wat Bowonniwet and Wat Bowonniwaat and the ‘puzzles’ which are contained within them can be found in: Wilairat Yongrot and Thawatchai Ongwuthivage, Deciphering the Murals of Mongkut and Krua In Kong.
already been begun by Phu and other writers long before Krua In Kong put paint to plaster. A sprawling and variegated local literature of epics dealt with the shock of the new in its own terms, within the recognizable world of a highly-fluxed version of the Pāli Buddhist cosmology. It did not understand this new wider geography of difference only in simple moral and religious terms, but was beginning to do so via parody and irony. Here I use Lamentations (Ram Pam Pi Laap) one of Phu’s final poems, a parodic dream journey which mixes together several genres into one, as a window into the wider world of epic literature and the parodic ways in which it was desacralizing old forms as well as dealing with the new in terms of the old.

Cosmology and parody

The Siamese cosmology, prior to the coming of the new Western cosmology of nation-states with clear boundaries, objective mapping and a Copernican cosmos, is frequently described as one not so much concerned with the world out there as with religious truths and morality. The key cosmological text of the premodern Siamese world is taken to be the The Three Worlds of Phra Ruang which is said have been to be written in about 1345 C.E by Phya Lithai, then the heir apparent to the central Siamese kingdom of Sukhothai-Srisachanalai.214 It features a creative re-telling of cosmology, and outlines knowledge of astrology and meditation, to give a wide canvas of vast temporal

and spatial dimensions. It speaks of Mount Meru, of jewel-wheels, and centers around the perfection of bodhisattvas and *cakravartin* or wheel-turning monarchs. In a majority of studies, it is taken to be a text which maps pre-known moral truths onto imagined space. It is, as Hansen writes of premodern Buddhist geographies in the region more generally, a moral universe ‘in which the very temporal and spatial structure of the physical world has moral dimensions.’\(^\text{215}\) In this it is an exemplification of premodern ways of figuring space, of which Winichakul writes:

>The religious subordinates the materiality of space, making it dependent on, or an expression of, religious value. By contrast, modern geography is a discipline which confines itself to the study of the material space on earth.\(^\text{216}\)

It is important to query however just what this ‘religious value’ is. While Winichakul is extremely careful to pick apart the world of signs of modern geography as a conceptual abstraction, his analysis of premodern geography tends to fall into this understanding of premodern mappings of space as moral and didactic. Premodern tellings, he writes, could imagine the materiality of the human world in more ways than one, but the ‘spiritual meaning’ of the three worlds had to be ‘obeyed.’ However, I would argue that premodern conceptions were more varied, imaginative and contestable than Winichakul

\(^{216}\) Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p.55.
and Hansen suggest. At least in the time of Sunthorn Phu, when the shock of the new was in the air but when European cosmology and epistemology had yet to take a firm foothold, writers were using their own version of the larger imagined world to make sense of the new.

To take one example, Nidhi Eoseewong in *Pen and Sail* studies the cosmological text *Nang Nophamat*. It is set in the ancient kingdom of Sukhothai, but was clearly written in the early Bangkok period. The author claims to be Lady Nophamat, a Brahmin versed in the Three Vedas. The world of *Nang Nophamat* does not have center, or a Mount Meru or Bo Tree Throne. It is a world without a central point – a world composed of territories which all have equal importance. In contrast to texts like the Three Worlds, here the universe is not centered around the great wheel-turning monarch. This text presents a cosmos with no superior universal force and a ‘horizontal surface on which no center can be found.’ 217 For Eoseewong, this was an important new idea of ‘truth.’ Human experience now had value and man was capable of discovering truth for himself. This leads Eoseewong to see that the religious reforms of Prince Mongkut, who came to promote a more individualized and knowledge-based form of Buddhism, had already taken place in the Third Reign. 218 The important thing here is that this was not a text which ‘obeyed’ fixed and pre-known moral truths. It used cosmology to tell an argument about the value of personhood and questioning

epistemological certitudes. Cosmology was a particularly powerful way not only to describe the moral-material world, but to make arguments about it. While Nang Nophamat is modelled upon a text like the Three Worlds, a clearly ‘cosmological’ text, I would argue that these ‘religious reforms,’ these ways of arguing with a portrait of the spatial world also took place in literature. There existed at this time a hugely popular genre of texts of epic and romance which, although they used it as a backdrop to narrative rather than the main focus, still took place more or less within the co-ordinates of the Traibhumi cosmology. Here, too, thought was taking place.

For Phu and his contemporaries, it was through a parodic approach to old and popular forms that new attitudes towards the wider-world and the new world were engendered. Parody here does not necessarily have to mean vicious imitation. In fact, in that it is a conscious imitation of prior cosmological texts to say something new, Nang Nophamat could be called a parody. Our understanding of the term parody is often influenced by towering figures of eighteenth-century literature like Jonathan Swift and Henry Fielding. Fielding ‘parodies’ what he saw as the self-satisfied and morally-righteous prose of Samuel Richardson’s Pamela (1740) in his novel Shamela (1741). He viciously imitates its style and subject matter and in so doing holds the full implications of its values of proper bourgeois sexuality up to ridicule. But parody need not be quite so trenchantly polemic. A more inclusive definition of parody with which to examine the different effects of imitation would be: ‘Parody includes any cultural practice which
provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of a cultural production or practice.\textsuperscript{219}

Parody does not necessarily attack the original style, as Fielding did. It could imitate or allude to a classical style in order to satirize elements of the contemporary world. This is what Phu does frequently. He takes old forms, including sutras and the vaguely defined cosmology of epic Buddhist literature to say something, in a playful manner, about the new geography and knowledges that were opening up before him. Furthermore, parody is not only destructive but also creative. \textit{Don Quixote} parodies – imitates in a polemical way – the excesses of knightly romance but, in so doing, created its own genre and popularized a more jaded orientation towards the morals and practices of the knightly ethos. Often, in the competing voices by which it imitates and mocks or desacralizes, parody manages to create a way of talking about the issues that its source text or genre brings up but does not problematize fully and so, in parodying it, comes to say something broader, more layered, more multi-voiced about those issues. In parodying Buddhist dream-visions and \textit{jātaka} tales which raise issues about the nature of desire and of personal destiny or what it meant to be a good and merited person, Phu problematizes these issues more fully than his classical source material.

\textsuperscript{219} This definition is given as a cautious introductory one in Denith, \textit{Parody: The New Critical Idiom}, p.9.
An autobiographical nirat — the beginning of the poem

*Lamentations* takes several different genres in turn. The first is a nirat journey, but a highly unconventional one. It reads like an autobiography, but is an autobiographical nirat. The poem begins with Phu’s declaration that, while he had been ‘intent on my Pāli prayers’ and focusing ‘on my kasin,’ praying for the happiness of all being, he saw a ‘dream-vision’ (*nimitta-fan*), a thing ‘most miraculous and strange.’ He then describes a series of ominous portents around him in the quiet of the night at Wat Theptidarham. Spiders thump their chests beneath his bed and the bees that had nested outside his door ‘float forth abroad in a chilling hum.’ Phu begins his account of his life not as a nirat would. He does not begin by leaving upon local rivers but starts stranded at sea which, as we have seen in classical nirat like that of Sri Prat, was the ultimate locus to express a sense of being far-off and lost:

In the monkey-year I’d left my post
Sought monk’s repose, turned devotee.
I felt afloat on open seas

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220 A *kasin* is a meditation object such as a clump of earth or a visualized bright light which helps focus the meditator’s concentration. In the context of Theravada practice, as set forth in such works as *Visuddhimagga*, *nimitta* refers to an image that appears to the mind after developing a certain degree of mental concentration. Here, however, it simply seems to mean a meaningful vision or dream.
With naught to see but open sky.  

Instead of place-names or annual rituals to mark the procession of the poem, Phu replaces these with the events of his life which demonstrate his misfortune. He writes of his misguided attempts to search for the alchemical materials and the life-prolonging elixir:

Off to Kan’s mountains, the Karen’s wild land.
I heard but gibbons and tiger’s loud roar,
Endured iced dews in search of an ore,
Fooled by Lao lore and by lure of pure gold.

His life is told as one full of ill-boding omens, misfortune, failed quests, like the portents that precede his biography. At Running Horse Mountain in Saraburi Province, he saw ‘a pair of snakes in darkness’ glinting, ‘enrapt, entwined, as man and wife’ which are

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This translation is by Walter Vella. I rely heavily here on Walter Vella’s excellent translation of Sunthorn Phu’s Lamentations which was published posthumously. Occasionally I make minor alterations and, when I have changed his version significantly, I note that it is my own translation. In the case of this verse, a more literal translation would be:

I sought monk’s repose, for I love the religion.
As if floating, I fell into the sky and seas alone
Seeing only sky and sky, alone utterly, turning and looking.
controlled by a ‘woman standing, her haunting hair ivory white.’

Such bad omens and their interpretation were the mainstay of tamra manuals, the name itself thought to derive from the Sanskrit śāstra. Many of these outline omens, such as the meaning of a gecko lizard chirping from a particular direction when one leaves the house; the meaning of hearing a crow call out at particular times of the day or the particular sequence of the caws of a crow. These omens showed that Phu was shadowed by a poor fortune so clear that it evinced itself in the runes of the world itself. Although he wishes to merely sleep in the shade with a fat belly and ‘feast on pork, shrimp and fowl till my teeth get tired,’ his little merit means he must keep searching for patronage, secure lodgings and continue to hope for the impossible.

It is worth returning here to the question of Phu’s persona, because does something different with it here than in Nirat to Golden Mountain. It is often said to be markedly more confident and individualistic than that of prior poets. Inserting his own biography into a nirat would seem to be an example of such confidence. Delouche takes on a section from Phu’s Nirat Phra Pathom to demonstrate Phu’s confident ‘individualism’:

222 My translation. Vella has:

Long and large as the masts of ships, possessed.
Then transformed themselves into wraiths, hair silver-white.
I ask that the words of my mouth, that make books
Be a name known for the time of all the skies, earth and lands –
Sunthorn – writer for the Lord of the Universe,
That king, sovereign of the White Elephant.

Delouche notes that this is not dissimilar to poets of Renaissance Europe who wished that their poetic words would bring them as well as their sponsors immortality.

Delouche sees this as Phu’s chief innovation, his ‘revolution’ in the conception of the role of the poet, a writer and commentator on his times in his own right rather than a mere servant of his monarch.223 This is true to an extent but the fact is that for the most part Phu’s persona’s ‘confidence’ was not so confident. There is a marked tension, as we can see in Lamentations, between being able to achieve something via one’s own industry and Phu’s own constant lament of a lack of merit. This tension is explored – but by no means resolved – in his own work via parody. This parodic style is far less personally confident and more ironic than the assertion of the powers of self-reliance and personal industry such we can see, for instance, in Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe.

Instead, by inserting himself into classical forms such as nirat or imperfect and unconventional protagonists into his epic work, Phu is able to both comically explore the gap between classical ideals and his own shortcomings.

223 Delouche, Nirat, p.162.
Phu’s persona is of a wandering poet-monk struck by continual misfortune and who is congenitally filled for longing for what is beyond him. In a text such as *Lamentations*, he inserts this persona into classical forms such as Buddhist dream-visions in order not only to satirize himself but manages also to say something more fully about the nature of desire than prior literature. Much courtly literature and many popular Buddhist tales were obsessed with love and parting. But the figuration of amorous desire in such tales tended to be rather simple: parting and longing and finally re-uniting. Phu’s work in contrast figures his own desires as well as those of his protagonist’s not so much as love foreordained by merit in past lives, but as something that drives people to distraction, vacillation, longing and futility but which, for all that, is something worth pursuing and writing about. For example, in Phra Loetlanphalai’s (Rama 2nd) play of *Inao*, which covers a section in which the protagonist’s lover Busaba is stolen from him by a jealous god, Inao is simply sad and worried for Busaba. In Phu’s literary *nirat* version, Inao’s emotions and vacillations are excessive to the point of being ridiculous.224 He ‘folds on himself in tears’ and bears ‘ten-thousand hatreds’ for the wind,’ he becomes ‘distraught and muddled’ by the shadowy rippling of leaves; he says that he will ‘execute’ the wind with his dagger if it dares show itself to him and resents that he must, while still pining, admire the forest with his sister. One device which Phu employed frequently was to have himself or his protagonists make a vow or solemn declaration and then immediately break it. In *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince*, his son

224 This is a point made in Arampheen, “Nirat Inao,” pp.82-87.
Pat solemnly reflects on impermanence and sickness, vowing to ‘conduct myself in the manner of a great ascetic’ only to have his ‘holy endurance’ broken in the next section by dancing Mon women who were, unfortunately for him, wearing pink. Phra Aphaimani, when he is an ordained hermit, delivers a solemn and learned Buddhist discourse (Pāli; desanā, Sanskrit: deśanā) on the dangers of the ‘four matters of the worldly life’ and the five senses of form, taste, scent, sound and touch when, only in the previous chapter, he had had his son steal the princess Suwannamali’s shawl which he had then ‘contemplated deeply on’ as the ‘fragrant smell enraptured and refreshed his consciousness.’

This parodying approach, of inserting impassioned vacillating characters and personas into classical forms, is taken to a further extreme as we shall see in Lamentations using the imagery of Buddhist dream-vision literature.

A dream-meeting parody of Buddhist dream-vision literature

With the autobiographical nirat portion of the poem finished, Phu begins to describe his dream-vision. In contrast to the portents by which he has described his life, this promises to be a boon, one bequeathed to him by the ‘power of Buddhist merit.’ The majority of the poem is the description and discussion of a dream and it worth

picking apart what dreams meant in Phu’s context before covering their parodic intent.

Phu begins with an invocation of the Three Characteristics:

I recited, repeated the Three Characteristics\textsuperscript{226}
To execute that love that weighs down, to cut its fetters out.
I smelled the scents of incense, I drowsed, I fell asleep,
Dreaming that I swam on the currents of the sea alone.

Here, Phu’s dream becomes a canvas on which to reflect on worldly versus moksha-orientated goals. This fundamental split is axiomatic for the dream prognostication of the time. A different interpretation, such a dreaming of the death of a son, would have a different meaning, depending on whether the dreamer was a monk or layperson. Many dream prognostication manuals written by monks for laypeople are self-consciously worldly-goal orientated and assume, for instance, that dreamers desire lovers, to win in fights, the acquisition of wealth and so on. The content of dreams very much takes place in a Hindu-Buddhist imaginary. There are many dreams of beautiful women and of gods

\textsuperscript{226} The three characteristics are anicca, dukkha, anattā – impermanence, suffering and non-self. However, here this is simply a Buddhist prayer. Vella’s less literal translation is:

I recited, contemplated on Three Truths of Being;
I sought to kill, cut, stop love’s fierce ferment.
The incense fumed; I drowsed, I dreamt.
I dreamt I swam in seas alone.
and palaces, of situations resembling literary episodes (such as falling asleep at the foot of a tree), entwined nāga-serpents, of entering temples (which foretell ‘an abundant, winning fortune’), seeing Indra’s palace, or of seeing the Buddha’s relics (which means you shall be free from hell). This perception of a strong divide between lay and monastic wishes which is reflected in the content of dream prognostication manuals is precisely what Phu’s dream-vision complicates.

In his dream-vision, Phu next comes across an arresting sight:

Two golden images there were, well-ornamented,
Looking glittering and sparkling in halos.
Then, with a loud sound, I looked to see: ladies,
In rich colours, ladies I’d count one-hundred thousand.

They all wear wigs half-covering their faces, all looking alike
Beautiful courtly ladies, elegantly outfitted and utterly enchanting.
But there is a leader amongst them, exceeding them all, her skin

228 Vella has the ‘the two’ in the poem as referring to the statue’s two attendees, i.e. ‘The white stone Buddha was attended/ By two others, a resplendent golden pair.’ However, the Silpakorn University commentator of the text thinks that this refers to two Buddha images at Wat Theptidaram, standing and holding back the ocean of Mara.
229 Court ladies of the time cut their hair short. But, if they played in theatre, they wore wigs as the play would be set in implicitly at the time of Ayutthaya, when women wore their hair long. Heavenly realms were often imagined as like the world depicted in court theatre, with dancing apsara angels and such.
Like the orb of the moon, sparkling in the sky without blemish.

Phu’s vision of heavenly maidens reads like descriptions in Buddhist dream-vision literature, which often describe a worthy protagonist visiting the future Buddha Metteya in Tusita heaven. It uses almost identical imagery and language to the following descriptions of the classical Ayutthaya rendition of *Phra Malai* by Prince Thammatibet (1715-46). Phra Malai makes flying visits to both heavens and hells. In this section, he makes a flying visit to the Tusita heavens and sees the following:

“The Supreme Head of Tusita, the powerful Metteya, the Great Refuge, drew near, walking majestically with a group of celestial women – a hundred thousand *kotis* in number... The heavens shone with the light cast by the multifold grace of all the devas, arrayed in the radiance of the Supreme One, drawing all eyes to their beauty.”

Because Phu places himself in these heavily-ornamented heavens, it is appropriate to call this a parodic text. He is imitating a revered genre in order to satirize himself and in the process desacralizes the language and imagery of Buddhist dream-vision literature itself. The language and imagery of Buddhist dream-literature is used for humorous effect because he is certainly not someone who would normally deserve such a

visitation. Nor, as we shall see, is he someone who would have the appropriate response to it.

Immediately following these descriptions, Phu begins to describe the chief angel herself:

Her image, behavior, all – only superlative beauty -
Like a puppet doll, gleaming and pleasing.
As I look, my gaze she glimpses, evades sideways my glances.
A body nubile and perfect, ready to be courted.  

Such mildly erotic language was not entirely alien to Buddhist scripture which, after all, derives much of its language and imagery from Sanskrit courtly literature. For example, in the non-canonical Anāgatavamsa, a visionary sutra describing the future coming Metteya, Maitreya’s wife Candramukhī when he is born as Prince Ajita is described as having ‘sandalwood scent’ issuing naturally from her body and ‘the scent of waterlilies’ from her mouth. But, writing that the chief angel is ‘nubile’ and ‘ready to be courted,’ Phu takes these conventional descriptions of beauty to a higher degree of eroticism than was normally acceptable.

231 My own translation.
232 Meddegama, Anāgatavamsa, p.37.
As the chief angel is counselled ‘not to tarry’ by her celestial attendants in the earthly *Chompoon* continent she leaves Phu, ascending in her chariot to her heavenly mansion. The sight of a bodhisattva in Buddhist dream-vision literature should generally incite the viewer towards greater piety. Here, however, it only incites Phu to vacillate between piety and lust:

Did she want me to waste way, pine, long in my thoughts?²³³
To lose my reverent habits, with longing bedimmed, drowsy, debilitated?
Did she want to laugh, to mock, to taunt,
To tease me – is that why she entered my dreams like this?
As for all of the thousands of human women on this earth,
I consider them terrifying, ten-thousand-times scary, I take myself up and flee!
I sit, I meditate quietly, I practice mental endurance.
I stay in my monk’s hut aiming for nirvana, as would Brahma.

The language he uses vacillates between worldly, lusty goals and the goals of a monastic. Later, he writes that obtaining ‘that jewel’ would give him equal ‘to the attainment of Buddha-mind’ (*prayot potiyaan*) and that:

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²³³ My own translation. As in European medieval literature, love-sickness was believed to cause distraction and a lack of appetite.
She’d make my face all cheery, gay with her words,
Like nirvana, beyond suffering - in total bliss.

In a later verse, he swings completely against his monastic vocation:

Worldliness (lokiyawisay) is in the world's very nature;
Rapture and grief end with this body end.
To be a man is to seek fulfillment,
And with this one can increase one’s happiness and ease.
Should my merit mean that I remain on this plane (chomphutaweep)
To give my life worth and make it better.
To lack the joys of my fellow men is shameful, bitter.
Better to die on a wooded hill.234

He finally concedes that it is not possible that he will be able to be with her because, like
the mythical Karawek birds and Parikachat flowers, she exists in a heaven which he
cannot reach. He offers up a prayer of merit for her, but even here towards the end of
his metta prayer for the angel, he deviates and scandalously implies a wish for sexual
union:

234 Vella’s translation. The final phrase refers to the expression bai tai ow daap na, which means
‘to be killed with the next sword is better than dying here,’ meaning it is better to face a new,
possibly greater danger instead of accepting defeat.
I wish to remain a monk until I must eat betel with a kabun.\textsuperscript{235} Until the evening of my life, that I may make merit and I offer it up to you.

Like the moon, kindly letting the old man and woman
And the rabbit write their marks upon her shining orb.
Like that heavenly lady who rouses in her loveliness
That she be pure and perfect, I give to her the rewards of my merit.
That she be perfect, and have excellence, maintain
Precepts, maintaining them together, making a future Buddha.\textsuperscript{236}

Over and over, then, Phu is making two contradictory wishes, one for sexual union and the other for Buddhist attainments. This play between worldly and monastic goals is an appropriate theme for a poem concerning a dream. A dream complicates intention in that it can be caused by an outside force (such as a demon or angel) and allows for a monk such as Phu to talk of love and a desire-made world with a degree of impunity.

Indeed, he himself questions whether this was a visitation sent to test his moral resolve:

\begin{flushend}

\textsuperscript{235} A kabun is an instrument for consuming betel nut for those who are old and no longer have teeth to chew with. The kabun pulverizes the betel nut, making it into a powder.

\textsuperscript{236} Saang put taang goon. This comes from Pāli buddha together with ankura, meaning a ‘nascent Buddha’ or sprouting Buddha. Sometime a king was called this, a Buddha-bud, a bodhisattva who was not yet a full Buddha but would be in a future birth. In one reading, this is a pious wish (to be a Buddha with his lover in the future) and in the other he wishes to have a royal child with her.

260
Oh, I’m not by nature so ambitious.
Why did the precious one enter my reverie?
To dizzy my will, tempt me away from my brahmacariya vow of celibacy?
Or maybe this heavenly lady was just testing me?²³⁷

It was a common trope, particularly in Sanskrit literature but also in the Siamese
Ramakien, for high-level ascetics to be visited by an angel who will test their faith. If
they remain steadfast, the angel will respect them and give them offerings. Phu, again in
a parody of this form of literature, appears to fail this test miserably.

As well as being a parody of dream-visions, there is a further layer to Phu’s
angelic visitation. This is that the angel in the poem is quite clearly referring to a real
person, Princess Apson Sudathep (1811-1845). Her name means ‘heavenly maiden’ and
it is a similar name that Phu gives to the angel who visits him. For Phu, a monk and a
commoner, to write erotic verse about a living member of the royal family was
scandalous. Phu vacillates between contrition and denial. The language in the following
verse reads like a plea to a king to absolve punishment:

I ask that I not be punished, that you acquit me of wrongdoing -
As I way born as a man of the royal service,
I came to desire for a lady of heaven to share her royal chambers-

²³⁷ Vella’s translation.
Absolve me! I beg of you, I Sunthorn,
And let me have lasting wealth and progress and good fate.

He writes that this poem is for ‘the ladies of the court and Bangkok’ so that they can, as love-messengers, send word to his love although he fears ‘the king’s punishment.’ But as in so many of poems, in the end he resolutely denies this implied meaning, writing that this was only a ‘scheme to entice readers’ and that he loves no one on this ‘earthly sphere’ (sutha) but a ‘daughter’ of heaven. Further, he says that ‘Monk Phu’ (Phra Phu) only writes this in jest and that he had known ‘these women’ for such a long time that they are ‘like my grandchildren.’ This likely refers to Phu’s friendship with a society of women at court, one of which was Princess Apson. This society was like a leading literary salon of its day and spearheaded the move towards more parodic forms of literature, of which this verse is an example. Looking at some of the key figures of this movement will help put into context Phu’s own parodic style.

**Princess Apson Sudathep’s court and the parodic literature of early Bangkok**

Princess Apson Sudathep was most certainly the favourite child of Rama 3rd. While he was still a prince, he had her named as Phra Jao Ying Wilaat (The Beautiful Princess). When he was king, he had her established as Her Highness Goddess Angel, Princess of the First Class, the first time such a title (krom meun) had been given to a
woman. She was given important positions in the rear palace, entrusted with
distributing salaries. She was thought to be a very devout Buddhist, like her father.\textsuperscript{238}
Although Rama 3\textsuperscript{rd} had a number of temples refurbished, he only established four new
temples, one of which was Wat Theptitaram, named after his beloved daughter. She
was an avid reader, fluent in different languages including Chinese, and was so often at
her father’s side for affairs of state that many foreign visitors and diplomats assumed
that she was the king’s queen.

Most importantly for Phu however was the fact that, in contrast to her father,
she was a great patron of artists and poets. Her royal residence was popularly known as
‘large royal residence.’ Many of the poets at her court were courtesans such as Consort
Duck (\textit{Mom Pet}), a name supposedly given by the princess because the poet ‘sailed and
sauntered, shook and swayed’ when she walked. Khun Sawan, one of the courtesan
writers whose work the princess encouraged, describes the camaraderie and the
musical, cultured atmosphere at her court:

\begin{verse}
The concubines, princesses who stately come  
All merry, singing songs in style  
All in chorus, the rhythm mellifluous.
\end{verse}

\textsuperscript{238} There is in fact a rumor that she supported a clandestine coterie of fully-ordained \textit{bhikkunīs}
or Buddhist nuns in a secret area of Wat Theptidaram. This would not have been acceptable to
the sensibilities of the time and so had to be done in secret and would of course not have been
recorded. It is, however, only a rumor. Source: Interviews with laypeople at \textit{Wat Thepthidaram}.
The xylophone-band and the lady’s orchestra festive and fun.

...  
Lady Yaem from Nakhon speaks unclearly, her Southern sayings changed,  
Her sounds stubby or chubby, singing so fast - we’re splitting our sides!  
As for Lady Hem, she snatches up some betel and drags it from the box.  
She laughs until she cries, saying 'oh my dear girl!'  
Her case of areca-nuts spills out from her hands as she snatches the betel leaf,  
As if she’d never heard music like this before.\textsuperscript{239}

The playfully excessive language of this verse is a clear example of the kind of literature which Nang Apson’s court specialised in, a court which Phu had close ties to.

Khun Sawan herself wrote plays like \textit{Phramaletetai} which were courtly plays which parody the style of previous ages. The play uses a kind of ‘nonsense jabberwocky language’ which, because of what had been a vigorous policing of signs and referents at court, Davidaskd sees as a playfully subversive imitation of old courtly works. The clearest work of parody however is that of Phra Mahamontri, a minor prince who wrote a play called \textit{Raden Landai} which he did not circulate widely during his life. It is a parody of the courtly play \textit{Inao} and also features a love triangle but, instead of kings and princesses, features \textit{kaek} (brown-skinned) traders who resided near the Giant Swing in

\textsuperscript{239} Cited from Wirasinchay, “Her Highness Apson Sudathep, angel of the royal residence – why did she dare sponsor Sunthorn Phu even though it did not please Rama 3\textsuperscript{rd}?”
Bangkok. It parodies the style of court-sponsored epic literature, which were full of descriptions of the immense abilities and talents of their protagonists:

He used immense powers and courage,
Full of milled rice was his back-basket that he bore,
With dried fish he put them in the burning fire,
And in a moment, a single moment they were powdered.²⁴⁰

In what would have been considered scandalously subversive of the sacred institution of monarchy at the time, Mahamontri uses royal terminologies and reverses their association with kingship to describe commoners. Raden, a beggar, sings snatchets of a Thai classical poem, the Golden Swan (*Suwanna Hong*) without ever finishing it; he ‘reigns’ over a shadowy kingdom near the Great Swing in Bangkok, his ‘palace’ a crooked pillar and his ‘soldiers’ a pack of dogs. Mahamontri writes:

All submit, surrender themselves, fearful of his powerful (*barami*)....
The king (*phumi*) is subdued, intoxicated with marijuana.

²⁴⁰ Cited from Jatyangton, *The Development of Thai Literature*, p.408.
According to Davisakd’s reading, Raden Landai’s subversive power came from ‘the displacement of the established relationship between the court’s sacred signs and its royal referents.’ This then was a very direct and subversive form of parody. By speaking of the lowest in the language of the highest, the text mocks not only its characters but also the language used for royals itself. Phu’s parody is not quite so direct. Instead, his mode is more frequently to insert unconventional characters and personas into old forms. This certainly has the potential to desacralize his source texts but he can also use these characters to explore more fully tensions and contradictions in the original texts, such as worldly versus moksha or, as we shall see below, merit versus individual, knowledge-based effort.

**Romance jātaka literature**

Up until now, we have gone over Phu’s parodic approach in order to elucidate his heavenly encounter in *Lamentations*. In the second half of this chapter, I will begin to go over the final portion of the poem which is of a fantastical boat journey across Java, Bengal and magic islands which Phu wishes to be able to take his angelic lover on. Here, I shall argue that Phu is using a larger geography to explore the tension between knowledge and human endeavour over merit. But, first, to understand fully the derivation of the aerial geography of this journey of fancy, we shall have to travel

beyond the court to a popular genre which I refer to as romance \textit{jātaka}. This, I shall argue is the same geography which Phu works with in \textit{Lamentations} and in his epic \textit{Phra Aphaimani} but which, in the playful parodic manner of his contemporaries, he proliferates into the geography of the new world.

\textit{Jātaka} literature was, as Peter Skilling has suggested, much more varied than only those \textit{jātaka} from the Pāli canon. While the oldest Pāli \textit{jātakas} tend to stress the moral progress of the bodhisattva, a great many of the most popular and influential \textit{jātaka} since at least the sixteenth-century in Siam were more concerned with love and adventure. They feature bodhisattvas born as shells and then raised by \textit{yakkhinī} ogresses who then escape by wearing magical shoes; separated brothers who go on sea-faring adventures, slaying ogres, acquiring magic weapons and warring to re-capture their kingdom, and ladies, married to greedy Chinese princes, who then will themselves die and then be re-born in order to come to the aid of their love, the bodhisattva.

\begin{enumerate}
\item For instance, in the canonical \textit{Mahājanaka Jātaka, Janaka} finally decides to renounce his kingdom. His wife Sīvalī follows him distraught but must eventually concede. Finally, he escapes to the Himalayas, produces the higher knowledges and, in the end, both he and Sivali are reborn in the Brahmā world. In the \textit{Samuddaghosa Jātaka}, which is clearly modelled on the \textit{Mahājanaka} but takes on certain Panji-like tropes such as portraits and misidentification, there are far less moments of Buddhist moralizing. The story is more about the protagonist and his separation from his wife Vindamati and, once the two are reunited after much fanfare, the two are installed as king and queen, construct many pavilions, rule with justice over a moral kingdom where everyone observes the Buddhist precepts and, at the end of their lives, are reborn in the realm of gods.
\item These stories are, respectively, the \textit{Suvannasaṅkha Jātaka} and the \textit{Varavaṃsa Jātaka}, both of which are told in the oldest \textit{Paññāsajātaka} collections. The last story is a nineteenth-century
\end{enumerate}
call these tales of romancing bodhisattvas because, like medieval European romance stories, they begin with the separation of the protagonist from their lover and then follow the impediments and peregrinations they must endure before reunification. They are very much what Northrop Frye would have called romance stories of ‘and then,’ where the links between various episodes are relatively unmotivated, as opposed to more sophisticated ‘hence’ narratives where more attention is paid to the relationship among events.\textsuperscript{244} These tales draw on diverse sources such as \textit{The Hundred and One Nights}, \textit{Inao}, \textit{Purāṇas} from India, local legends and even Phu’s epic work. The influence of Javanese \textit{Panji} tales, taking place on a wide-ocean canvas of island kingdoms and involving star-crossed lovers separated, roaming and lamenting, misidentification and disguise, and final recognition and reunion is particularly strong and can be seen even as far back as the earliest collections of \textit{Paññāsajātaka}.\textsuperscript{245}

In an excellent source of these \textit{jātakas} collected not from the court and major temples libraries as the majority of Thai studies are, but from temple libraries, Trislipa Boonkhachorn reveals an extensive culture of local literary production. Her study of prayer poems (\textit{klon suat}) from early Bangkok reveals an entire genre of Buddhist literature which, while identifiable as \textit{jātaka} from their framing stories, stray far from

\textit{klon suat} tale called \textit{Dao Ruang}. A summary of \textit{Paññāsajātaka} stories can be found in Fickle, “An Historical And Structural Study of the \textit{Pannasa Jātaka},” pp.282-302.\textsuperscript{244} Frye, \textit{The Secular Scripture}, p.47.\textsuperscript{245} Adrian Vickers has argued persuasively that these Panji ‘journeys of desire’ were so popular and wide-spread in the region that we can talk of ‘a Panji civilization in Southeast Asia.’ See Adrian Vickers, \textit{Journeys of Desire}.
the more morally-directed jātaka of the Pāli canon. Nevertheless, it unlikely that audiences at the time would have perceived any great difference in the literary or educative value between these and what we now know are older stories. This is because their geography and stock characters themselves told audiences that these were of the same genre, that they were ‘that kind of story.’ The moral issues raised in these were usually not as complex as, for instance, the exploration of the aporia of renunciation as something both admirable and offensive which Steven Collins interprets from the Pāli Vessantara Jātaka. Nevertheless, the oceanic backdrop of the stories – a backdrop which could often be seen in the murals that surrounded them as the stories were told – implicitly informed audiences that this story bore some relation to ideas about merit and morality over multiple lifetimes. More often than not, the work-like force of these stories, their power to configure and refigure moral life, was simply to encourage audiences to draw a link between stories in which true love wins out in the end and in which one’s true merits will eventually be made manifest. Phu would take the potent discursive potential of this geography and make a different argument about the forces by which it was governed and how it should be approached.

246 There were, however, certain texts which were held in more reverence than others. More dire warnings in the colophons which preceded the manuscripts of established texts such as the Vessantara Jātaka and the non-canonical Samuttakote Jātaka and Phramalai Jātaka, attest to the higher reverence in which these texts were held, as opposed to texts which said simply, ‘this is not Phra Pāli, I composed it myself.’
The fact that literature like *Phra Aphaimani* and local romance *jātaka* tales were considered to be in the same genre is attested to by the fact these tales were remarkably inter-textual, freely borrowing tropes and characters between them. New stories emerged from the process Justin McDaniel calls a ‘creative anthologizing of stories,’ whereby ‘a great number of new *jātaka*-type narratives were composed in this reign, many including random bits of information, tropes, characters, plot elements, morals and so forth.’ We can see just how freely tropes moved between these stories, between canonical *jātakas* and local *jātakas* and works such as Phu’s, by focusing on the single common trope of being rescued at sea by an angel or god. In the midst’s of his dream-vision in *Lamentations*, Phu is visited by an angel called Maṇimekhalā:

I saw the beautiful figure, chief angel Mekhala,
Lifting her precious orb bright in the midst of heaven.

Maṇimekhalā is generally depicted with her shining orb, which she offers to Phu so that he may fly up to find the angel Theptida whom Phu seeks. Maṇimekhalā was closely associated with the trope of being rescued at sea which, metaphorically, is what is happening to Phu for whom the vision of an angel ‘rescues’ him from the sea of his destitute life. In canonical literature, Maṇimekhalā appears most notably in the

Mahājanaka Jātaka as the goddess of the sea. The bodhisattva Janaka escapes from a shipwreck and swims for seven days even though he has little chance of surviving, so demonstrating the virtue of viriya or vigorous effort. Maṇimekhalā, impressed by his endurance, picks him up ‘as if he were a bunch of flowers’ and delivers him to the city of Mithilā. The Samuddaghosa Jātaka, one tale from the Paññāsa Jātaka collection, is another story involving the bodhisattva’s rescue at sea. Samuddhaghosa, whose name means ‘clamour of the ocean,’ ends up parted from his lover and swims in the ocean for seven days. Maṇimekhalā, as guardian of the sea, rescues the bodhisattva and delivers him near to his beloved.

Although they are not rescued by Maṇimekhalā, many of the klon suat jātaka stories studied by Trisilpa involve the bodhisattva protagonist being stranded at sea for seven days. In Samuddaghodom (not to be confused with Samuddaghosa), a story which exists in fourteen surviving temple manuscripts, the bodhisattva is separated from his brother on a shipwreck on a journey to study in Sri Lanka and rescued by Indra. It is explained that this came to pass because, as is a common explanation in these stories for misfortune, the two had once in a past life played near a river causing a young novice monk to fall in the water. In Dao Ruang, which exists in seven handwritten manuscripts three of which are complete, the protagonist, having stayed with Indra’s

\[249\] Trisilpa, Klon Suat of Central Thailand, pp.276-296. Trisilpa, who endeavors to find Buddhist morality in all of these tales, notes that Samuddaghodom ends with the female protagonist killing her own father out of revenge, which she is at a lost to explain the moral significance of.
daughter on the enchanted Green Isle for seven days, has a ship conjured for him by Indra.\textsuperscript{250} Elements of stories are then very freely intermixed. As such, it was simple enough to borrow episodes, characters and even verses from other tales of the same genre. Phu’s own epics borrow or were borrowed for or from several of these local bodhisattva tales. Writers of these epics would even take whole verses and largely replicate them in their own stories. In \textit{Dao Ruang}, one verse sung by the protagonist is virtually identical to Phra Aphaimani’s multi-life-spanning vows to his lovers:

\begin{quote}
Even if my beloved were a bird I, your darling, 
I ask to be born the arbours of a tree. 
Whether your flesh be that of tiger, devil, elephant or horse 
Your beloved asks to be a vast woodland 
That will never hem in any beautiful thing 
But all live in that woodland, in coolness and happiness each day. 
No matter where we are born, I ask to meet again 
My dharmic lord, until our day of nirvana.\textsuperscript{251}
\end{quote}

These epics, then, borrowed freely from one another and participated in a very similar fantastical geography, a highly-fluxed version of that world found in Pāli jātakas. An important work which, as we have seen above, participated in this inter-textual genre of

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., pp.297-306.  
\textsuperscript{251} Cited from Trisilpa, \textit{Klon Suat of Central Thailand}, p.302.
romancing bodhisattvas was Phu’s *Phra Aphaimani* which, like the final section of *Lamentations*, takes the geography of romance *jātaka* tales and hyperextends it into the dizzying multiplicity of the new world.

*Phra Aphaimani*

To understand what the geography of flight described in the final section of *Lamentations* is doing in its proper literary context, we must briefly go over Phu’s most famous epic work, *Phra Aphaimani*. The epic is clearly modelled after the Javanese tale *Inao* in that it is the tale of a prince who seduces and adventures his way around an ocean-swept canvas, eventually conquering by war and marriage several kingdoms. But, as well as the fact that Phu’s epic draws on sources and ideas far more varied than older courtly epics, there is a key difference in the nature of the main protagonist.

*Phra Aphaimani* (meaning “Lord of Forgiveness”) is not, like Inao, heroic and manly and possessed of a characteristic weapon. Aphaimani is quite cowardly and, instead of a dagger, has a magical music pipe. Aphaimani does not, as his father counsels, learn dark arts and spells so that he may protect the city against danger. Instead, the prince wishes to learn how to play a musical pipe. His father complains bitterly that his son has learned arts fit only for ‘women’ and ‘forest-people.’ For this unconventional but ultimately righteous decision he and his brother are, like so many Sanskrit, Pāli and Siamese protagonists, banished from their birth-right as princes. While
Vessantara is banished for having taken his virtue of generosity to the dangerous extremes of giving away a rain-making elephant, Aphaimani’s virtue is not only belief in the value of art above the old arts of war but, as is later revealed, his willingness to use craft and worldly wisdom above shows of virtue and adherence to tradition. At one point, a Brahmin teaches the exiled prince that he must learn ‘worldly stratagems of the five senses’ in order to make humans ‘spellbound and distracted in samara.’ A yogi counsels at a later point that ‘you can rely on only one, and that one you can rely on is yourself.’ The highest knowledge is ‘to know how to keep yourself safe.’ Aphaimani’s virtue then seems to be being able to use the ‘stratagems’ of the worldly world such as music and clever words.

Rather than merely the lands of Siam or Java or the traibhumi, Phu incorporates into the frame of jātaka tales and courtly romances knowledge of new peoples and new places. At the fabled Green Island, which also appears in Dao Ruang and Saumddhaghodom, Aphaimani does not meet with Indra or angels but with a Brahmin who is attended to by an entourage of ‘Chinese, Chams, Brahmins and browns and whites.’ Because he is able to learn their languages, Aphaimani is able to have these men serve him on his adventures. Lady Laweng, Aphaimani’s lover, later sends out from her kingdom of Sri Lanka for ‘people of knowledge’ (phu ru) from all corners of the globe, such as Madawin, (Mada’in), the ‘Gulf of Germany,’ and possibly Egypt (Aikupto)

and Medina (Madchana). Some of these names come from literature available to Phu, such as the One Thousand And One Nights, some from the Three Worlds and some seem simply to have been made up to increase the sense of variety.\textsuperscript{254} Far from being a morally-mapped universe, it is an island-swept canvas that can only keep expanding in complexity and strangeness. The unstable re-creation of the \textit{jātaka} backdrop to include places of the wider world known of in nineteenth-century Siam is comparable to what Erich Auerbach wrote of the literature of Renaissance England. He attributes the ‘much more varied world’ of that literature at least in part due to the discovery of the new world which widened ‘men’s conception of the possible forms of human life.’ As opposed to the earlier morally-ordered cosmos of Dante or literature later influenced by the ‘absolutistic’ ordering of scientific empiricism or the counter-reformation, Shakespeare’s depiction of reality is for Auerbach characteristically ‘agitated’ and ‘multilayered.’ Auerbach writes of Shakespeare’s plays that ‘there is no stable world as a background, but a world which is perpetually re-engendering itself out of the most varied forces.’ \textsuperscript{255} A similar reality created out of an often inconsistent mix of genres, voices and contradictory perspectives of truth and morality can be seen in \textit{Phra Aphaimani}. Also similar to Elizabethan literature, a special delight is taken in the exoticism of foreign places, strange islands and unfamiliar customs. The narrative core

\textsuperscript{254} Raksamani, “Various countries and the people of various countries in the world of Sunthorn Phu,” pp.24-49.

\textsuperscript{255} Auerbach, \textit{Mimesis}, p.324.
of the epic is still that of a romance *jātaka* but what is original about the epic is the extent to which it re-imagines that world – spatially, morally, out of the most varied forces.

There does at times emerge, however, amidst the disorientating multiplicity of different forms of language and knowledge, a light-hearted entreaty towards accepting new forms of knowledge and different ways of life. At one point in the epic, a yogi inscribes a ‘Dharmic puzzle’ on a cliff:

Sadness and gladness, good and bad – these four things
Give to men and women something to stop on and think – a puzzle.
With the first thing, they are all born and are maintained.
A nose, eyes, mouth and a nose and tongue– everyone
Has senses and by that they follow that which pleases.
Look around you – it’s obvious in each direction.

This continues in a confusing and colloquial style, stating that those who do not see the answer are ‘dumb as a buffalo.’ The yogi is particularly scalding about those who are ‘blind but with an eye stuck on,’ meaning fools who are yet proud of their supposed wisdom. What is interesting here is not so much the puzzle itself, which derives from basic Buddhist philosophy, but that each group that reads it has a different answer:
Whites, Thais and whites sat down and thought it over,
Each expressing their mind according to their manner,
Each understanding it according to the manner of their wisdom.

Those of Lanka (whom Phu features as Caucasians in the epic) think that it is ‘truth.’ Thais think that it is ‘the precepts of the Victorious One’; nobles think that it is honor and lords think that it is ‘fun and merriment.’ The trope of different groups interpreting a teaching in their own way was far from alien to Pāli-Sanskrit literature, but what is new here is first that the Five Precepts of the Buddha are merely one form dealing with the nature of life amongst others and, second, that it is applied to a country or an ethnicity.²⁵⁶ An ethic of understanding that different forms of wisdom can be right in their own way is applied to a new geography. The epic also features numerous verses which read as appeals for different ethnicities to interbreed and work together. To take one example, when Aphaimani courts a mermaid she is afraid because ‘the ways of fish are of the waters’ and to mix together would be a ‘transgression.’ Aphaimani overturns this with:

²⁵⁶ Sanskrit scripture has more than a few examples of different groups understanding the same message in their own way. Famously, in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the Da sound of the thunder is understood differently by devatas, demons and men because each has a different virtue that they in particular must develop.
Each birth-life should meet.
They should mix and mingle, commix and couple.
Adorable, beautiful, tender, graceful one –
Do not object or be upset.
Every form of existence has its own customs,
But do not limit or hinder what is only natural.
Be we nagas, humans, garudas or demons
In the end, it is only the heart’s harmonies that should guide us.257

One the one hand, this is a parody of courtly tales in which the protagonist is always equipped with powers of seduction as shows of his merit and manliness. Phra Aphaimani, in a parodic hyperbole of this, seduces in a comically sophistic way. Even so, it is via parody and fantasy that a message – of being open to the new – is conveyed.

As Sombat Jansawong has commented, Phra Aphaimani is an appeal to arts and knowledge and diplomacy rather the traditional routes of war and the unquestioned wisdom of merited kings.258 This would seem to have had some impetus in the contemporary politics of the time, again mirroring Phu’s allegiance to the faction around Prince Mongkut as opposed to Rama 3rd. Encouraged by Rama 3rd at this time, Prince Paramanuchit was engaged in writing proto-nationalist epics such as Lilit Taleng Phai, the story of King Naresuan’s defeat of the Burmese. Rama 3rd fought wars to secure

257 Sunthorn Phu, Phra Aphaimani, Book 2, pp.104-5.
258 Sombat Jansawong, Sunthorn Phu’s Worldview, p.118.
Siam’s dominance in the region. On the other hand, the rival faction headed by Rama 4th was interested in knowledge of diverse kinds and free exchange with European nations. Phra Aphaimani used the potent discursive potential of the imagined geography of jātaka tales and courtly epics to fabricate a vision of a new world and tell an argument about how that new world should be approached – with worldly knowledge and open-mindedness.

The trope of flying and geography in Lamentations

It is this re-purposed version of new world geography that Phu describes in the next section of Lamentations. This section features a unique take on a common device called um som (to carry off and commingle), when a god or bodhisattva carries off his lover, or when an angel carries a lover to their lover. Such passages or, more broadly passages of aerial description from flight occur throughout classical Siamese literature. Phu, however, makes this journey of flight one of ocean voyaging, inserting an ethic of self-effort and knowledge as well inserting himself into this classical device.

Rama 3rd’s military campaigns are well covered in Vella, Siam under Rama III, 1824-1851. It would, however, be unfair to characterise Rama 3rd as pragmatic and martial as opposed to his successor who was forward-thinking and open-minded. He was in reality a complex figure who understood world affairs well and was quietly tolerant of reform. Nevertheless, he tended to prefer to stick with the old system of complex networks of patronage and monopolies. King Mongkut, his successor, however was actively encouraging of a new, comprehensive free trade deal with England, according to Sir John Bowring’s report.
When Phu had been visited my Maṇimekhalā and handed her flight-granting orb, she disappears from sight and Phu begins to realize what he had witnessed was merely a dream. He is back again in his kuti hut at Wat Thepthidaram, to his own human life where he feels like a sugarcane top ‘chopped off, set adrift.’ He calls upon Vishnu, Shiva and the wind god Vayu to blow him to his love in heaven. When this fails, he makes reference to Indra and Inao kidnapping the objects of their affection and implies that he could do the same. This is typical of Phu. Having only just denigrated himself as a lusty bee ‘by beauty charmed,’ he then vacillates and compares himself mischievously to gods and famed heroes.

A key verse which helps us to understand what Phu does later with his own version of um som is found in this verse just before Phu wakes and realizes that has not been granted Maṇimekhalā’s orb of flight:

And you fade off, far drowsy and feint the sounds,
Of a Karawek bird, concealed peaking from the clouds260
I aim, I offer up my fortune, my fate and my endeavors in hope.
Like a Parikachat flower, stretching to snatch it, but impossible even with a pole.261
I ask with the powers of my good deeds that you let them drop down.

260 The karawek bird is believed to reside in the Himaphan forest. It can fly above the clouds and its flight causes all other birds to stop in their tracks.
261 This is called the Pāricchatako flower in Pāli, believed to grow in Indra’s heaven. It is said that if a human can smell this flower, they shall be able to remember their past lives.
The word translated here as ‘offer up’ is *siaŋ*, which means to use an instrument such as a candle or other offerings to pray for the future. Phu does not have a candle or indeed anything else worthwhile except for his own accumulated fortune (*vasana*, Pāli: *vāsanā*) and personal industry (*utsaha*, Pāli: *utsāha*). Phu, when he wakes, has no flight-granting orb or sword and no particular reason to expect the boon of loving an angel. This sense carries over into the later *um som* journey because, although it clearly uses the trope of flying above the world, it does so via a ship rather than via a miraculous instrument.

The significance of this will become clearer if we compare this world-surveying journey with that of older literature. The *Three Worlds According to King Ruang* includes large-scale descriptions of continents, hells, heavens from an omniscient-like perspective, as if the reader were flying above them and describing them. When the world-conquering Cakkavatti king comes a gem-wheel, a *Cakkaratana* manifests itself. It has spokes, ‘decorated in seven kinds of gem’ which shine forth ‘like flashes of lightning’ and make ‘beautiful designs.’²⁶² There follows a long description of the gem-wheels travels soaring from the moon, into the ocean, delighting the populace. The trope of flight is used here to give an aerial depiction of a particular imagining of a morally-

ordered and king-centered cosmos. In *Samuttakote kamchan*, having received his magical sword, there is a long description of the sights that the bodhisattva and his lover pass, which take place within the same geography as that of the Three Worlds. The two see 840,000 gold mountains and the five ‘mammoth peaks’ of the *Traibhumi* world. They travel to the fabled Himavanta forest with *kinnarees* and *kinnorns* mix with ‘*ma*, *maw*, and *mu*’ and the ‘*paen* and *paep,*’ species of fish used for their playful-sounding names.²⁶³ What is significant here that aerial flight was to depict a larger world which was laid out according to a particular moral order. Although one text could be called cosmological and the other a court poem, both use the discursive potential of a wider geography to make an argument about the governing forces of the world. Both texts show persons or objects of supreme merit as they moved through a world which celebrated them, which bowed down before their merits. Phu is using the discursive potential of a wide-canvas geography but using it to insinuate a much less obviously ordered world which one must approach with one’s own industry and knowledge.

Having described the sights and sounds of Wat Theptidharam, Phu then describes to the angel the flight path that he hopes to take her on. Instead of being able to use a magic orb to fly, he boasts that he himself is one who ‘knows well the sky, the earth, consummate as a craftsman.’ Rather than carrying her off in his arms, he will hide her in a ‘boat of dreams’ and trail ‘maps of foreign speech.’ The fact that he travels in a

boat rather than by using a miraculous instrument is significant. Boats in the literature of the time were associated with merchant culture. Chaophraya Phraklang (Hon) gives a pointedly long description of a merchant boat in his early-Bangkok version of the Vessantara Jātaka. Vessantara’s children are compared at one point to a merchant’s boat but have the potential to be an event stronger boat – a boat of dharma – if they allow their father to give them away. The boat has a hull with layers of ‘caulking rubber to make it tight,’ with guns and with workers of ‘different accents and languages’ and book-keepers and navigators who work with their compasses and telescopes. The vividness of description, the interest in human ability to make the boat safe by their own efforts as opposed to magical or divine Eoseewong sees as more ‘humanistic’ thinking. In Samuttakote kamchan, by contrast, the bodhisattva can only escape this sea of danger because of his merit. Phu, on the other hand like Phra Aphaimani, uses his personal knowledge and worldly wisdom to safeguard passage. He will write ‘mystic signs on a pennant/ To prevent new perils and calm the seas’; he promises to be able to escape pirates with a ‘charmed flag’ and, should a redness leap out of the current of the water like a hallucination, he will fix it by burning leather and feathers.

Next, he takes his angel on a flight-like ocean voyage of Indonesia, to the ‘woody hilly isle of Java’, which of course Phu associates with the Asanya-deva, Inao’s clan. He marvels also at the Gnão, indigenous Polynesian people who feature in literature of this

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264 Eoseewong, Pen and Sail, pp.118-9.
time as being short, dark-skinned and with curly hair. He takes her to what was then the important trading town of Malacca, ‘which before was of Muslims but to the white men fell.’ He then takes her to the ‘Island of Wangkanlaphangha’ which is likely an invented, Javanese-sounding name. The island is like the Green Isles which appear in Phra Aphaimani and so many local jātaka tales, a verdant land looked over by gods. Phu writes that:

An angel (thewada) rules this island country
And not even crows can circle too close.

But this island also features ‘fragrant grapes,’ opium and coffee which grow naturally.
Even a description of fantastical fecundity, then, is related to the valuable crops of a new world of commerce. Similarly, in Saharat in India they ‘make a printed fabric’ of:

Jameswars in purples, greens and golds,
Bolts of Western gilded goods
Fill their row houses that oddly stood
As far as one could see on shore.
On the ocean are steam ships large and small.
These descriptions are representative of an increasing fascination with foreign, expensive, colorful and variegated items in the literature of this period. Nidhi sees this as stemming from the rise of the bourgeois class and merchant culture. Rather than the alankarn (Sanskrit: alaṃkāra) descriptions of jewels and gold and even bejeweled mountains which linked the aesthetics of the court with imagined geographies of morality and merit, these have been replaced by fabrics and luxury crops. This is not a portrait of a world with fixed moral dimensions, but a new and more interconnected and complex world.

In Bengal (Mangkala), which the white men ‘guard and patrol,’ women are pretty and ‘follow precepts’ as well as go about the city in horse-drawn carriages. Finally, the dream-journey culminates at Sri Lanka:

I will take you to make merit
Ascend to Sri Lanka to see, that we may go to heaven.
Pay respects to the chedi Weluwan
The shoulder-bone relics, which reside on the summit of Singkutara.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Though he notes that such an interest frequently mixed with what he calls the sakdina or feudal mentality of, for instance creating large and ornate krathong or floral displays for merit and display.
²⁶⁶ Both the name of the chedi and the name of the mountain are technically inaccurate.
The final destination of Sri Lanka functions similarly to how Collins describes the mention of nirvana in so many Buddhist texts. It is not so much a soteriological concept as a narrative endpoint like a sunset rode off into, a closing statement which creates an ‘expectation of nothing’ for the listener. Many epics and jātakas as well as Phra Aphaimani reach their conclusion at the peak of Sri Lanka. Even though the dream-journey takes place in a new world of trade and exotic place-names, this marks it as still in the fantastical geography of epic and romance jātaka literature.

In Lamentations, Phu has taken a genre which had previously been reserved for bodhisattvas and ultra-merited princes and inserted himself, a lusty old monk ferrying a princess-angel about the world. His parodic text both ridicules the inappropriateness of his desire and, at the same time, seems to celebrate it. In an example of characters and personas not only being in their landscape but of it, it is because the geography that he navigates is no longer quite that of jātkaka tales and the Three Worlds but, as in Phra Aphaimani, a new world with no clear moral core that he is able to parodically insert himself into it. Even as he ridicules the desire of his lowly self to aim to high, however, he does make such figurations of inadequate persons in high places available. From now on, this imagining of the wider world did not have to be one of worthy persons and princes but at least potentially of unworthy, imperfect persons of little merit or standing.
Conclusion

In his *New Science*, Giambattista Vico wrote of the ways in which people make ‘use of the semblances of things known or near at hand’ to make sense of the new and as yet incomprehensible. This he called the ‘poetic geography’ by which a world of human difference not fully understood could be made sense of. While it has been argued that there was a rather rapid transition from ‘religious’ – i.e. morally-structured and didactic – cosmology and geography to a European one of maps and boundaries in profane space, here I have argued that the transition was already underway at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Writers were already using the geographies and cosmologies that they were familiar with to make sense of the new and make arguments about it. The parodic style of Phu and his contemporaries allowed them to imitate classical forms, to desacralize them but also to use their geography and language to say something new about the new knowledges and new socio-political possibilities that were opening up before them. No longer was a dream-vision only to demonstrate the effects of excellent karma, but could explore in a playful manner the competing demands of moksha and lust. The geography of *jātakas* too, not quite the geography of the oldest Pāli *jātakas* but a more romance-centered and island-ocean-swept version of them, was being used as a thing ‘near at hand’ to make sense of the new. Phu had used this geography of oceans, ogres and bodhisattvas to write his own parodic epic, the playful style of which allowed him to proliferate an established form more firmly into an opening world of diverse kingdoms, peoples and ideas. Into this, as well as into the
closing ship-journey section of *Lamentations*, he insinuates an ethic of self-effort and accepting new ideas with diplomacy and art. In *Lamentations*, he perhaps only manages to accomplish this by first making himself so low, so lusty, poor and unworthy. By no means does it appear certain that a new ethic of knowledge and art above merit-given fortune will be effective for him but, as in the rest of his poems he holds out for what feels like an impossible hope, that the princess and perhaps the kings of the land will hear ‘this old man’s song.’
CONCLUSION

The landscape of present-day Bangkok has without a doubt completely changed from the time of Sunthorn Phu. In place of a glittering, temple-spotted river-city is a skyscraper-towered megacity that spreads way beyond what were once only fields and palm trees. Many of the temples and palaces that Phu navigated and spoke in terms of still stand in the Old City. But, even if the buildings are still there, the landscape that Phu wrote within, a landscape which gathered him up in its horizons, histories, hopes and disappointments, has vanished.

With the ascension of Rama 4th to the throne in 1851, Phu was re-instated as a court poet and accorded a higher title than he had ever had before. He was bequeathed the title *Phra Sunthornwohan*, the name with which he is remember today and which translates as something like ‘His Excellency the Well-Spoken and Eloquent.’ Not long after he died in 1855, Bangkok and later the larger kingdom of Siam became set on a fast-track course towards modernization. The court Phu knew as one of betel-nut boxes, accordion manuscripts and courtesans who wore their hair short was rapidly replaced by European clothes, photographs and telephones. Soon to fade too was the classical Siamese poetic tradition which he had done so much to try to reorient. Although there were attempts, most notably by Rama 6th, to reinstate the court’s literary traditions, the majority of readers and writers had already turned by the close of the century to translations and sensational novels.
This study has argued that we could to some extent re-construct the vanished landscape of Phu’s through his poetry. It argued that, contrary to modern expectations of what Buddhism and poetry should be doing, Phu’s poetry was of the landscape first and the speaking subject second. Whereas much modern poetry might have as its near the isolated life of a city and long for a far of nature and a more harmonious existence, Phu’s landscape poems had their own nears and fars. His nirat poetry not only described the kingdom in which he lived, but worked through tensions inherent in it, gaps between the should-be and are, between merit and industry, between proper and improper practice. This study also argued that studying a single poet at a single point in time would reveal not Buddhism as a relatively stable universe or as certain high-ranking monks might like it to be, but a single moment in the database, when particular histories and stories, some far from Pāli and Sanskrit sources, were used to navigate and think with the landscape at hand.

Investigating the origins of the nirat genre, we discover that although it bears similarities to Sanskrit poetry, it only very occasionally drew its sources from a shared Sanskrit literary imagination. It was its own, local form for its own local landscape and shared cultural memory. In the earliest examples, local bodhisattva protagonists such Samuddgaghosa were used to mourn separation from the beloved just as readily as Rama and Sita. These poems also reveal just how much was invested into the names of things, particularly temples and towns bequeathed names by royals. The names of places were used by Phu not only to describe the history of places, but to evoke his own
fallen place in it. A study of *Klong Haripunchai* reveals that, rather than only trying to excavate chronological time from these poems, we must endeavor to think with their own telling of time and place. To tell the landscape of a perfect Buddhist kingdom, this poem wove grand Buddhalogical time together with local legend, all culminating with a lively festival made alive in the present by onomatopoeic language, allowing listeners to actually hear the merit being made as their kingdom came together in a moment of collective, effervescent triumph.

The poems of pilgrimage to the Buddha’s Footprint at Saraburi give us insight not so much into how poet and time are tied to place, but along affective lines of movement. A brief look at the history surrounding the ‘discovery’ of the Footprint reveals that likely came to be as part of a political maneuver. However, this does not give us insight into how it was publicized or quite what made it such a hugely-popular place of pilgrimage and central feature in the Buddhist landscape of the time. In the earliest poems, we can see how Ayutthaya poets put Pāli narratives of Buddha-flights and superimposed them upon the processions of contemporary kings. Part of the power of the Footprint to draw crowds was in the possibility of coming into contact with the presence-absence of the Buddha, an emotional experience like that of meeting and parting from a lover. The line that led to the Footprint was also a place of assignations, thefts and admiring nature. These affective lines began to change, however, from the Buddhalogical time of Ayutthaya-period poems to more modern poetry which celebrated the new railways of a nascent Buddhist nation-state. Phu’s own *Nirat to the*
**Buddha’s Footprint,** is somewhere between the Buddhist time of Ayutthaya poetry and the skeptical, modern time of the nation-state.

In his *Nirat to Golden Mountain,* Phu works with the image of a flourishing Dharmic kingdom seen in *Klong Haripunchai* and uses it to describe the Chao Phraya of his own time. He describes instead a kingdom in decline, subtly but within terms that his audience would have understood. He describes the kingdom as one where the five precepts are systematically broken, where Chinese commercialism replaces the traditions of the Mon and where he himself must console himself with his own memories evoked by the sights he sees. He uses the ruins of the old capital of Ayutthaya to speak of himself and the kingdom as having been almost irredeemably lost amongst rubble but, in the sighting of a relic, seems yet to hold out for the possibility of redemption. The poem is both an original re-working of the *nirat* genre to tell of Phu’s own deep imbrication with a local landscape which he feels dislodged from and a thinly-veiled criticism of the then reigning king.

In *Nirat Suphan,* Phu travels with his sons to an area perceived to be far from the capital in search of alchemical materials. Inspired by perceptions of this area at this time as a far-off semi-wilderness of spirit-lords, bandits and animal-trappers, he writes creatively of the forest, drawing inspiration from classical gothic tales such as *Khun Chang Khun Phaen* and *Lilit Phra Lor.* Such stories generally figured the forest as a place of possible subversion and disorder as against the ordered world of the court. Phu’s
Suphanburi forest is also a place of disorder, but one of improper practice towards animals than of directly subversive forces. As in so many narratives about a hunt into the forest, he is gradually forced to realize the wrong-headedness of his own quest. The various corpses he comes across, including one of a monk who had been practicing alchemy, demonstrate to him that his desire for greatly-prolonged life is improper. And yet this is not a simple didactic poem against ‘practices of transformation’ rather than practicing metta and generating and donating merit. Because this is a literary text rather than one by a writer with an institutional line to tow, the right and wrong of Phu’s desire for alchemical materials is somewhat ambiguous. In the final portion of Nirat Suphan, the refusal of a spirit-king to allow him to obtain gold or mercury hints at the possibility that this is an allegory of Phu’s own life and the frustration he felt that his ‘merit’ or personal fortune was so dependent on the discretion of patrons and kings. As a work of literature, then, Nirat Suphan does not work by counseling directly against practices of transformation, but by allowing multiple interpretations to be left available, to maintain the gap between the danger and allure, the justice and unfairness of wishing for more than what one has.

In Lamentations, one of his final poems, Phu mixes three different genres into one, though still heavily referencing classical material. He gives a nirat not of a local area, but a landscape of his own life, a life lived as if lost at sea. In the next section, we see him taking advantage of a parodic style that was fast becoming popular amongst the nobility of his time. Rather than merely play subversively with the rigorously-policed
language of royals, Phu tended more to insert passionate, vacillating characters into classical forms. Here, he inserts himself as a lusty monk into Buddhist dream-vision literature, incited to amorous desire by an angel and a living princess. In the final section of the poem, he takes his lover on a fantastical boat journey across islands and continents. This geography, I argued, must be understood as a re-purposing of the semi-fantastical geography that we find in court epics and romance jātaka tales. Although they are quite far from the morally-directed narratives of the canonical Pāli jātakas, I argued that audiences of the time would have perceived old and new jātaka tales as more or less the same genre because they still participated in the same generic world of islands, Brahmins and ultra-merited protagonists. In his epic Phra Aphaimani, Phu took this genre and expanded it into the dizzying multiplicity of Siam’s new world at the time. The epic is a parody of courtly epics like Inao but still borrows from and is borrowed from by the romance jātaka literature of the time. Rather than a protagonist whose virtues are insured by their merit from past lives, Phra Aphaimani’s virtue is that he is willing to use personal and worldly wisdom to make his way. A similar ethic is inserted into the closing sections of Lamentations in which Phu, without a flight-granting sword or magical orb or any kind of miraculous merit, claims to be able to show his love the world by taking her on a boat. Using the oceanic geography of jātaka tales, so tied up with an ethic of accepting moral cause and effect over multiple lifetimes, Phu insinuated a new ethic of self-effort, knowledge and open-mindedness.
Phu’s nirat poetry then can act as a window into the particular place of the Chao Phraya at a period of transition between old Siam and new. His poetry allows us to examine the times gathered up and the tensions felt. We encountered these in rivers of sorrow, cities of song; paths to Footprints of triumphant procession and heartfelt parting; kingdoms of betrayal and ruins of redemption; forests of disorder and improper but inescapable desire and of a new geography of oceans and islands that had to be approached with knowledge and open-mindedness. Studying the nirat of this particular poet, then, gives us a window not into the Buddhism of sects or of personal experience, but into Buddhism at one time as one particular homeland of our thoughts.
APPENDIX

Translations from Thai

This section includes full translations of several of Phu’s nirat, as well as a partial abridged version of his Nirat to Suphanburi. The Thai original is provided on facing pages to my English translations. At the end of this appendix, originals and translations of other poems used in the study are included in the order in which they appear there.

Almost all of the original Thai is sourced from vajirayana.org which is by far the most invaluable online resource available for old Thai texts. The original printed source which the website has reproduced online is also cited. All translations appearing here are my own.
Nirat Inao

Inao was one of the most popular tales of Southeast Asia. Originating from Java, it is a ‘Panji Tale,’ a tale about a Don Juan-like prince who is forced to leave his kingdom, travels to various island kingdoms and has love affairs with various princesses, then usually re-gains his own kingdom and various others. Much is made of moments of separation, particularly in this case of Inao being separated from Lady Bussaba. Prior to the events recounted in Phu’s poem, Inao had essentially kidnapped Lady Bussaba and absconded with her to a cave. An angel who bears a grudge against Inao steals her away in the night. Inao awakes to find that she has vanished and assumes that the wind has stolen her. Apart from the Ramakien, the Thai version of the Sanskrit epic the Ramayana, this was probably the most popular tale of Thailand since the middle-Ayutthaya period and this is its most recognisable scene. It is the subject of countless court-sponsored dramas. Many murals depict Inao lying with Lady Bussaba in the golden cave or show Inao spitefully attacking the wind with his jagged kris dagger. Phu’s own version is to some extent best read as a parody of the original story, in that his Inao is far more vacillating, jealous and extreme in his emotional turmoil than in most renditions. If Sri Lanka was like Siam’s Jerusalem, then Java was like Shakespeare’s Venice, an exotic land of high culture and make-believe. The poem features many untranslated Javanese words – such yuyi, meaning ‘my darling’ – scattered about the poem to give it an exotic, Javanese flavour. This was one of my Phu’s most popular
poems in his own time, so much so that he wrote that people would call out to him in public that, like Inao, he left his ladies in the lurch.

Source:

นิราศร้างห่างเห厮หา

ปางอินหน้าร้างสุดคำบุญ
พระพายพาพัดน้องเที่ยวล่องลอย

หลิ่งเหลียวปลื้มย่ำปล่ำให้เหงาหงิม
สุขปริ่มปั้มทะยานอาศัยเหลียว

โธยยนคำนิ่นท่องพระพริ้น
น้องจะลอยมาบินไปไหน

ถูกวั่นขันพันมาพ้น้อง
ไปไว้ห้องชองเวงก็พันไหน

แม้น้องน้อยลอยที่สูงเครื่องฟิตร
สาระนี้จะขยับขึ้นประคับประคอง

ถูกไปประยาทิพย์พิศาสตร
ไปร่วมอาสน์ทะยานผืนผา

ถูกพาพานมนำลอย
เพื่่ยวลอยสู่เดิมที่าชุมสาร
That time when Inao was at his saddest for Lady Bussaba.

When the wind has blown you off, carried you away, glided way.

Undone, he turns – he finds himself alone, solitary.

Tears fill to the brim, drip by drop, bit by little bit.

Oh, cold like dewy water scattering in tiny splashes.

Where, my love, have you floated off to?

Was it an angel from heaven who lifted you off?

Who took you to place in heaven? To which level?

No matter which level of the Three World you are bound,

Indra, the 10,000-eyed-one I am sure shall aid and love and support you.  

Or could you have gone to meet Phra Athit, the Lord of the Sun,

To be near that throne of Indra’s palace, floating fast beside him?

Or perhaps Mekhala may have invited you, my tender one,  

________________________

267 Indra was known as being found of pretty women. ‘Love and support you’ also implies ‘marry’ which suggests Inao’s jealousy.
To go on a trip, gliding and floating in the sky, admiring the ocean.

Manimekhla is a figure of Southeast Asian mythology. She carried a glowing orb with her. When thunder and lightning occur, it is because she is being chased by the god of thunder and he hits her orb with his axe, the sparks causing lightning. However, in many epics and jātaka tales, she rescues protagonists from the sea and carries them off.
ฤๅไปริมหิมพานต์ชานไกรลาส บวเรษฐ์มาสารหงษ์
ฤๅจะออกนอกเนมินท์อิสินธร เที่ยวลอยร่อนรอบฟ้านภาไลย
โดยส่งแสงจะแสงส่อง จะม่วงหมองม่วงซึ้งจะหวั่นไหว
จะดันหมอกออกหมวกกวิก นี้เวรใดคือชาวให้กลาสคลา
พระผันแปรรอบขอบทวีป เห็นกลีบเมฆเคลื่อนเกลื่อนเวหา
จะลงสู่วิถีนั้นสุขยา จะดูฟ้าฟ้าดำให้ร่าจวญ
ฟืนวิจัยโคกแห่งเข้าในห้อง เห็นแท่นทองที่ประดิษฐ์สงวน
ไม่เห็นนุชสุดจะทรงพระองค์ขวน หล่อหนานหัวใหญ่ด้วยโหยแรง

302
Or have you gone to the extremes of the Himaphan forest, or the Khrailaat Mountain?  

Near even the precious crown of Meru Mountain’s summit?

Or perhaps you went out beyond even there, to Neminthon or Isinthon mountains.

If you are travelling, flying and gliding around the firmament

Oh, the red wind and the rays of the sun shall shine out

They shall make you dizzy, my treasured one, they shall make you tremble.

You shall push through the fog, out of the clouds with a lonely heart.

This is my own ill-fate – that that loveliness once gathered so close – to be gone so far from me.

Now she must be turning her face to look about the wide horizons of the continents.

She sees but the petals of clouds flutter, flowing in the skies.

She sees the sun in its twilight

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269 The Himapahan or Himavanta Forest is a mythical forest of Buddhist legend. It is a sort of Arcadia where fantastical creatures roam.

270 These are some of the names of the seven mountains which surround Mount Meru in traditional Pāli-Buddhist cosmology.

271 There was a belief that there was a dangerous red wind somewhere in the ocean.
Sees the sky, the dim sky, making her pained.

Fighting against his grief, Inao enters his chamber.

He sees his treasured bed, once there so enraptured and so cherished.

But seeing not his lady, his majesty staggers,

Suspended, in need, groaning, debilitated.
ยิ่งยุ่งปุ่มเล่าเศร้าสด
ระบายทลายตอบชำระกรรมแสง

โอ้สุดเส้นแค้นอารมณ์ด้วยลมแดง
dูเหมือนแกล้งพัดไปใส่ไกลหว่าง

เสียหายอย่าเคยแอบแนบสนิท
ถึงชีวิตดวง PyObjectไม่หายหว่าง

โอ้ฉันนุชบุษบาสุดาดวง
พี่เปล่าทรวงทรวงดังจะพังโทรม

โอ้โพล้เพล่เวลาปานนี้
เคยเข้าที่พี่เคยได้เชยโฉม

เห็นแต่ห้องน้องน้อยลอยโหยหอม
ยามประโคมมิรู้สึกเจ้าปลื้มใจ

โอ้ชั่นเคยหนันอยู่อ่อน
แต่น้องน้อยลอยร่อนไปนอนไหน

ยิ่งยุ่งเคยชิดสนิทใน
วันนี้ไกลไกลสวยงามนอนนอน

305
He sees that yi-phu, that mattress - what blows to the heart!

Collapsing upon his long bed, he folds in on himself in tears.

Oh ten-thousand hatreds he had for that red wind

As if the wind had intended to torment him, carrying her off far from him.

Such misfortune – to have once been so packed and compact together.

Even if his life were to be at an end, no his jealousy would not abate.

Oh, my loved Bussaba, my cherished one,

I am bereft, bereft, as if my heart were in pieces.

Oh dusk and darkness only there is now.

I once did enter here and look upon you

But now I see only the room itself, for she has gone upon the gusts.

Those twilight times of music, I shall never forget your delight.

That sitting cushion that once had cradled you, still warm and soft -

But to where did my young one glide off to, where do you now recline?

The yi-phu mattress where once we were close-nit-fit upon one another,
Yet today I must be far from you. My love has floated far off and I lie here, bereft.
โอ้รินรินกลิ่นนวลยังหวนหอม
เคยถนอมแนบทรวงดวงสมร
ยังรื่นรื่นชื่นใจอาไลยวอน
สอื้นอ้อนอารมณ์ระทมทวี
จนฆ้องค่ายาหึ่งหึ่งกระหึม
ยิ่งเศร้าซึมโศกาถึงยาหยี
โอ้ยามอยู่คูหาเวลานี้
เคยพาทีทอดประทับไว้กับทรง

โอ้กลับเคยอุ่นผืนผูอำเภอง
เคยโอ้ถึงอ่อนตามไม่ห้ามทาง
ยังเคลิ้มเคล้นเข้าประทุมกระหว่าง
เคยแนบทรวงไสยาสน์ไม่คลาศคลาย
จนเคลิ้มองค์หลงเชยเขนยหนุน
ถนอมอุ่นแอบประโลมว่าโฉมฉาย
ครั้นรู้สึกดึกดื่นสอื้นอาย
แสนเสียดายสุดจะดินั้นสิ้นชีวัน

เห็นสิ่งของน้องนุชยิ่งสุดเศร้า
พระไทยเฝ้าเคลิ้มไคล้ดังใฝ่ฝัน
ยิ่งจาบัลย์
สุดจะกลั้นรีบออกนอกบรรพต
พินิจจันทร์วันเพ็งขึ้นเปล่งแสง
กระจ่างแจ้งแจ่มวงทั้งทรงกลด
ยิ่งรำฦกตรึกตรา
A whiff of your cream-colored-skin - it lingers still.

Once did I cherish closely you closely, my lady, to my chest.

Softly, softly your scent sublime – what longing!

In sobs soft soft, he is yet more and more despondent.

Till the night bell *hum-rum-kra-dums* sounds out loud and

Sadness all the more soaks through my sobs – for my love.\(^{272}\)

Oh, that time when we were together in this cave,

When once we spoke with one another, clutching each to the other.

Oh your bosom, once close, enamored and adored,

Once embracing, soft and tender, never forbidding my advances.

Dazed, fondling my lovely’s bosom as I would the face of a flower.

Once close to your chest on the bed, never separating.

Now he is dazed, lost in fondling the soft pillow,

\(^{272}\) A Javanese word – *yaa-yi* – for ‘my love’ or ‘my darling.’ This poem is replete with borrowed Javanese words, particularly words meaning ‘garden’ or ‘beloved’ or the names of flowers. This, as David Pusakd has shown, were in order to maintain a sense of the exoticness of Java for the audience.
Cherished, warm, satisfied as if it were his beloved.

In the late hours, sobs and sighs,

One thousand sadnesses, struggling as if at the end of his life.

To see my beloved’s things – sadder still.

My royal heart watches over you in a daze, in a dream.

The more I think on you, the more I must weep.

I cannot endure - I must leave from the mountains.

I see the moon, flourish full in its splendor

Spreads out its rays, an aureole like that of a royal umbrella.

Four servants are there, close ready to salute him,²⁷³

He swivels, seeing clear those streams of the spheres.

²⁷³ That there would always be ‘four servants’ going together with nobles and royalty was a trope particularly associated with literature set in Java.
ดูเหง่ก่อต่อเต้าเห็นตาล่าย เจมนหมายมุ่งไปก็ไม่เหมือน
เห็นง่าไม่ไหวหวั่นให้พันเพื่อน จนเตือนเคลื่อนคล้องรั่วให้อารมณ์
เห็นชมพู่ที่เกมมาประทาน ระดับดั่งดวงบัวโปรดโครงส่อง
ล้มรั่วเขาเขยกระจาจร หอมกระเวกสาวนครที่หล่นประโยชน์
โอ้รินรินกลิ่นบุ=dfะสะตาหมัน เหมือนกลิ่นจำทนเจื่อนเวลาให้หวานไทย
หอมยิ้มทุบสุกรรมค่อยใจอย่าง พราพวกเขาเหลียวซึ่งอันดับ
โอ้ที่นี่ศีลเคยมาบาง เห็นบัลลังก์แล้วงี่กรังกุกกิ่ง
ดูเงิ้มเง่าวิ่งไม่เพราะที่ร้อง เสียงหงส์ฝังร่างหันทางรั่ว
จังหวะทรงคั่งให้ราไว้ร้อง แฉว่านางนี้เสียเพราะเหลียวหลัง
เห็นน้ำพุคุ้มตรงบัลลังก์ เเคยมานั่งสรงชาที่บนเตียง

เจ้าสรงด้วยช่วยพื้นขนอง แตกน้ำStartElement_tail

โอริวันธนชานท์เกยเตียง พระทรงเพียงผารับชอบอนุไทย
Something stirs there, a shadow like hers!

He gazes intensely, stares – it is not the same!

Seeing the shadow of trees ripple has made him distraught and muddled

Until the spheres have moved, gone far in the sky, bringing him to longing.

He saw a pool where once they had gone for an outing.

Scattered flowers spread and lotuses swell, bestrewn and interspersed.

The wind flutters and floats, nuzzles and undulates, scatters the

Scent of those sweet-smelling flowers that fall and disperse.

Oh smell those scents of the bunga flowers of the sataman garden\textsuperscript{274}

Like that smell of sandalwood mixed with your white skin – it makes him turn and long.

Smell of magnolia cocoas, taloora lac trees, and Burma paduak, by

The wind waved and wafted. Thrilled he is, frozen on his feet.

Oh, here the stone where once we came and sat.

To see this throne of theirs, more still does he think of her.

He sees the overhanging arch of a hill, a vast Banyan tree,

The sound \textit{heung-heung} of bees barricading their hive.

\textsuperscript{274} These are Javanese words – \textit{bugna} (flower) and \textit{sataman} (garden).
Crickets cry out on the branches of the Banyan, cicadas sing.

Loudly I hear them my love. With an expectant sting, he turns about

To see a waterfall high up across from his throne.

Once we came to cleanse our royal selves in the water above our bed.

I washed, helping you, rubbing your back.

And when the water would hit you but a bit, you’d cry out with a screech.

Oh soft soft smell, tantalizing touch, once so close,

Now his royal chest only burns and only sighs does he in his royal heart.
ทุกแจ่มเช้าแห่งเนื้อบงซัด ไม่มีกวาดแก่วังกิ่งประวังไหว
ย้อนยืนเดินหูผู้พบใคร อี่ย้อยคือในทรงซั้ราวัยยืน
เที่ยวรอบสาระประทุมมาสะดวกมัน เคยเห็นขวัญณนครที่ไหนก็ไม่เห็น
ชนไอใ้ไหลตกกระเซ็น อี่ย้อยคืออันดูอินกันอันน้ำตา
จนตัดสาวันกัลลันถูกษา ทะลุเหลือเผ่าเสือจะบินมาสา
เหมือนประสงค์ลงนองบุญบาน ถูกหลักยืนแฝงอยู่เหงิงใด
เที่ยวตูดาปลาปลี้ยาวเสยสวุ่ง จนจวนรุ่งรองสว่างไสว
หนามนำค้างพร้างพรหมมิทร ดวงดอกไม้บานแผ่วรับแสงทอง
หอมมณฑาสาร์โดยยืน ปั้งร่วงทรงธุรกูยุทธพระขนอง
ภุมรินบินว่อนมาร่อนร้อง อาบละอองเกสรขจรจาย
จนแจ่มแจ้งแสงสว่างนภางค์พื้น  オリジนน์อาไลพระไทยหา
ดูวาว่าแสนเจ็บพระพาย  ไม่พาสายสวทศุมากขึ้นใจ
Each over-hang of hill is solitary, silent, soundless.

Each leaf sways and each branch swings.

A piercing chill shakes the grass of this forest

And even more does it pierce in his chest, colder still.

He meanders around the lotus pool, arriving at the mountain grounds.

I had once seen my gift-for-the-eyes, now I see her not.

His eyes water – they seep, they spill, they spatter

In the piercing cold standing still, swallowing tears.

Till late, smelling the sweet savors of rose petals,

Awaking, rotating, anticipating, his nostrils permeating

Ready for the golden cheeks of his Lady Bussaba,

For perhaps she has come back and stands hidden in some place,

Having gone on a trip to see the stars. Alone he stands, thrilled in anticipation

Till it’s almost dawn, dimly the sun’s rays radiate and

Cold dew sparkles in the hills and forests.

Spheres of the flowers bloom and share between them those golden rays.
He smells egg magnolia, *salapee* flowers, and dwarf magnolias.²⁷⁵

Some fall, striking his majesty’s chest and back.

Bees bumble, ramble about, buzz and moan,

Bathing in the blossoms and the pollens that disperse and dissipate.

He looks at the rays in the sky, angered by the wind,

For it had not brought his beloved back to return him to bliss.

²⁷⁵ These flowers are *Magnolia Candollei*, *Mammea Siamensis* and *Magnolia Coco* respectively.
จำจะตามธรรมชาติทางลมพัด
ตั่ววิ่งทางท้องถนนอุทัย
จึงแปลงนามตามกันเป็นปีกุหวัง
พลางอุ้มองค์ยาหยีวัชราช
พระเหลียวดูญาสาทมัน
จะแสบบั้นบั้นปรีเป็น
เสียแรงแต่งแปลงสร้างจะร้างเริศ
โอ้ก้านกิ่งมิ่งไม้เรไรร้อง

คงจะพลัดตกบางที่ตรงไหน
ให้เตรียมพลังไม้จะไปไกลคลา
จะเที่ยวเตร็ดเตร่ในโพยพุกษา
ขึ้นรถแก้วแววฟ้าแล้วพาไป
ที่สำคัญญาญาเคยอาศัย
จะมีได้มาเห็นเหมือนเช่นเคย
งอยอยู่บัดแผ่นหาญาธาย
โอ้เขาสูงฝูงหงส์เคยลงเดิน
จะเริดร้างห่างหงส์ไปดงอื่น

เฉื่องอุ้มมองค์ยาหยีวิยะดา
goingรถแก้วแววฟ้าแล้วพาไป
พระเหลียวดูญาสาทมัน
tี่สำคัญญาญาเคยอาศัย
จะมีได้มาเห็นเหมือนเช่นเคย
งอยอยู่บัดแผ่นหาญาธาย
โอ้เขาสูงฝูงหงส์เคยลงเดิน
จะเริดร้างห่างหงส์ไปดงอื่น

โอ้ก้านกิ่งมิ่งไม้เรไรร้อง
ประสานซ้องเสียงดังดูวังเวง
He must follow his beloved to wherever the wind had blew her

For she may have been dropped carelessly at any place -

So he considers as he makes his way, sighing in his princely heart.

He prepares all his armed forces to advance with him.

And he changes his name, becomes Panjuret, a forest bandit.

He will go travelling, go a-wandering in the woods.

At the same time, he took with him his darling sister Wiyada, 276

Who mounted his chariot which glittered until the skies.

His majesty turns, sees the hills and all the verdant lands

And that most important place – the cave. He looks over where once they had lived.

He looked over it and closed his eyes. For many years to come,

He would not again come to see this site.

__________________________

276 His younger sister by the same mother.
What a pity! For they had just decorated it, and it would be left abandoned.

Stay just as you are, you mountains and caves,

You cherished woods and forests, which once we had come to admire.

He stares at them all, each wood and every hill.

Oh, those birds that passed catching the branches

I shall no longer see them - I shall stray, shall drift far away.

Upon the tall hills flocks of geese wafted down to walk.

Once we had dallied, bewildered by those golden geese!

Now he shall leave behind those birds, pressing on to other forests.

Each day and night, he shall be only sad and clouded.

Oh, twigs and branches, cherished woods where cicadas cry,

In a well-welded harmony, a sound disconsolate.
ได้เคยฟังครั้งนี้มารับกบ ต้องพลัดพวกพวกว่ามาท่านมหัศย์แห่ง
แม่นพบเห็นแ่นตัวไม่กลับก่วง จะว่าคงกูกษาลูสังหารลอม
นิ้วใจไม่เห็นด้วยเป็นจาตร์ มาถ่านพวกดุกลู่ลูกสูสัม
สังคีเด่นแก่นขัดอดอารมน์ จะแซะซันยืนไม่ชันใจ

แต่จับแวนทุ่นมาคงด้วย ต้องชี้ข้าทยาพวกกุกยาใส
กระควอคืนอันหน่นพรายนี้ มิคอกไปถ่านก็จริงพริ่งฟรีชา
บั่งเก่าอ่อนซ่อนชับสับสล้าง บังสังสร่างเสี่ยงขุมขูมเจ้า
ที่ตายต่อหน่อนหนนุ่นรุ่งเรียรยว เอาวอถิ่นยักออกก็้งเหมือนชิงชา

พระชานพลดือตต้องน้องกุ่มอุ้ม ให้ข้าพบเห็นดินกุ่มม้งกะราว
ป่าประเทศขวแควนแคนเช้า อดินแคสัมปุ่มสูมพ้น
โกฏสดจำาปาดงอุ้ม สรรหดุกุ้ยระคนป่นป่าทนนัน
สลาสะแนกงนมเยี่ยมเกเทคนัน หญายไฟร้นฟริ่งในเงินเกี้ยงง
That once we had listened to – it is because of my karma, that

We had to be separated by the wind’s abuse.

Were I to meet him – well, I am not a flighty or fickle type!

I would sing the song of my kris-sword and there and then execute the wind!

That he cannot be seen – so much more the pity.

It is our bad fortune, that it came that I should be parted from my lover.

Ten-thousand furies, what rage and hate -

If I see or admire anything whatsoever, satisfy me it shall not.

But Kenlong has come along with me to this forest also

And I am forced to join her in admiring these dales and forests.277

Bushwillows, legumes, Moon trees, fruits of many sorts with

Flowers, leaves, branches and stalks spruce and graceful.278

________________________

277 Kenlong is Wiyada, Inao’s sisters, name as she accompanies her brother disguised as a bandit.
278 These are Combretun trifoliatum (Bushwillows) and Diospyros decandra (Moon Trees).
Some old, some green, layered and overlapping

Some brilliantly fresh, moist-colored, others verdant green.

Those that have died support sapling shoots, tapering young-ones, their

Vines mingling with flowers and branches like a giant swing.

He invites his sister to chatter with him, tenderly he takes her in his embrace.

Happy and gay, walking the woods, wending their way.\textsuperscript{279}

The forest of this wide-ranging realm of Java

Date palm trees proliferate, of Salum-trees a thousand;

Bearded irises, Jampa flowers and grapes

\textit{Pa-nans} mix and intermingles with screw pines.\textsuperscript{280}

Areca nuts up high with Amazon lilies jumble and stir.

Saffron grasses and guavas grow alongside in the jungle.

\_______________

\textsuperscript{279} A specific Javanese turn meaning ‘to travel through the jungle’ without a specific destination is used here - \textit{ma-ngum-ma-nga}

\textsuperscript{280} This is the Javanese name of \textit{Pandanus Odorifer}.
โกฏกระวานกานพลูดูระบัด
ทุ่มระรื่นชื่นใจที่ในอง
ทัพพีปราบปราบล้ำทรย่อม
เเห่งยิ่นเจ้าฝันส่งอันฟ้อน

ทวีปุ่มบานนิจน้อย
ยิ่งใส่เสียหยันหว่าให้ดอก
ดูเล็บนางในผืนแห่งเมืองอย่างเลิศ
เห็นนางกลางพนมนิคมแทน

มะปรางต้นผลอย่างพระปรางค์
น้ำเนตรคลองคลอคลอยหยิมหยิม
พินามย์ข้ามภูพังต้นทับทิม
พนมมาศลาดเลี่ยนเต็มคลับ
บ้างสูงลิบลอยแห่งเป็นแผ่นแผ่น
บ้างทมึนทึ่งเป็นเชิงเทิน

บ้างพนมที่ฟิกเป็นรางแท่น
เป็นกระดินโกกรวยล่ำหัวชะร

เศรษฐกิจปั้นพุ่มระดับ
ทุ่มระรื่นชื่นใจที่ในอง
ทัพพีปราบปราบล้ำทรย่อม
เเห่งยิ่นเจ้าฝันส่งอันฟ้อน
Mugworts and cardamoms and cloves – they look lush.

Teri pods, yellow heartwood shrubs all kinds of trees, *ton-yong* trees\(^{281}\) –

Their scent, vague and gradual, refreshes the heart in the forest.

The trees send their aromas as someone had mixed up a perfume.

On the ground, clean and clear, is only soft sand.

They enter the highland woods and skirt the edges of the *ku-nung*, the mountains and ridges.

Fennel and cumin, poppies send their smell spreading out

Mixed with mugwort and sweet sagewort together with the camphor trees.

How he misses Bussaba, oh *Anicca*\(^{282}\)

I cannot fondle or caress in contentment – vanished from my sight is she!

Sadder still, he turns to look around – what anguish!

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\(^{281}\) A Javanese word for the very common and highly appreciated Spanish Cherry tree (ton-yong) called *pikun* in Thai and known for its scent.

\(^{282}\) This word for impermanence in Thai poetry generally simply means ‘Alas!’
His puzzlement mounts and rises in the forest.

Seeing Lady’s Nails flowers, I think of your nails

That once scratched sore my skin, made rashes on my arm.

I see a Lady’s Breasts tree in the midst of the forest, I admire it as if they were yours

Akin, the same as seeing you there with elegance about to smile. 283

The mango plum plants are hollowed like your celestial cheeks-

Tears emanate, percolate, dribble in dripping drops.

He forces on a good mood to, he praises the persimmons and the pomegranate trees

Rising, circling around the paths of the mountains and hills.

The golden hills pave out flatly to the far reaches.

Some tall, far off float – you must crane your neck to see – a view flat as a veneer,

As massive, as mountainous as fortresses

With little crevices for rivulets, for the breezes and the streams.

283 This tree was used as a herb for increasing the size and milk-yield of women’s breasts. This is because of the name and it is because of the name that it is used here.
เสียงสินธุ์ดังลั่นที่สู่
ที่น้ําโจนโณนพังดังๆ
กินซึมผิอบุมผันแม่นหนัก
ผู้ป่าทางดงใส่เลี้ยมใส่อกัน

ปลาเนื้ออ่อนอย่าหลงเกลื่อน
ปลาเนื้อแข็งงงนังแกลมนวล
ปลาไว้ซับขับรถก้าวแกลนแกลง
ไม่ประสำพบเห็นให้อ่อนทรง

ถึงพลมากมายที่ขยับปลิ้ว
เห็นนกหกผกโจนจับไม้
นกกระตั้วคล้องคล orchestrated
ปั้นสะพานซึ่่่หุ้นกลัน

ที่น้ําโจนโณนพังดังๆ
บ้างพุ่งด่านสะสายสุว่าจัน
จะลงเฝ้าลำราเลาะหิน
กระติกคั้นดูงามตามกระบาน

ไปนั่นอ่อนน้อยก้านไม้เขี่ยมอง
ไปนั่นอ่อนน้อยก้านแกลมยกลน
ปลาไว้ซับขับรถก้าวแกลนแกลง
ไปงงนังงงนังแกลน

ปลานวลจันทร์นั้นก็งงนังแกลมนวล
ปลานวลจันทร์นั้นก็งามแต่นามนวล
ปลาไว้ซับขับรถก้าวแกลนแกลง
ปลานวลจันทร์นั้นก็งามแต่นามนวล

พลังรีบทัพขับรถก้าวแกลนแกลง
ไม่ประสำพบเห็นให้อ่อนทรง
ไปทางงงนังปลานวลแซงหัวหลวง
ปลานวลจันทร์นั้นก็งามแต่นามนวล

ถึงพลมากมายที่ขยับปลิ้ว
เห็นนกหกผกโจนจับไม้
นกกระตั้วคล้องคล้องน้อมม้ํา
ปั้นสะพานซึ่่่หุ้นกลัน

เหมือนมาเดียวดั่งจะพาน้ําตาไหล
เหมือนมาเดียวดั่งจะพาน้ําตาไหล
บ้างพุ่งไปๆขบประทับพี่รับขวัญ
มาถึงกันกรรมเอ่ยไม่เคยเป็น

328
The sound of rivers fierce, a frightening burst.

Trembling, exciting as they swoop down, slash – chat-chat – striking.

Where the water leaps, catches, collapses in shivers,

Some falls diffuse, splashing and sprinkling springs.

I think of Lady Bussaba for if she could come to admire them with me,

We’d go down and play amongst the streams and wide pools and stones.

A school of goldfish glides, chasing and biting the seaweed.

Squiggling and squirming, as pretty as a procession.

Those fish have soft flesh, soft flesh that splashes and swims

But not so soft nearly as the flesh of my dear one, my beloved one.

White-skin-moon fish are pretty only in their name – their “white-skin,”

Not as pretty or replenishing as that of my perfect princess, my ra-den.

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²⁸⁴ In fact, these are called smallscale mud carps (cirrhinus microlepis). The name in Thai is, very literally translated, ‘white-skinned moon fish’ and the word-play here concerns this name.
While hurrying along in the chariot, he sees brightness

Emanate from every point of the earth, from each domain and each mountain large

Yet neither descrees nor espies he that which would cool his chest.

It makes lonely and tired, lonely and sad his heart.

Although he had come with so many soldiers, he had to be far from his lover, left lonely,

As if he had come all alone - tears flow.

He sees a bird tumble turn-wise, leap-catching a branch,

Some bow down, cleaning with their beaks another’s tail, each helping the other.

Cockatoos cuddle and coax, their wives feeding them,

Like my lovely-gift lover, who gave me the gift of her love,

Feeding me betel nut blissfully each night and day,

Now parted from one another – oh, such bad karma there never has before been.
เห็นนกเปล่าคู่เข้าชูชิ้น ถอนสือเหมือนไม่พอใจเท็น
พอดาะย์ยิ้มรับเป็นยิ้มที่ภูมิ
บ้างเห็นกองหยางก่อป่าปีก แฉลกฉลีกเลี้ยวลัดฉวัดเฉวียน
บ้างยังเห็นกองประจงท่วงเวียน ออกกลางเตียนดินซิวคดูริดคานร
พัดพิงไปใช้บนใส่ละมุ้น เมื่อทอดครริ่งราวปราบฝาก
ไอถูกพับนุชสุดเสียดยาย สัณธยาภูมอิริยาภรรยา
เห็นเขาเขียวคั้นโคลส่วนสะอาด แฉลับผู้นางธัญสะปลัสละลอน
หงส์กังวานตามอยากเพราะทางจน เป็นผู้ป้องปกไปคล่นขัดคาน
อานนั้นหน้าเท่ห์เหมือนหนุ่ย์ ปิกเหมือนครุฑครับเท่าเม็งแท้เหม
พวกเขาย้ายที่ขยายเต็นนิ่นฟูม ลูกเล็กกล้ำลาครูภูมสูงกษณ
เหล้าเมะะมาปั้นกล้าอยู่ เที่ยวกินปู่ปี้ปัวไปหลาผล
สิงโตตื่นยืนหยัดสบัดตน เที่ยงผู้คุณโคนช่ามลำานแบนม

331
He sees green pigeons merge in matches, in duos delighted.

He turns away in tears, as if he cannot bare to look.

At that time of twilight, the sun goes cold,

Peacocks play in the wind, a pleasing sight upon a hill.

Some dignify their chests, deviate their tails, display in strut their feathers.

They separate, they saunter and circumrotate.

Some stride smoothly, carefully watching each other, moving in a circle

Upon the flat ground, skipping their feet prettily.

I wish to make a sacred vow to meet with my beautiful one,

To see you pull away your arm, spin and sway in a dance for the gods.

Oh, what misfortune! That she has disappeared - what ill chance!

Sobs of shame, that these peacocks have made me lament.

I see green hills solitary, stand out singly, sky-high.

There a flock of geese, adjoin and alternate with one another.

These geese, beautiful because of the curved tails.
Are in couples feeding, covering each other, so cozy and so close.

There is an orahan there that has a face like that of a human,

Its feathers are like those of a garuda, its fin-like feet thick with fur.\textsuperscript{285}

Indigenous people, the Ma-miew, move through the mounds and downs

Their little ones falling, led by the hand like flocks of human creatures.\textsuperscript{286}

Wild folk of the forest, the Ngo reside there

They go about eating jungle crabs and assorted fruits.\textsuperscript{287}

The lion stirs, stretches and shakes his torso,

Seeing people above on the mountain plains.

\textsuperscript{285} An orahan is a mythical creature with a bird’s body and a human head. A kinnari, on the other hand, the whole lower half is a bird and the upper a human. Garuda or krut are very large and have an ogre’s face and body and a bird’s beak and wings.

\textsuperscript{286} The Ma-miew were dark-skinned tribes of people who were thought to live in Java. They are, like some other minority forest-dwelling groups like the Thai-Yai, are described using the vocabulary not of people but of animals. Here Phu describes them as a foong, a herd or flock rather than as kon or people.

\textsuperscript{287} The Ngo were figured as indigenous people who lived towards the far south of Thailand, featured as having dark skin and curly hair.
ฝูงมฤคถึกเถื่อนเที่ยวเกลื่อนกลุ่ม
เห็นกวางทองย่องเยื้องช้าเลืองเดิน
เหมือนน้องเชิญพานผ้าประหม่าเมียง
พี่เข้าด้วยช่วยประคองพระน้องนุช
สงสารสุดสุดสวาทไม่อาจเถียง
โอ้ยามนี้มิได้น้องประคองเคียง
ที่ถึงบุญตามเจ้าทรามเชย

เปนฤดทนหลังเราหังส่อง
คงได้น้องถีนมาเรียงเคียงเซน
แม่ครบแทนนุ่นอย็จะลองเลย
ไม่ได้เชื้อนบประมาณ
พระราชูกร่าวไรมาในรถ
ใครก็สรรแตกเสียดลายยาสมร
พอเวลาบวรผ้วดวั้นรอง
ปายร่อนรับกลับแม่บังรัง

โอ้นกเอ๋ยเคยอยู่มาสู่ถิ่น
แต่ยุพินลิบลับไมกลับหลัง
ครั้นแลดูสุริแสงก็แดงดัง
หนึ่งน้ำครั่งคล้าฟ้านภาไลย
เหมือนครั้งนี้พี่มาiskoผสมแท้
ชลเนตรแดงเดือดดังเลือดไหล
โอ้ตวันครั้นจะลบภพไตร
ก็อาไลยโลกยังหยุดรั้งรอ
Flocks of forest animals wildly advance and gallivant,

In twos close to one another, never straying.

I see golden deer deviate gracefully, walking while looking back askance,

Just like you, my love, offering clothes for me on a tray with that timid glance.\(^{288}\)

I came to assist you, caressing you my love and – oh! -

Such a pity, my lovely one, that you could not then protest!

Oh, this night I cannot nuzzle nor be near my love.

I offer up my merit to follow you, my tender one.

If we have done in the past a meritorious action, we two

It should allow you to come back, close-nit upon my pillow.

If we had bad karma, she shall surely float on away

And I would never again be able to caress my Bussaba, my voluptuous-flower.

\(^{288}\) The King of Daha, Bussaba’s father, had ordered Bussaba to offer an expensive cloth to Inao who had won a war for him. Because of the formal situation, Bussaba could not at that time protest Inao’s advances.
His majesty moans and groans his way towards the carriage.

He is downhearted, disconsolate for his beloved.

At the time of twilight, the sun lowering

The birds hurtle, hurrying in haste back to their nests.

Oh, these birds! They have departed, returning home,

But my beloved has vanished from sight and has not come back to me!

He looks at the sun, its rays a radiant red

Like a striking vermillion dye is the sky.

Like this time when I must come here, ten-thousand sadnessess,

Tears red, boiling over like flowing blood.

Oh, the sun when it from the Three Worlds departs

Longs yet for the world, delaying and procrastinating.
ประหลาดนักรักเอ๋ยมาเลยลับ
เหมือนเพลิงดับเด็ดเดี่ยวไปเจียหวนอ
ชอลื่นไหลหลังคลังคลอด
ยิ่งเย็นย่อเสียงทรงวางให้ร้วงโวย
ชนิน้อยห้อยไม่เรอริเรอง
เสียงแซ่ซ้องเริ่มว่เรือยยกผัวโวย
เหมือนเอกพิดีวิลให้ดีนโดย
ลท้อยโทแทนนางกลางไพร
พระสุริยงค์ลงลับเฝ้าตา
ถึงหน้าสะนักกันพุกยาใส
ทุษสันนักพบพลสงกรัย
พระเนาในรถทองกับน้องยา
ถนอมแนบแอบองค์หลงหนึ่งหรัด
ให้บรรธมโสมนัสในรัฏ
ต้องจากวังครั้งนี้เพราะพี่
พระเนาส่องกลางวังบางใจ
นอนเกิดหมายถึงก้อง
งามละมอมมั่งชวนอย่าห้วนใจ
ทิ้งร่องพบก็เหลือผืนผังใจ
อยู่ร่วมไม่เหมือนปราสาทราชวัง
เคยเนื่องเสียงนางสุรางค์เห่
มาฟังโรงแจ่มเมื่อนเดรัสั่งช์
เคยมีใส่ครูดันบนบังล่าง
มากับงั้นไปไม่ไปใครรับ

337
Strange truly love is, that it comes and disappears,

So suddenly, without delay like a fire fast extinguished oh.

Tears flow and fall deliriously,

Cold on his chest stinging, making him sadder still.

Gibbons dangle, cicadas sing,

Sounds of whoops and squalls, crying out ‘Pua! Pua! – my husband, my husband!’

Like my heart which twists and turns in hurt,

Missing and searching for my lady amidst the forest.

As the sacred sun descends, disappears into dusk,

Its lines reaching the waters, the hills and the forests abundant.

All there stop, drop off, fall into a drowse all.

Inao in his golden carriage with his sister Lady Wiyada

289 It was believed that gibbons had no ‘husbands’ and so went around calling out for their husbands, calling out the cry ‘pua pua pua’ which in Thai means ‘husband, husband, husband.’
Closely-packed, rapt and encaptivated in a single pack.\textsuperscript{290}

Laid down in happiness in the carriage.

She had to be away from the palace this time because he took her and

She has come with a lonely, disconsolate heart.

Sleep softly, my darling, and I shall sing a lullaby for you.

Sweet, cherished thing, have no fear.

These mountains that encircle you are like the walls of a city.

You are in the shade of trees like that of the palace.

Once you heard the sound of heavenly court maidens;

Now have come to listen to the cicada’s rasp, like a conch’s trumpet.

Once we had a royal screen that slid concealing our throne,

Now we are covered only by the leaves of the trees of the forest.

\textsuperscript{290} It may seem as if Inao is sleeping intimately with his own sister, who is in fact still a child. However, there are many times in the story when Inao either mistakes someone else for Bussaba or begins to imagine that they are Bussaba. When he meets Bussaba’s very young male brother Siyatra, he starts to imagine that he is Bussasba and holds and caresses him intimately. This is best understood, however, in terms of the theme of constant misrecognition in the tale, rather than about sexuality.
หนาวนั้นทำให้กลางคืนตื่นอ่อน
เก็บดวงดารายับกับพระจันทร์
จักรกวนหวั่นแหว่วเจ้าจ้าวเสียง
พระยาเอ่ยขณะดื่งพระน้องน้อย

ใส่เวลาปานนี้เจ้าพี่เอ่ย
น้ำท่วมเพราะเหตุเอ่ยกระซับชั้น
พระขวัญเอ่ยเคยนอนอย่าร่อนเร่
ขวัญมาอยู่สู่ที่พระพี่ยา

พระขวัญเอ่ยเคยแอบแนบถนอม
มาฟังกล่อมกลอนเพราะเสนาะเสียง
โอ้แรมล่วงดวงเดือนก็เลื่อนเอียง
บุษบายาช่างลอยเลยลิบลับไม่กลับหลัง

เมื่ออุ้มออกนอกเขตรนิเวศน์วัง
พระน้องนั่งรถทรงที่ตรงริม

 HashMap<String, String>
Bitter cold, the dew at night, soft sobs.

Holding in my spread-out arms my cherished one.

Let us use the spheres of the stars, that sparkle of the moon

As our chandelier, undulating to and fro.

Cicadas make their sound – jaew-jaew-jaew.

Each of their voices laments in a whirling melancholy.

The wind touches, it caresses my little one

As if there are ladies crouching down to fan us.

Oh, this time, my beloved sister,

The cicadas quieten their choruses,

The dew falls - it dashes and splatters.

It is night now and noiseless and our hearts are in slumbers.

Your spirit oh which sleeps here, do not let it stray
To go out alone amongst the forests and groves.²⁹¹

I ask that your spirit stay here with me,

Or to rest with our mother and our father within the palace walls.

My darling sister, I am so used to being close by you.

You who come to listen to my consoling songs, my languorous lullabies.

As the waning moon weighs to one side,

I gaze at your face, obscured in the darkness, changing

To be like that of my Bussaba, my yayi - my beloved.

She who floated off, disappearing, never returning.

When I carried her off beyond the quarters of the palace,

My lady had sat in the carriage off to the side.

²⁹¹ Inao refers to his sister’s kwan which is a person’s spirit. It might go wandering as one sleeps or it might escape the body if it is afraid. If it leaves for too long, the person will get sick and possibly die.
พ่อของน้ำซึ้งเดิมเดิมIGIN
อยู่ใกล้เคียงเพื่อนอยู่ได้เชื้อ
พระราษฎร์ว่าภูเขาที่สูง
สงบเสียงสัตว์สัตว์สัตว์
สุมาลอภินันท์ภูเขานนนน
พระราศีกรคาระศิรกัน
ฝนกระป๋าไปที่ช้างไอ้
น้ำรั่งพร้อมเรือเลื่อนเลื่อน
จันทร์เด็กนั่งบนแห้งผ้า
พระน้องชุมเจ้าข้าพเจ้า
พระผู้ชุมเจ้าข้าพเจ้า
นางโยโย่รีเด็นตร์แห้งผู้สิ้น
หาไม่ได้นานแต่พระศูชาติ
เต็มบูม้าผมให้ทันประสบกัน
I jested and implored you, but for me you had only rage.  

Sobbing so, your mouth your beautiful mouth, was silent.

And then we were close together, only then could I touch and caress,

My beloved’s firm flesh, soft - our hearts at last in concert.

He laments and despairs through the silence of the night

As a piercing cold blows the abundant grasses of the forest.

Hushed, abated are the sounds of the animals and forest

Each and every twig and branch of the Banyan lies in shade.

Garlands of flowers bloom, their aromas spreading.

At midnight only the sound of bees bumble and buzz.

The spirits of the Banyan tree murmur and mumble.

Ghosts grumble and groan, whistle weew wooh-woi!

Groups of illusive sprites of the forest roam about the outreaches.

They shout out to their absent friends in eerie acclamations.

292 Initially, Inao had kidnapped Bussaba from her palace to abscond with her to the cave.
The dew sparkles on and on leisurely,

The harder I struggle, the moon vanishes, unable to sleep.

Until my chest aches! Close together, looking up at the sky.

Oh, Phra Tarakala, I your servant,

Lady Bussaba is my beloved one!

Once we were lovers, tender in caress – I ask you to return her to me.

All of Indra’s eyes - surely they have seen what has happened!

My yupin, my lovely girl – I ask you - where has she been carried off to?

And if you Indra shall not tell me, I shall ask Lady Suchada, your wife,

To help carry her back to me, that we may meet again.

293 Tarakala is the name of the highest angel of heaven in Java.
ทั้งพรหมกิจวานแต่พาหนะทรงสัณฐาน
แม่นี่คู่บุญบาริกร숫ร้น
จนพลบค่ำร้าวทุกนิ้วก่อน
จนแจ่มแจ้งแสงดวงวันให้วัณทค
ได้ทรงเหาะแสวงทุกแห่งสวรรค์
จะทำขวัญทรงพรหมให้สมยศ
ไม่เสยสายนะมั่นวิถิโสดกล้าแสดง
ให้ยกพัทธบริทำสวอดเคลิน
ทุกเณรแคว้นแวดคลาสวาสุทธิ์วิป

เพี้ยวยิ่งไร้รับระเบิดจั่งการถิ่น
ไม่พบเห็นไปถึงพระบาทจั่งพิจัย
เมืองกระตุ้นทำวักล้าอำนาจ
ไม่ขยับถูกแสงจั่งดาย
แม้มีเหมือนเพื่อนชายที่เคยชิด
ไปจนเกินมาลากาภาราราย
ไม่ขยันให้บัลลังก์อาญาเหนือ

เฝ้าไร้ใจได้ถามตามธรรมเนียม
ไม่มีและเลื่อนแสงเหาะทรงแห่งไป
จึงถึงเห็นเคลื่อนกลางที่ปรากฏแล้ว
ไม่พบแก้วกลอจิตตรีสมัย
จนพระรูปชูพระพรทรงпромจิ
ทั้งน้ายิ่งร่วมพิสมัยองกัล
จนถึงทางร่วมที่ถวิริคัน
ที่จะคุณภาพภαหลัง
To Brahm, I ask that you bring your radiant bird vehicle,

So that we may fly off in search of her in each region of the heavens.

And if we find my darling Bussaba, my one-of-radiant-skin,

I shall give a gift to you and your swan-carriage, one well worthy of your rank.

Till dusk he is destitute in dreams of her,

Un-sleeping, in separation and in sorrow

Until the bright light, the end of night – lying dejected.

He asks his soldiers to drive the carriage, turning and wandering

Over each cove and corner of this wide continent of Java.

Swift and speedy, round the whole island they go in a soaring ascent.

That he sees her not is his very own accident of fate.

He goes over the rowed cities of Malacca,
The lands of the ratoo, the second kingdoms all know that he comes and fear his power.294

All of the kingdom’s women come out to offer themselves,

But he barely pays attention, so dis-heartened is he.

For his jewel has vanished and these but glass beads will never be her equal.

None are equal to that lady of his, once touched so close.

He thinks that for her his love shall never wane – oh, what shame.

But with humility he inquires after those ladies, following custom,

But no seduction was there, no searching for love in each kingdom he passes.

Till seven months had swum past in a daze

He had not met with his jewel, his beloved one.

Till he had become pale, skinny from grief.

All of the nobles and the common soldiers had lost their strength

When he came to the junction that led off to the Bejeweled City,

Where the roads led off to the City of Kalang.

294 Ratoo is a Javanese word meaning lord or king of a lesser principality. At this point in the story, Inao is disguised as a forest bandit and marches through the island with his army.
เห็นเขาขึ้นเนินร่วมหม่นวาง
ตั้งทรงกระดิ่งครั้นระวับยืน
ทัศเราร้านพุทวรรณ
เป็นช้องขึ้นบัลลังก์ผ่านผ่านลั่น
ผลผลหล่นกลายกระดิ่ง
ดอกไม้ไม่อนค์พร้อมทรงฐานงาน
จะใคร่ราวข้ามค่อนอยู่บ้าน
เพราะแสนเศร้าสุดจะตามธรรมดา

แม่นืมตามความรักเสี่ยงช้าน
ให้เป็นป่านไปตามเพราะความรัก
จะท้องเขื้นหนักจัดได้
หักอาจยินดีไม่หยุดสุดจะหัก
สารพัดตัดขาดประหลาดนัก
แต่ตัดรักนี้ไม่ขาดประหลาดใจ
จะสร้างพระโคตรังหละ
เพื่อจะขาดข้อคิดพิสมัย

แม้น้องมุ่ยบมณีนิคาย
จะได้ไปสู่สรรค์ขั้นโลก
จึงหยุดพักอยู่ถึงหลังอาตาม
รักษาพระมิตรด้วยกันหมด
ประดิภ์อยู่อยู่บรรพบุรุษ
อยู่ส่ามรด่าโลกก็ไม่กล้า
ภูวน่านิ่งจ้วงพลังสิ่ง
ก็หลับนอนเห็นอยู่ไม่รู้หาย
He sees hills and valleys, a place of many mountains.

The Red Lauan trees give him shade.\textsuperscript{295}

The streams and caves, springs leap noisily through.

It is a space like a throne, a place to sit and play.

Various fruits scatter all over,

The flowers ready to be smelled and rejoiced in.

He wishes to ordain, to pray and live upon a mountain.

So despondent was he, to follow the misery of love.

If he did not follow love, it would invite him to do so,

To follow him in turmoil, for that is love’s nature.

You can cut, rend, break anything else and it’ll split.

But to cut this – this longing - it will never give.

\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Shorea siamensis}. This tree is also linked to Buddhism in the area as according to some legends the Buddha was born under such a tree.
Of all the many things in this world that will break – strange it is,

You can cut love and not a jot will it tear – truly strange.

He makes a devout wish to abstain from love, to be severed from love

To be broken off from all alluring thoughts. 296

And also that, if Lady Bussaba should have perished,

That she may go to the 16th Level of Heaven.

He halts his army and there builds an ashram,

To maintain his vow and to follow the brahmacariya, the celibate way of Brahm entirely.

He becomes a patapa, a renouncer, he ordains upon the mountain.

He endeavors to abstain from thoughts of her absence - but it is undiminished.

He prays in meditation that he will forsake samsara,

And shuts his eyes to see - only the two of them - she shall never part.

296 The vocabulary used here implies a Buddhist vow.
จะสวดมนต์ด้วยกันไปเคลื่อนไหว
ทีหลับกลาเรื่องราวเป็นกล่ากลอน
กัดถึงชูขนบราข่มผ่า
บนบัลลังก์เหลือฝ่าผนัง
พระตะวันร่างว่าวิจิตร์
หวังสมรภูมิจะกล้าซึ่งนั้น
จะอู๋สำหรับปรา الاجتماع
อาของปุ่มพลังสะท้าน
จะเกิดไหนในจังหวัดบุพเพ
ให้เหมือนปักกับลูกตัวท่านองกัน
แป้นจำจำพระนิ่งฝังแสงขุม
ให้สนิทเสหนาคุมหนัง
แม่นแป้นไทยให้แป้นร่วมพสผนังชู้
พอโสดานิ่มให้ได้ยุ่นปุ่มครอง
ครั้นกระดาษเสิร์จเคลื่อนกลับ
เช่างง่ายไทยให้พระไทยหมอง
ทุกข์สำหรับกุศลเสร็จครอง
จนจาครองครบสาวที่ราศ์อย่หว
He intones prayers, fastening himself unto the utmost,

And yet returns yet again to the same story – that one writ here in verse.

He misses still his Bussaba and goes down to sit

Upon the throne that rests upon the side of the mountain’s summit.

He anoints with water, reciting with longing,

Wishing that, though he and his lovely one may be apart in this life,

He would endeavor in his monastic austerities to maintain his duty,

So as to make a gift, a reverent donation to his beloved:

No matter where we should be born again, no matter what area of this earth,

Make us like a pipe and whistle in an orchestra, making melodies together.\(^{297}\)

Be I Chinese, Jaam, Brahmin, French or English,

May we be attracted, besotted, \textit{tungangan}, asking for you hand.\(^{298}\)

Should we be Thai, may we be amongst linked families.

\(^{297}\) This comes from a saying. To get on together ‘like a pipe and a whistle.’

\(^{298}\) \textit{Tungangan} is a Javanese word meaning to be engaged to be married.
So that at even my tonsure-cutting ceremony, we may be arranged a couple.

Having concluded his decanting of the water, he sets back,

Enters his room and shuts it with a sharp sigh, his heart shattered.

Each day and night he would long and pine

Thinking of that time of their love, and to that time of their parting.
Nirat to Golden Mountain

The year is 1830, six years after Phu’s generous benefactor King Loetlanphalai (Rama 2nd) had passed away and Phu had to ordain as a monk. This nirat is unconventional in that it concerns the passing of the king more than an absent lover. Phu journeys from his temple at Wat Rachaburuna to Phu Khao Thong or Golden Mountain Temple in the ruins of the old capital of Ayutthaya. The poem is also unusual in that it is clearly a political critique of Rama 3rd’s reign in the terms that nirat poetry offered, a critique which takes place through the landscape itself.

เดือนสิบเอ็ดเสร็จธุระพระวสา
รับกฐินภิญโญโมทนา ชุลีลาลงเรือเหลืออาลัย
ออกจากวัดทักานลูอาวาส เมื่อตรุษย์มหาจริยวัตร แต่นั้นเจ็บเจ็บจะมำเห็น
เหตย์รำลึกในน้ำตากรองร้อย เพราะจุกขันยุคนพลเมรำททาง
จะยกชอบยับยั้งเป็นที่ดังที่ใช้ดั้งหนึ่ง สัคเณ์ขัดขวาง
จึงจำลำนำวิสาศรีช้าง มำถึงวังวิญญาณปี่ในสาค

ถึงหน้าวังดังเหนื่อยจะขาด คิดถึงบาทพิสดาริศ
ยิ่งผ่าน脸颊บานประยุกต์ของสุนทร แต่งก่อนเคยเสียทุกช้านアクセ
พระนิพพานปานประหนึ่งศีรษะขาด ด้วยไร้ญาติยากแค้นถึงแสนเข็ญ
ที่รำวิสกรชิตวัตติเป็น ไม่เสียแห่งที่ขึ้นจะฟังทาง
จะสร้างพระคุณสำหรับสุนทรภู่มาตร บรรทัดฟ้าอยู่สม_WALLA
เป็นสิ่งของละล่ำง คุณมุลิการของเป็นข้าเหยองพระบาททุกชาติใด

ถึงหน้าแพแลเห็นเรือที่นั่ง คิดถึงครั้งก่อนมาน้ำตาไหล
เคยหมอบรับกับพระจมีนไว แล้วลงไปเรือที่นั่งบัลลังก์ทอง
เคยทรงแต่งแปลงพจนารถ เคยรับราชโองการอ่านลง
จนถึงสิ้นเมื่อนั้นแล้วก็คง มีได้ชื่อเดิมชัดหมาย
เคยหมอบใกล้ได้กลิ่นสุคนธ คลับ ละองอรสารส่วนช้านมานำ
สั่นผันดินสิ่งสรุสุคนธ วานยางที่สินเหมือนกลิ่นสุคนธ้
It's the eleventh month, end of the rainy season retreat.

I received my new robe - great blessings. Cross-legged in the boat, cast-down,\textsuperscript{299} I leave the temple and view its sacred environs.

Where I passed New Year, the cold season ceremony and rainy retreat.

Three seasons I lived, without worry, at the temple in the cool hours of the night.

This monastery and hall, perhaps it'll be many days before I shall see them again.

I reflect – a spring of tears. It's because wretched ruffians hound, harass me.

I petitioned my superiors to stay, reached out for an inch of promises\textsuperscript{300}

And all I got was a yard of lies - all blocked. \textsuperscript{301}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{299} This is the end of the rainy season retreat, a season when monks are forbidden from moving from a single monastery for three months. At the end of this, there is a large Kathin ceremony, named after the new robes which are donated with great pomp and celebration by local supporters.
Rachaburana Temple (lit. Royally Repaired Temple) has been in the Bangkok area since Ayutthaya times but was repaired and re-named by Rama 1\textsuperscript{st} so that he could follow the traditional belief that a capital must have three royal temples. In this case, the three were: the Temple of the Great Relic, Temple Royally Repaired and Temple Royally Founded. In Phu's time, although it was still a royal temple and within walking distance of the palace’s Southern gate, it seems to have become a rather unremarkable temple.

\textsuperscript{300} There is a play on words here that refers to an old Siamese system of measurements. One tang or bucket refers to 20 ta-nan, which is about 20 scoops of coconut shell and is equivalent to about one metric litre. A sat is a larger measurement used for measuring out rice. The basic idea, simply, is that Phu feels that he has been cheated. Sat is also a word for ‘truth.’

\textsuperscript{301} It is not clear who thibhodi means something like ‘overseer.’ One would assume that it refers to the abbot of the temple, though the term implies a political overlord of some kind. Phu had likely ordained at this temple as a political exile. It was common for people to ordain to flee
And so I bid farewell to the monastery, going a lonely traveller;

Coming a severed spirit, scattered upon the waters.302

Arriving at the palace alone, a breaking heart

I think of you, your majesty, my lord,

Oh, past royal patron of Sunthorn -

Those times past, when I was with you each morning and night.

At your Nirvana, it was like this statue’s head had shattered.303

I with no relatives, poor, squalid

Perpetually beset, a crowd of karmas crush me.

political persecution. Since the coronation of King Rama 3\textsuperscript{rd}, who more or less usurped his brother’s place on the throne, Phu was forced into exile from the court, likely because he was a supporter of the king’s brother’s claim and because, famously, had done the opposite of curry favor with the new king when he was a prince. When he talks about the ‘overseer’ he likely means his political allies at the court who, as yet, were unable or unwilling to help him.

302 The word used for ‘spirit’ here is 

303 There is some double-meaning going on here which is hard to translate. At your ‘nirvana’ simply means ‘death’ for a king. This is then followed by terminology – such as sirisa, the word for ‘head’ used for kings, monks and Buddha images. The phrase implies the image of a Buddha statue with its head broken off, to which Phu is comparing himself following the death of his king.
I see no place, no person on which to rely.

I will follow a devout routine, endeavor earnestly, offer my merit to you.

My behavior followed the way of calm contemplation all throughout the rainy season.

That shall be my way to celebrate you, my lord.

I ask only to be your servant, close-by in each life to come.

Arriving at the pier, I see your boat passing, sitting still.\(^{304}\)

I think of those times before, tears flow.

I once prostrated before with the ministers, oh worthy lord,

As you went along in that boat that houses the golden throne.

You composed songs, verses

And I received the command, to sing and to celebrate you.

The end of the rainy retreat, I watch the waters on the body of the canal.

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\(^{304}\) This is one of the more well-known verses of the poem. It plays obliquely over three different moments in time: the monk Phu in his boat now; when Phu was a favored poet on the royal barge and, finally, when the king’s funeral barge was burning on the river. In the first line, the word \textit{pae} translated as ‘pier’ means something like a pier of floating logs, which is where Phu alights now and is in stark contrast to the kind of landing platform he would have been used to riding on the royal barge.
I cannot vex, trouble nor disappoint your royal heart any longer.

Bowing at your passing, so close that I could smell perfumes disperse -

Pervading, baking smells that refreshed my nostrils.

At the end of the land's lord, aromatics of wildflowers -

A blaze of merit ended like the smell of those perfumes.305

305 The last two lines are somewhat liberal translation which tries to capture the layered meanings of the original. Phu is both at the ‘end of the land’ because he has been exiled and witnessing in memory the burning of his king’s funeral barge, which would have been heavily scented with sandalwood and other fragrant woods. In one instance of double meaning translated as ‘at the end of the land’s lord,’ the phrase simply says ‘end of the land’ but paen din implies phra jao phaen din or ‘lord of the land’ (i.e. the king) and so is a play on ‘the end of the land’ (describing where Phu is now) and the ‘end of the lord’ (the end of the king’s life.) The final phrase ‘blaze of merit’ come from the word vasana from the Pali vāsanā. In the Thai, it simply means ‘merit’ or ‘fortune’ or social position. But Phu was clearly aware of the original Pali-Sanskrit meaning here where it means something like residual impressions from one’s prior karma. Literally, it means ‘perfumings.’ In scripture, one’s residual conditioning (such as anger or desire) is often compared to the scent of incense that remains after the incense itself has burned away (i.e. even after nirvana). Source: Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.
ดูในวังยังเห็นหอพระอัฐิ ตั้งสติเติมถวายฝ่ายกุศล
ทั้งปิ่นเกล้า เจ้าพิภพบัลชีรบุรินทร์

ถึงอารมณามนวัตไปรโคนปีก ไม่เห็นหลักเลี้ยงวัวสำหิน
เป็นสำคัญในแผนในแผ่นดิน มิรู้สืบสุคคิตรที่ลือชา
ขอเลขพระพุทธอุทิศช่วย เฉินยอดม่วงยอดกลับชาวสนา
อายุยืนหมืนเท่านสำหรีอา อยู่สู่ฟันดิน ได้ดังใจปอง
ไปหน้าวัดทัศนวิมทันน้ำ แพประจำจ่อตราพยายามของ
มีพระคำสารพัดสั่งดวง ทั้งสิ่งของเขาเห็นเครื่องสำอาง

ถึงโรงเหล้าตกหลักกว่าหมิ่น มีคนโทษหลักยาวิปลาปลง
ใช้ป่ากรมทั้งนัยจ่าออกหัว ให้มั่นมาเหมือนหน้าเข้าเป็นน้ำยา
ท่านบุญบารมีครบเครื่อง สรรพสุขใหญ่กลางประทานหมาย
ถึงสุราพรดีไม่ออกควาย ไม่ใกล้กรายแกล้งเมินก็เกินไป
ไม่มีมาเหล้าด้านแต่เรขายมาด้วย สุดจะทำหัวมิติติไฉน
ถึงมาเหล้าช้างสะท่ำหายไป แต่มากใจนี้ประจำทุกคำคืนๆ
Looking in the palace, I see the chamber of the royal remains

I fix my mind, I offer up good deeds,

To his majesty Pinklao, lord of the world,

Free from danger, with a glad heart, Indra-like-lord of this city.

I arrive at the monastery called Border-Boundary,

Yet I don't get to catch a glimpse of its famous stone pillar,

An essential pillar, that divides this land,

Its name widely known until the ends of the earth and celebrated.

I call upon the virtue of the Buddha to assist me.

Even though we are all fated to die, fade away and be born again

That you, my sovereign, shall have life as long as this stone pillar,

Life as long as the sky and earth.

Going past the temple, we see a raft

306 This is the reigning King, Rama 3rd (1788-1851, r.1824-1851 C.E).
307 The phrase is burinthra literally ‘Indra of the City’ or ‘Lord of the City.’
Like a floating peer, parked, selling wares.

They have silken cloths, purple and gold.

Things all white and yellow, from Chinese boats.

I come to the spirit refinery,

A bellow of smoke rising from the cauldron.  

There is a scooping bucket tied to a high post.

Oh, what sin it was - this devilish water that so burned my heart -

Made me dim, drunk, a madness of such shame.

I did good deeds, ordained and poured only holy water, asking for release,

Aiming to be as the All-knowing Awoken one.

Until I was released, from this drink, not ruined yet.

I don't go near it, I turn my head away, not too much.

No longer drunk on wine, but drunk on love.

Refinery is perhaps too grand a word. It is more like a few men with buckets and cauldrons making rice-derived liquors by the side of the river.
How is one to cut, rend, break the thread of one's own thoughts?

Drunk on rice liquor and, by late morning, it's gone.

But this drunkenness of the heart, it remains in my body every night,

every night.
ถึงบางจากจากวัดพลัดพี่น้อง มานั่งหมอมงม้วนใบไม้ฝ่าฝืน เพราะรักใคร่ใจจืดไม่ยืดยืน จึงต้องขืนในพระ Gdaไม่เมือง
ถึงบางพลัดพี่น้องผู้อยู่ข้างเคียง ใคร่สั่งส่งให้ล้วนไปเหลือง
ถึงบางพลัดเหมือนฟงพลัดมาจัดเกียง ฟงพลัดเมืองพลัดสามร่อนรอน
ถึงบางโพธิ์โอพระศรีมหาโพธิ์ ร่มริมรุกขมูลให้พุนผนผล
ขอเทนามุกภาพพระทานพล ให้ผ่องพื้นภูผาลำอานภาษาฯ

ถึงบ้านญาเหล่านักแบ่งและสะพร้า มีข้อขัดกันปล่าไว้ท้าขาว
ตรงหน้าโรงโพงพางเขาวางราย พวกหญิงชายพร้อมพร้อมค้าขาย
จะเหลียวกลับลับเขตประเทศสถาน ทรมานหม่าฝ่าฝืนเมืองมอง
จะเหลียวกลับลับเขตพระพทธสถาน ทรงแทนหม่าน้้ให้ผันทิมมอง
ถึงแบบระหว่างบางพ้อง ฟังลองเลือกงานเมื่อวานชินฯ
Arriving at Away Village,\textsuperscript{309}

Away from my temple, away from my siblings.

I am eclipsed, shamed, without cease.

Because love and longing sours and does last long.

I must force myself, tearing away, away from the city.

I arrive at Betel Nut Leaf village, where we were together.

Where I rolled it all up to share with you, in yellowed leaves.

I arrive at Parting Village, like my love parted from me, such bitterness.

All parting, parting the city, parting the monastery – torn apart.

I come to Bodhi Village and oh that great tree of refuge

That cooling shadow of respite refuges, bringing forth fruits.\textsuperscript{310}

I call on the potency, powers and attainments of the Buddha\textsuperscript{311}

\textsuperscript{309} Bang Jaak translates literally as ‘Palm-tree River-village.’ However, the word jaak also means ‘away’ or ‘separated from.’

\textsuperscript{310} There is a lot of Buddhist-flavored language here. Ruk-ka-moon is from the Pāli rukkhamula and comes from the phase rukkhamulikangka, meaning ‘tree-root-dweller’s practice,’ which is of the thirteen ascetic dhutanga practices. These are sometimes extreme practices that a monk can take up optionally and include ‘sitter’s practice’ as a vow to never lie down and reused-rag-wearer’s practice. Rirodh is nirodha and is the cessation of suffering. There is some slight wordplay here because the word for ‘root’ can mean ‘cause’ and so leads to phala, the accumulation of fruit, i.e. just as the tree gives fruit, so does a monk’s dwelling beneath lead to the fruits of merit.
To be free of suffering and evil and to be joyful in this body.

Arriving at the Vietnamese Village, where shop stalls proliferate.

Prawns and fish, crammed and caged, sold and hawked all about.

Before these buildings, fish traps set in a line, all in order.

Groups of girls and boys, come in a protrusion to take a peek.

I turn my head back, so far is the city.

Tortured, heavy-hearted, clouded.

Arriving at the Khema monastery, with gold – resplendent.312

The festival was over just the day before yesterday.

311 The first word here is tejas and literally means ‘fire’ but implies here ‘supernatural attainment’ which arises out of the bile from meditation. Words in English related to magic largely derive from words for chant or sing, whereas some words in Pāli-Sanskrit are from fire.
312 Wat Khema is named after a female disciple of the Buddha, Khemā in Pali or Kṣēma in Sanskrit. She was a chief consort of the Buddha’s sponsor King Bimbisara, known for her beautiful golden complexion and vanity. After a visit to the Buddha’s monastery, she ordained and achieved arahantship. However, likely because of their extreme attachment to the metal, Khema appears largely to be associated with gold in Siamese lore and that association is borne out in this verse.

The temple itself is believed have been founded in the early Ayutthaya period, perhaps as early as 1350. The temple seems to have had a special place in the heart of Rama 2nd, Phu’s benefactor. He bequeathed royal temple status on it and sent his favorite son Mongkut, who later became Rama 4th, to spend a rainy retreat there where he was given the kathin robe by his mother Somdet Phrasirisuriyenthra. The completion of a large renovation was celebrated in 1828 C.E. When Phu mentions a ‘celebration’ he is likely referring to this celebration which would have taken place during the kathin period.
โอ้ปางหลังครั้งสมเด็จพระบรมโกศ มาผูกโบสถ์ก็ได้มาบูชาชิน
ชมพระพิมพ์ริมผนังยังอีน ทั้งแปดหมื่นสิบพัน ได้วันท่าน
โอ้ครั้งนี้มีได้เห็นแสลงลง เพราะวัด.backward ประกาศานาน
เป็นบุญขอพรสอนนัดไม่ทาน พอมาวัดศีลข้าววิเศษ
ดูนั่งวัดหลังเช้าเป็นเกลี้ยกล่อม กลับกระโดดกลับพันวัดเจริญ
บ้างซุ่นพุ่งๆุ่นวัดเหมือนกองภูมิน ดูเปียดเปียดคว้างคว้างเป็นหว่างวัน
ทั้งหัวท้ายกระจายกระจายว่า กระโลกสวยงามมากกลางทน
โอ้เรื่องพุ่นไม่มากในศาล ใจยังว่างหวังสวัสดิ์ไม่ตกหล่นๆ
Oh, those times before, when my late royal lord\textsuperscript{313}

Tied his boat to the chapel, worshipped thankfully,

Admiring the Buddha tablets – long have they reigned -

All eighty-four thousand we did salute.

Oh, now I cannot worship at such festivals

Because I've fallen, fated to become a nobody.

It's because of little merit, I reflect, I offer up thanks.

The boat gets caught, entering swirling water.

It seems to change and change, drift and flow, this whirlpool.

It spurts and gusts and gusts, spirals round around like a turning cartwheel.

Every man struts his paddle, wrestling and plunging.

Exhausted, we pass through, going straight on.

Oh, this boat has overcome the vortex of the rivers

\footnote{The word here is \textit{phraboromkot} which means a royal urn. It is a word used to signify a recently ‘royally gone to heaven’ king. However, here it could also be referring to Prince Mongkut who had only the prior day attended the celebrations at the temple.}
Yet this heart turns and dallies still without escape.
ตลาดแก้วแล้วไม่มีหินตลาดดัง สองฟากฝั่งก็แต่ล้วนสวนพฤกษา
โอ้รินรินกลิ่นดอกไม้ใกล้คงคง เหมือนกลั่นผ้าแพร่ร่วามะเกลือ
เห็นโศกใหญ่ใกล้น้ำระกำแห่ง ทั้งรักแซงแซวหาที่ประหลาดเหลือ
เห็นโศกฟื้นระกำก้าเข่าเพื่อรักเรือนสาทษาตลาดเหลือ
ถึงแขวงนนท์ชลมารคตลาดขวัญ มีพ่วงแพแพร่ร้านขาย
ทั้งของสวนแต่เรือเรียงราย พวกหญิงชายชุมกันทุกวันคืน..
There was an old glass market here, but no market do I see.

Shores and banks, all but fields and flora.

Oh, but gently gently I smell flowers on the waters.

Like scents of dark silks, saturated in persimmons.

Near a large Sadness tree by the river, a longing-fruit is concealed.

Love-flowers inserts themselves between them, a beauty wondrous and strange.

Like I the Sadness tree, longing again and again to comingle,

For my Love is neglected, bereft, her loveliness gone far away.\textsuperscript{314}

Arriving at Nothanburi on the river, Gift Market.

Towed trailers, silks of all sorts for sale.

All things juxtaposed about, the boats orderly arranged.

Groups of girls and boys gather here every day and night.

\textsuperscript{314} When Phu sees Love, Longing and the Sadness trees and flowers bunched together, he sees in them a metaphor for love itself. As with places, the poetry of flowers emanated from their names far more than from their botanical characteristics. Ashoka tree (\textit{saraca asoca}, lit. “sorrow-less”) is an evergreen tree famous for its beautiful foliage and fragrant flowers. In Indian literature, it is heavily associated with love and is associated with Kamadeva, the god of love. In Thai, it is called \textit{sok} or ‘sad’ and so there is much poetic play on its name, especially together with ‘water-love flowers’ or more simply ‘love flowers.’ ‘Longing flowers’ are \textit{salacca wallichiana}, a species of fruit-bearing palm. Again, here it is used for its name.
มาถึงบางธรณีทวีโศก ยามวิโยคยากใจให้สะอื้น
โอ้สุธาหนาแน่นเป็นแผ่นพื้น ถึงสี่หมื่นสองแสนพื้นที่
เมื่อคาราจรฝาลายมากเท่านี้ ไม่มีที่พึ่งสุธาจะอาศัย
ล้วนนางเหม็นเบื้องแย่งแย่ง เหมือนนกใช้ร่าวเรื่องหูอากาศ

ถึงเมื่อรัฐย้านบานมอญแต่งก่อนแก่ ผู้หญิงเก่าล่วงมากว่า
เดี๋ยวนี้มอญถอนไร้จุกเหมือนเล็กน้อย ทั้งผัดหน้าจับเขม่าเหมือนชาวไทย
โอ้สามัญผันแปนไม่แท้เที่ยง เหมือนอย่างยิ่งข้าหลายจังหวัด
นี้หรือจิตคิดหมามีหลายใจ ที่จิตใครจะเป็นหนึ่งอย่าพึ่งคิดฯ
Arriving at the Village of Thorani the earth goddess.\textsuperscript{315}

In the morning, my grieving heart moves me to sobs.

Oh, this earth is dense and packed, this wide land

Stretches forty-two-thousand lengths up even to the boundaries of the Three Worlds -

And yet my unfortunate body is just this length and breadth

And still has on this fecund earth not a space to stay.\textsuperscript{316}

All thorns, bundles stab and pierce its bitter heart.

Like a bird without a nest, wandering, crowing alone alone.\textsuperscript{317}

At Kret Island, we arrive at a village Mon since long ago.\textsuperscript{318}

\textsuperscript{315} Torani is the name of the goddess who visited the Buddha as he was sitting under the Bodhi tree. She drowned the armies of Mara by ringing her hair out. Her name means ‘Earth’ and that is the sense that is explored here. However, the goddess herself is more commonly associated with fertility, abundance and sensuality.

\textsuperscript{316} The word for ‘earth’ here is \textit{pasudha or vasudhā} in Pali-Sanskrit. It is the name of an avatar of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and fortune, and literally means ‘wealth-producing.’ It can also simply mean ‘the earth’ but carries a connotation of fecundity, the theme of this verse.

\textsuperscript{317} There is some word-play here. The word \textit{ekha} means ‘alone’ or ‘one’ and the name of a crow is \textit{nok ka} and the sound it makes is ‘\textit{ka ka}.’ And so there is deliberate ambiguity as to whether the metaphorical bird is crying while alone or is actually crying out ‘alone!’

\textsuperscript{318} Koh Kret is on the Chao Phraya river between Bangkok and Ayutthaya. It was originally a peninsula but short-cut canal was created along its Eastern flank which gradually subsided into a
The women put up their hair prettily according to their culture.

Now, Mon women pluck their top hairs like a doll

All powder their faces, soot their hair like Thai folk.

Ah, how common it is, for things to change and never truly be fixed.

Just like boys and girls who discard fashions.

Like this minds, thoughts and meanings are many.

Never think that the thoughts of anyone are one.

river, making the land into an island. The Mon are an ancient people associated with the coming of Buddhism to Southeast Asia and a favorite topic of Phu’s poetry. Note that the Mon people changing their customs is a sign of impermanence, whereas the Chinese people are always already a sign of change in the kingdom.
ถึงบางพูดนุ้ยจิตเป็นศรีศักดิ์ มีคนรางใส่ข้อละยิ้ม
แม้นพูดนุ้ยข้าวตัวตายทำลายมีคร ชะบัดพิจิตในมนุษย์เพราะพูดจา
ถึงบ้านใหม่จิตลึกค้าฉัน จะหาบ้านใหม่มีธนาคารในปรารถนา
ขอให้สมคณเด็กเทวะ จะได้ผาสุวัสวดีจ้างกับกัย
ถึงบางเดื่อโอ้มะเดื่อเหลือประหลาด บังเกิดชาติแมลงหวี่มีในไส้
เหมือนคนพาลหวานนอกย่อมขมใน อุปนัยเหมือนมะเดื่อเหลือระอา
ถึงบางหลวงเชิงรากเหมือนจากรัก สู้เสียศักดิ์สังวาสพระศาสนา
เป็นล่วงพ้นปกรณารกาลา ถึงบางฟ้าจะมาให้ไม่ไปคิดๆ
I arrive at Talk Village. To talk well is a great power.

There are those who love the taste of well-flavoured words,

Yet if your speech is cruel and killing it will hurt your dearest ones.

One is right or wrong in this world of men according to one’s speech.

Arriving at New House, my mind ponders.

I will look for a new house, that’ll be just as I wish

I ask you that it be peaceful, just as I wish, you angels.

That I may be happy, at ease, protected from harm.

I arrive at Fig Tree Village, the fig a strange fruit

That spawns the life of fruit flies inside its core.

Like bad people with a sweet exterior and a bitter inside,

The fig is a metaphor for them – what sadness.

Arriving at Chueng Rak, like departing from love.
I lost my potency, gave up, entered the order.\textsuperscript{319}

I am liberated from all that restless running around.

If a heavenly woman would offer herself up to me now, I would not be disquieted.

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\textsuperscript{319} \textit{Sangwat} is a word for ordaining and adhering to a single order's rules also, paradoxically means to copulate (the Sanskrit means both 'to be in agreement/talk together' and is a covert word for sex). Phu seems to be playing on the dual form of this work. \textit{Sak} can mean 'position' in society or, more usually, something like 'spiritual potency,' the same potency that can imbued upon powerful religious objects, including those to enhance sexual potency.
ถึงสามโคกเลื่องชื่อในแต่ละพุทธเจ้าหลวงว่าชื่อปทุมธานีเพราะมันเป็นเมืองตรี
ที่พระพุทธเจ้าพระราชทานนามสามโคกเป็นเมืองตรี ชื่อปทุมธานีเพราะมันเป็นเมืองตรี
โปรดอย่าคุณสูญไปก็ไม่กลับหลัง แต่ชื่อดังยังอยู่เจ้าถ้ากั้น
โปรดอย่าทิ้งสุนทรประทานคาวไปรอดชั่วจวันสามโคกยิ่งโศกใจ
สิ้นแผ่นดินสิ้นชีวิตจงดองทิ้งเรื่องราวทิ้ง
แม้นกับนิติเดินชาติใด ขอให้ได้เป็นข้าฝ่าธุลี
สิ้นแผ่นดินขอให้สิ้นชีวิตบ้าง อย่ารู้ร้างบาง
เหลืออาลัยใจตรมระทมทวี ทุกวันนี้ก็ยังดายทางมากมาย
I arrive at Three Hills Village, a sad yearning for Pinklao.

Great august and pious lord who ruled the land,

Changed it from a land of ‘Three Hills,’ a Third District,\(^{320}\)

To Pathum Thani, Land of Lotuses.\(^{321}\)

Oh your kindness, faded gone, never returning.

But this name you established yet remains for all to know.

Oh I, Sunthorn, wish to offer up myself

For in truth I did not live on, like that old name Three Hills - sadder still.

At the end of my lord, my name too followed.

\(^{320}\) This is reference to the feudal system of administration, practiced in later Ayutthaya and early Bangkok. There were three grades of province: prime provinces (hua meung chan ek), secondary provinces (hua meung chan tho) and third provinces (hua meung chan tree). That is to say that ‘Three Hills’ had been a ‘Third District’ and not particularly important, but here came under the king’s munificence directly.

\(^{321}\) The name is Pali-Sanskrit and was given by Rama 2, Sunthorn Phu’s most generous benefactor, after the lord of the region brought Mon people to receive his majesty’s visit in 1815. It means ‘Land of Lotuses’ – Pathum Dhāni. This could refer to the fact that the area was visited in the eleventh month and there were many lotuses blooming at that time, or could refer to the Mon people there as themselves being like lotuses, which will rise out of the water and bloom beautifully. This place and the king’s re-naming of it appears in almost all of Phu’s nīrat. However, it tended to be referred to as ‘Prathum Thani’ but this was officially corrected in 1918 when the spelling was changed back to Pathum Thani. This apparent pedantry testifies to the importance of the names of things and places to the Siamese of these times.
Now I must travel, wander, searching for a place to stay

And wherever I go next, whatever life I may be born in,

I ask only to serve the dust at the sole of your feet.

Whenever my lord dies, I ask to die with him,

Never again to know this desolation, living without he of lotus feet.

This mourning heart, dragged down and down.

Each day now, lifeless, an empty vessel wandering.
ถึงบ้านแจ่มเต็มวันและสว่าง ไม่มีผู้สัตว์สับสนกับฝูงนก
ด้วายหมายเครื่องยนตริคпуบาน นิกกีนักลักหนามข้ามเขื่อย
จวบจนซิบหน่อยตื่นเต้น ทั้งจากนั้นเสี้ยมแซกแตกใส่
ใครทำผู้ดูทำกรณีน้อย ก็ต้องไปปีนขึ้นบน
เราก็จะมาถึงเพื่อนนี้แล้ว ยังถ้าแค่หลัวตื่นด้วยไม่มีหนะ
ทุกวันนี้วิริตคิดทำงอน เจียนจะต้องปีนบ้างหรืออย่างไรฯ
I reach Cotton Tree Village and see only cotton trees drifting high.

There are no chattering clusters of animals on the branches

But thorns, bushy, plentiful strike the eye.\textsuperscript{322}

I think, how frightening these thorns, what dread.

The cotton trees of the Sixteenth level of hell.

Thorns inject spikes, snapping in scores.

Whoever committed adultery, once their time is up

Must climb up that tree – oh, it gives me chills.

I have already reached that age

When I've escaped, I'm controlling myself - no longer dim, desiring.

But everyday there are those with wretched ways

And, well, I guess they'll have to climb it, won't they?

\textsuperscript{322} Cotton trees, when young bear numerous conical spines on their trunk to deter attacks by animals though these become eroded as the tree ages. Of numerous depictions of hells in the temple murals of Ayutthaya and early Bangkok, this image of the cotton tree of hell was particularly popular. Those who had, in this life, committed adultery would suffer in hell the poetically just punishment of seeing their beloved at the top of a cotton tree which they climb, getting jabbed with thorns along the way. Once they had reached the top, they would see their lover at the bottom and go through the whole ordeal once again.
โอ้คิดมาสารพัดจะตัดขาด ตัดสาวทัศทับกุกREC หว่า
ฉันทางนั่งนึกนาเรากใบ ถึงเรากาไฮผูราชาวครามพอเย็น
ดูห่างย่านบ้านข้องท้องฟทาง ระวังท้องสัตว์น้ำจะท้าขี้กิ้ย
เป็นที่อยู่ผูกุ๊ยไม่ร้ายเณ furn จะชอบเร็วเรื่องหลังระยะ

พระสุริยงลงลับพยับพ่น ดูมวนมืดมิติทุกทิศ
ถึงทางลัดดังทางมากถึงทาง หลังก็ถูกแมกซ์กั้นรียาว
เป็นเจ้าเจ้าเจ้งดูดำเร้ง ท้ากว้างขวางขวัญหายไม่ร้ายเหลี่ยย
เห็นคุ้มคุ้มเห็นมินสถังกลางกรากรียว ด้านน้ึ่งน้ึ่งน้ำพร้อมหน้าพวกปลายนาย
แซ่ยอดอย่างง่ายไปเป็นผี เรือนาฝืนฝืนนินจางธนย์
ต้องอิ่มเข่าไปหักไม่เคย ประติมาแยซสบังคับเข้าพรา
กลับออกมาข้างตรังเดยังเคลื่อน เรื่องของโตก์ไอยครโยหุ
เจียบสัตว์เต็มปักษานก นั่งค้างตั้งพวกผูกพวกพระพยาพเทคนิค
ไม่เห็นก้มลงต้องค้างยุ่งกันทุ่ง พอหยุดยุ่งยั้้นชุ่มมารุ่งศัตก
เป็นกลุ่มกลุ่มเอื้อมม่านทรราชชัด ท้าหนังใดไปไม่ได้นอนๆ
Oh I think of all the various things I must cut from myself

Cut off beauty, cut off love – I cannot.

Yearning, I sit with a self-pitying heart,

Till we reach Big Island, Rajakram in the evening time.\textsuperscript{323}

I see many houses, on both sides of the land, away from the island.

Beware all those water animals that will do harm.

This island is a place where malicious folk persist,

Hiding themselves and attack passing boats – oh, too much.\textsuperscript{324}

The sun falls, fades – a stormy rain.

It's cloudy, dim and dull in all directions.

We take a shortcut that goes through the field.

\textsuperscript{323} 'Big Island' or Koh Yai is similar to Koh Kret in that it is a former peninsula made into an 'island' by the digging of short-cut canals. Rajakram is the name of the district, now Bang Sai (Banyan Tree Village) district.

\textsuperscript{324} This is a depiction of citizens breaking one of the five precepts, to refrain from taking what is not given. We should note that Phu systematically shows all of the five precepts – the \textit{pañcasīla}-being broken across the land. The precepts are commitments to abstain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct (often read as adultery), lying and intoxication.
On both sides reeds rushes, grasses poke up lush and brambly.

A looming shadow inundates us, broad and wide.

So vast, immense – chilling, I cannot look.

They look over us, men and women chattering riotously

All along the boat, flowing together like a school of fish.

The rowers beat the waters fluid and long but

Our boat becomes stuck, foundered – alas!

They must strike with poles. I've never seen such a thing!

In a while, a crunch and we enter the cluttered growth,

Fall back! Pull! Paddles pushing out.

The boat rocks, rattles, roils – spittoons spill.

Quiet, serene – forest animals, flocks of birds.

The dew falls all over, glitters and gleams as the wind blows.

We cannot see the river and must wait in this field.

As we wait, a throng of bugs surge and bite,

Crowds and crowds harassing us, like darts of sand.
We must whisk and clap at them and cannot sleep.
แสนวิตตกอนยามอ้าวัง

ในหุงกว่างเหล้าแต่เข็มชมสสอง

จนดีกดาพวกวังกว่างกลางอ่อมพร ภารีบันธรวังสงครามเมืองสอน

ทั้งกบเขียดเกรียดจิงจังกระเรือ่ พระพายเฉียวธีวิวาทวิวหวิว

วังเวงจิตศักดิ์.GetObjectRef('1')ร่าฟ้าควอถึงเมื่อถ่ายอยู่ดุลสูดน้ำ

สำราลภับพ้องสะพร้กร่อม อุ่นแทดล้อมกลางคนปรนนิบัติ

โอ้อมเข้ดเห็นอยู่แต่หญุ่หัด ข่ายนั้งปั้จุบูังให้ไม่ไกลภภ
A hundred thousand anxieties – oh, I am desolate.

In the wide field, I see but horsetail-reeds ordered lushly.

It’s late and the stars glow and glimmer in the sky.\(^{325}\)

Cranes hover, shrieks echoing at the second watch of the night.

The frogs cluck and croak; the crickets ceaseless.

The wind loiters leisurely, fresh and cool.

My mind a-swirl, I recollect, contemplate on things -

To that time, that time when I was still blissfully content

Laughing with beloved friends, together, in-sync;

Surrounded by many people who would serve and escort me.

Now this miserable time, when only my son Pat attends me,

Helps me as I sit whisking off the mosquitoes that approach my body.\(^{326}\)

325 The word ampon for 'sky' here is also the name for a garden area near the royal palace, which was subsequently made into a royal garden proper in the reign of Rama 4. Sunthorn Phu here compares his current situation to when he lived in the palace. There are numerous word plays which set the scene metaphorically between his current position in a forlorn ditch to his time in the pleasure gardens of the palace.
จนเดือนต้นเห็นกอกระจับ กระโดดออกบัวผุนเมื่อดื่นทาง
เห็นร่องน้ำสั่นลองพังสองฝ่าย ข้างหน้าท้ายอ้อมในสาร
จนแรมแจ้งแสงสว่างเห็นพันผุนผีดุนำรักบี้จ้างสังกระ
เห็นบัวผุนและลำวิรมทางจง ที่ผู้เข้าร่อนเสียดพรายได้คงกลาง
สายติ่งแก้มแซมสลับต้นตับเตา เป็นเหล่าเหล่าแพร่ยั้งช้ำข้าว
กระจำจักตอบบัวบานพบยา ตายทางสว่างตั้งตายพราย
โอ้เช่นนี้เสียได้มากหนึ่ง จะลงเล่นกลางทุ่งเหมือนมุ่งหมาย
ที่มีเรือน้อยน้อยจะลอยพา เที่ยวตอบสายบัวผุนสันตวาด

326 There is some word-play here. Phu’s son’s name is Pat, which means ‘to fan.’ Any respectable courtier would have servants to fan them in the tropical heat, but Phu now only has his son ‘Pat’ who pats (a similar-sounding word to ‘to fan’ but which means ‘to wipe off, whisk or sweep’) mosquitoes from his body.
Now the moon is clear, I see a cluster of water chestnuts and lettuces,

A profusion of lotus flowers and lilies in this waxing moon's light,

With the wake of the water passing us on both sides.

At the front end, at the back end, punting the river

Till bright and radiant are the rays of sun, I see families of flowers.

They look lovely, tenderly sending off their pollen.

Crowds of lilies and lotuses line up as I approach;

Throng of golden torch flowers, water algae beneath the water;

Lilies criss-cross and crotchet with frog's-bit flowers,

A cluster here and there, each side left and right;

Water chestnuts and lotus spread open their blossoms -

All about I see their whiteness like bright stars, hauntingly bright.

Oh, this is something even pious ladies could come and see,

Come down to sport in the middle of this field – just as they wish.

Where this boat gently, gently floats its paddle.
A trip out to gather lotuses and water lilies!
ถึงตัวเราถ้ายังมีโยมหญิง คนจะนั่งดูตายอยู่ไม่
คงจะใช้ให้ศีลย์ที่ใคร่มา อุตส่าห์หาเอาไปฝากตามยากจน
นั้นนี่ไม่มีเท่าขี้เลื้อย เจ้าอย่าเก็บเลยทางกลางหน้า
พอร่อนร่อนอย่าแรงประทุยอน ถึงที่บกพรุเนย์ยังเสริมใจ

มหาจะค้นน้ำจนเจ็บผู้รู้ ถึงครั้งครั้งจะแม่น้ำน้ำตาไหล
จะแกะหาลักษณะเหมือนเมื่อดีเป็นใจ ถึงไปรับนิมนต์ขึ้นบนจวน
แล้งมาจากวาบลักษณะแปลก อกมีเด็กเล็กหรือเราจะสรวล
เหมือนเชิงใจให้สูงไม่สมควร จะค้นแม่น้ำน้ำลับอัปประมาณฯ
Oh, if I had some attendant ladies,

I would not just sit here looking at that lonely, blossoming flower -

I’d get my disciple to devotedly

Search for it and give it to you, in accordance with my poverty,

So poor I don't even have dirt under my nails.327

But I'm too lazy to collect these flowers that pass along the way.

On and on, fading and fading, the soft light of the sun

Till we reach the parish of the old capital - sadder still.

We come to district chief's residence, an old friend of mine.

I think of times past. Tears flow.

I'll look to see if he's the same as before,

I'll get an invitation to come to his residence.

327 Sunthorn Phu, as a monk, cannot collect flowers himself and so uses his attendant to harvest the flowers for him. There is some implicit sexual reference here. Phu is at once saying he would get his attendant to get a flower for him and ‘lonely blossoming flower’ of course could also refer to the ‘pious lady’ herself.
But how agonizing, awful it would be if he's changed.

Would my heart break, would I look pathetic? Would he laugh at me?

For a miserable heart to aim high – that's not right.

I must turn my head and return in immeasurable shame.
มาเองต่ำหน้าวัดพระเมรุขั้วชั้ม วิโมารามเรือร้องเพลงเมืองนาน
บ้างขึ้นถึงระลอกเล่นสำราญ ทั้งเพลงการเกี่ยวแก้วกันแช่จี้
บ้างลงส่งพ่ะโปสถัก ระนาดวี๊รักลังก์กันนายเสื่อง
มีโคมราลลแล่ร่มเหมือนส่าเพ็ง เมื่อมองควงก็มีครั้งใดครั้งหนึ่งป่า
ย่าล่าเหมื่องครั้งท่อนก่อนมีม่านมา ชาวอวลลักเหลี่ยมล่องจนหนึ่งอยู่
ไม่จบบทลดเลี้ยวหมู่เตียวจู จนลูกคู่ขอทุ่มลาว่าหวานอนณ

396
At the banks of Wat Phra Men, the ships head-to-head alongside.  

Some start singing, dancing, making merry.

They all sing about boy-girl-duo song flirt back and forth, rowdy and raucous.

Some sing verses celebrating the ascetic's robes they've come to offer.

Some play the xylophone in rapid volleys like Seng.  

There are lanterns, it's all a-glow like Chinatown.

While I'm following observances, I can't desire to look.

A guy in one boat sings his half of a song and it's too much!

He sings it long, stretched out and hollow – my ears get tired.

He doesn't stop, the poem's all over the place, like a winding snake.

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328 *Wat Phra Men* (Temple of Great Mount Meru) was an old temple in Ayutthaya, founded in 1503 C.E. In Phu’s time, it was also one of Rama 3's first renovation projects. He rebuilt parts of it to look like a Chinese temple. Here, Sunthorn Phu seems to implicitly criticize how Rama 3 has denigrated traditional ways and religion with commercialism. The celebration here is for a *kathin* ceremony.

329 Seng is presumably the name of a musician who was famous at the time for his skilful use of the *ranaat* or bamboo xylophone.

330 Sampeng was the designated dwelling place for the Teochew Chinese since the establishment of Bangkok as the capital city.

331 Monks are forbidden from attending fairs and listening to music but, especially because most festivals occur in and around temples, this was and is still more honoured in the breach than the observance.
Till his duo-partner begs for release with gaping yawns.
ได้พิจิตรสติ่งคำที่เข้ามา จนสังข์เสียหลบลงกับหมอน
ประจำสามยามคล้ายในอัษฎ์ ค้างโจรจู่จับข้ามเข้าฝ่ายเรือ
นาราภีมเสียงอุกข์ขึ้นเรื่อง ผู้นั้นมีลวงน้ำไปข้ามไวเหลือ
ไม่เห็นหน้าสนุกสมัยที่ขัดใจ เหมือนเนื้อเบื้องบางคริอุขอฮะ
แต่หนูพัดจัดแจ้งที่เห็นส่อง ไม่เสียของข้ามหลังเครื่องอภิรษ์
ด้วยดีจะควบคุมอุกข์กับทุนพร ขัยชนะมาได้ดังใจโปร่งๆ
I listen casually to so many things at the side of the temple

Till its calm, quiet, blackout with my pillow.

At the third watch of the night, when the sky is black

Roving thieves readily plunge, enter stealing from boats.

Our vessel tilts, a sound of clatter - I get up and shout

Into blackness, he submerges the water expertly.

I don't see the face of my attendant who's close-by -

Our bodies are bumbling and bumbling, seeming brainless.

But Pat lights two candles -

We have not lost our white and yellow clothes, nor my eight requisites.

I call upon that little merit I have and the Enlightened Ones

That I may have victor over the demon Mara, as I desire.
ครั้นรุ่งเช้าขึ้นเป็นวันอุโบสถ เจริญธรรมบรมบุชาลง
ไปเจ็ดวันที่ชื่อภูเขาทอง ดูสูงล่องลอยฟ้า
อยู่กลางทุ่งรุ่งโรจน์ยั่งยืนยืน เป็นที่เล่นนวดกลางโคก
ที่พื้นฐานบัลถ์มอเติบไม้ คงหลั่งล้อมรอบเป็นขอบคัน
มีจิตย์วาหารเป็นลานวัด ใจแจ้งหวั่นแจงก่าแก่งกัน
ท้องก์อยู่โหนสลับกัน เป็นสามชั้นเชิงชานตะวันเจริญ
บ้านใต้มีสันตำราภูริน ต่างชันชันภูมิยั่งยืนชัน
ประทักษิณจินตกะยา ได้เสรีจาระบุคับถิ่นภิกษุ
มีริ่งรังตัวบรรจุเทียนกว้าง ด้วยพระพายพัดเวียนอยู่เทียนกัน
เป็นสามชั้นขึ้นวิจิตรยาม เดทุ่ววันนี้ซึ่งหนักหนักนัก
พื้นก์ฐานรูปรายร่างวังิ่งก้าแสน ผลงานเจริญครุ้มสกักหลุดหล้า
ไอrosisย์ที่สร้างยังร้างรัก เจ้าสมองกันน้าร์ตขาดกระเด็ย
กระธิลวิชัย์ขึ้นเสียงกิจยศ จะมีหมดค่ว้างน้ากันค่ำทัน
เป็นผู้คิดมีมากแล้วข่ายเดือน ก็ดีเป็นอนิจจันเต็มทั้งนั้น

401
It’s the morning of the Precepts Day,

Practice dharma, celebrate and pray.\(^{332}\)

I go to the chedi that’s called Golden Mountain,

Floating far up there in sky. \(^{333}\)

In the midst of a field, luminous, standing solitary and solid there

In the water that plays and sparkles.

From the base, a staircase, locked round and around in squares;

\(^{332}\) *Ubosot* or in Pāli *uposatha* day is a day of special worship, on each quarter phase of the month.

As the translations of the individual lines of poetry can become quite long, I have broken this section into smaller lines than in the original. The thing to note about this verse is that the first half, when describing architectural details, uses hard-sounding, consonant-heavy language: *thi peun taan bat tat ban dai/ kong kong lay lom rop pren kob kan*. Towards the end, when Phu describes the wind and candles, the sound of the language itself becomes softer: *duey phraphai pat wien yu hien han*. This creates a poem which seems to melt into air just as the temple is implied to.

\(^{333}\) The original Wat Phu Khao Thong was built in 1387 C.E. by King Ramesuan (r.1369-95 C.E.). When King Bayinnaung (r.1550-1581 C.E.) of the Burmese Kingdom of Hongsawadi successfully invaded and briefly took control of Ayutthaya, he had a Mon style pillar built there but this was later re-constructed by King Borommakot (r.1733-58 C.E.), one of the last kings of Ayutthaya, in a more rounded style that was popular at that time. Although a royal temple in Ayutthaya times, it had fallen into disrepair since the sacking of the city and would remain in this state until 1956, when it was repaired. At the time of writing this poem, Rama 3rd had begun construction of his own Golden Mountain temple in Bangkok, following the tradition of building new temples in Bangkok after the names of Ayutthaya ones. However, construction was at this time not going well. It was a large and heavy structure built of stone pieces supported by wooden frames which the muddy earth near the canal could not support. In fact, it collapsed twice. Construction was later halted and only resumed and completed at the end of Rama 3’s reign. Again, this seems to be a veiled critique of the king. What would have been seen today as a failure of adequate pre-construction surveying would likely have been seen by many at the time as a failure of the king’s merit. The implication of this poem is clear - Sunthorn Phu must return to Ayutthaya to experience what true royalty and religion was like.
A chedi, sermon hall and court and around this round and outspread area, a wall encloses.

On the chedi, the lines overlap on three levels, the edges of their corners jutting out beautifully.

You can count four sides, gratifying and satisfying,

Inviting me to relief at the third level.

Going clockwise, my mind strives –

Finishing the three turns, I bow and revere.

There is cavernous room for offering candles,

And a wind that turns round and around –

A miraculous sort of circumambulation.

But today it’s aged, thick and heavy.

All the chedis are broken, the nine levels –

Forgotten! The summit top loped off.

Oh, this great chedi is abandoned of love - such pity, a spring of tears.

Like this, fame and glory will waste away before the eye can glimpse,³³⁴

Persons of class and standing will come to anguish.

This is ‘impermanence’ – that all shall vanish.

³³⁴ Na than ta hen – translated here as ‘before the eye can glimpse - is a phrase which can mean ‘within this very lifetime.’
ขอประชากรเดื่อถิ่นมาบานาส บรรจุธาตุที่จิตวิจิตรที่ยิ่งใหญ่
ข้าอุตสาหกรรมพระภูโภที่เป็นอนันต์ทั้งทุกทุกวัน
จะถึงกิจใต้ในมนุษย์ให้บริสุทธิ์สมบัติที่กิตติศักดิ์
ทั้งทุกข์โศกโรคภัยยากแล้วปล้ำราบแสนสบายบารมีประยูรยิ่ง
ทั้งโลภโทสะโมทดสอบให้ชนะใจได้อย่างหลง
ขอฟุ้งเฟื่องเรืองวิชานิยมอย่างทั่วถึงกิจในสันติ
ขอสมหวังตั้งประโยชน์โพธิญาณไว้ถาวรให้ถูกต้อง
ขอสมหวังตั้งประโยชน์โพธิญาณไว้ถาวรให้ถูกต้อง
I call for the blessings of the Chedi of the Auric Summit.

Created to contain the king's relics, that creator of men.\textsuperscript{335}

I endeavor, pay my respects.

Your infinite virtues, may they preserve my body.

Whatever life I am to born to again, if I'm human

Make me with a pure heart with good intentions.

All sadness, pain, suffering - may it be far from me.

I ask that my family be comfortable and prosperous.

All greed, rage, lust -

Let me win out against them, never losing my way.

I ask to be prosperous in the art of wisdom.

I ask that the precepts be ingrained in my nature.

And that those two types - cruel women and evil men -

Let me not be drunk, dim, blinded nor bound with them.

I ask for the great blessing of Awakening.

To be in nirvana for the future and forever.

\textsuperscript{335} \textit{Narangs\textsuperscript{a}on} is literally ‘creator of men’ and means the king or lord. It is not clear whose relics these are. The king could be King Ramesuan (r.1369-95), the founder of the original temple and one of the early kings of Ayutthaya or King Borommakot (r.1733-58 C.E.), considered the last great king of Ayutthaya.
พอกราบพระปะดอกปทุมชาติ พบพระธาตุสถิตในแก้ว
สมถวิลยินดีชุลีกร ประคองขอนเชิญปางค์ลงนาวา
กับหนูพัดมัสการสักขีจัล ใส่ขวดแก้ววางไว้ใกล้เกศา
บาทกรุงรุ่งขึ้นจะบูชา ไม่ปราดาด้วยอย่างเดียว
แสนเสียด้วยหมาจะขับรถมาดู ใจจะขาดคิดมาน้าตาไหล
โอ้บุญน้อยลอยลับครรไลไกล เสียใจเจียนจะดิ้นสิ้นชีวัน
พอตรู่ตรู่สุริย์คืนพรายพรรณ ให้ล่องวันหนึ่งมาถึงธานีฯ
I find relics in the stamen! Victorious joy, jubilantly I worship them. Carefully, faithfully I invite the relics aboard our boat. After Pat and I have paid our respects, We put the relics in a bottle which I put near my head. We rest and, the following day, I get up to go to the city and worship But don't catch sight of the relics - more shock to the heart. Incredible remorse! I had wished to admire those relics. I feel as if my heart will break, tears flow. Because I have little merit, they’ve floated off, faded far away. Sadness, as if struggling at the end of my life. At my wit's end, looking all about, I am unable to suppress my sorrow. Unrelenting grief and anger - my heart dreams on and on of those relics. In the early early morning, the sun rises bright and sparkling. We go down the river in one day, reaching the Capital.

336 Kesorn can mean the stamen or mean the pollen of the lotus. Phu does not describe what these relics look like, but one can assume that they are diamond-like fragments, such are collected from the ashes of important monks and kings.
ประทับท่านถูกเมืองท่าที่พระศรีสัมพันธ์
นิราวัณเมืองกำแพงของเรา ไว้เป็นที่สมานสัตถสัน
ด้วยได้ไปเยี่ยมพระพระพุทธชินราช ทั้งสิ้น
เป็นนิราศไว้เหมือนเดือนคราวที่ ตามภาพไม่สบายและใจ
ใช้จะมีที่รักสมภาษณ์ สร้างนิราสวิณแก่พิสัย
ขึ้นทราบว่าที่พระพุทธชินราช ตามนิสาข์ภาพก่อนแต่ก่อนมา
เหมือนแม่ครัวคั่วแกงแพนง สารพัดเพียญเครื่องมังสา
อันพริกไทยใบผักชีเมื่อนี่สิ่ง คั่วโรยน้ำเสียสักหน่อยจะใจ ๆ
Stopping at the pier of the royal Temple of the Dawn.  

Gradually my heart recovers, upholding the precepts of the Victorious One.

This nirat of the old capital of mine

Can be a thing delightful to behold.

Just like going to pay your respects to the Buddha-image,

To pagodas, relics to our religion -

It's a thing you can do to inspire you on the Path.

According to this way, if you're struggling, you can get relief.

I don't really have a lover.

I left on this nirat journey devoid of a lovely other.

That poets lament and languish

Is a custom followed in poems and verses since times past.

Like a cook mixing up a red curry,

Who puts in various vegetables of all sorts and meats,

Together with peppers, coriander leaves - so I do with a woman.

I must sprinkle in some sad-heartedness to make it savoury.

Wat Arun (Dawn Temple) is still the most distinguished landmark of Bangkok. Although it has existed before the establishment of the capital, known as Wat Makok (Olive Temple). It was then re-named during the Thonburi period as Wat Jaeng (Announce or Morning Light Temple). Its status and size today derive largely from refurbishment begun by Rama 2nd who changed the name to Wat Arun and made it a royal temple. Rama 2nd's relics are stored there. Again, Phu places his faith in the kings of the past, rather than Rama 3rd.
จงทราบความตามจริงทุกสิ่งสั้น อย่านนึกนิ่งแทนเหงาใจ
นักเลงกลอนนอนเปล่าก็เศร้าใจ จึงรำไรเรื่องราวเล่นบ้างเถอะ
Just so you know the truth about me all the way.

And don't gossip about me unduly.

A poet who just sits about would end up sad,

So he writes a lamentable tale for you to enjoy.
Nirat to the Temple of the Prince

*Nirat Wat Jao Fa* or *Nirat to the Temple of the Prince* (1832) is one of Phu’s later quicksilver poems. He takes the persona of his young novice monk son, Pat, though it is clear from several passages that Phu wishes readers to know that he himself composed the poem. Following a manual, Phu takes his sons and friends on an expedition to find a legendary temple near Ayutthaya where he believes the elixir of greatly-prolonged life lies buried. The descriptions of the poem are thick with different registers of language – common, religious, commercial, classical – that strives to give a sense of the liveliness and variety of the landscape at that time. As in *Nirat Suphan*, the ending strays from the classical form of *nirat* into a fantastical narrative.

วันประทศพุทชีธีเขียนอภัย
เป็นเรื่องความตามดีคิดหานิบบิตร
ควรจักจาชกนิเวชคุณ
ได้ออกเรื่องเมื่อตะวันขึ้นหลัง
ละองนัวก็ยังอยู่ดอยดอยพืน
ตะลึงเหลียวปลื้มอยู่ฝ่ามองราวจน
ไม่มีคนเกือบหนุนกรุณา
ใช้ที่นี้หรือธุรกัญญณแน่น
นำบกิจเส้นสายแก่เจ้าภาษา
จาระสั่นน้ำพ่อนยา
ไม่เห็นหน้านักระอันปีนนุ่ย
เสี้ยวเร่งมีบทป่าหมอนเวาว่า
ส่วนเขาข่าวคำหวยน้ำตาลใส
อยู่ย่านที่ดีปรือไปเจ้าใจ
เหลืออาลัยปล่อยจะจากรส

413
On a Thursday did I, Novice Pat, write these words,

The story of how I followed my reverend father.  

We roved from our abode, Jetawan Temple,

Leaving on a boat in the evening time with

The dew drip-dropping like a drizzle of rain.

Amazed I am, to turn and find myself solitary, stone broke.

With nobody to help us, nor offer kindness.

In this city, humans are jam-packed!

338 Pat’s father is Sunthorn Phu, at this time a seasoned Buddhist monk. His sons, who accompany him on this journey are novice monks, under eighteen years old. Pat had followed him in several other nirat. This supposedly written by Pat, but it is strongly assumed that the text was written by Sunthorn Phu himself. Pat, although he laments being alone by poetic convention, is in fact surrounded by others on this trip. As well as his father, there is also Pat’s young half-brother Taap and his young novice friends Klan, Janmak and Bunnat. There are also Phu’s ‘disciples’ who are likely his monastic and also poetic followers as well as several men to row the boat.

339 This is Wat Pho, a temple close to the royal palace and where the famous reclining Buddha lives. Phu stayed at various temples in Bangkok in his eighteen years as a monk, likely at the invitation of and for the convenience of his various royal patrons. For example, Wat Liap (Corner Temple), Wat Jaeng (Dawn Temple), Wat Mahathat (Temple of the Great Relic) and for the longest time at Wat Theptitaram (Temple of the Divine Goddess.) Prince Damrong, Phu’s biographer, wrote that he thought that Phu might have moved to Wat Pho after being invited by the Supreme Patriarch Pramanuchichinorot who was himself a poet. Or perhaps he was invited by one of the reigning king’s sons, Prince Lakkhanakonkun. It is likely that these courtiers liked him to be in this temple close to the palace so as to take poetry lessons from him. (Prince Damrong, Sunthorn Phu, p.34).
A thousand women, elders, speaking in tongues unruly.

To love just some one, when they’re all mixed up like this!

I see not a single face and thoughts of sobs rebuff my heart.

Losing strength - aunties, sisters, consorts, faces of ladies

All white white and with sweetened words, sugared and spiced.

Together a time, then sour and without flavor, a heart

Broken, the words from your mouth far and parted.
ถึงวัตรLECคำบังคับเรลReact
มิเห็นดับกังวลปุณฑ์ตระ
ละสมบัติขัดคิดยิ่งขับบาท
เป็นสุขสุ่มบันปีแต่เนินไป
ถึงจนยาภายนะบันขับบาท
ทรงศรัทธาลักษณ์ในภูมิ
แม่เห็นยาพวกลักษิติจิขันธ์
นื่องใจไปไปข้าพานราภ
ขออยู่มาข้าพเจาะปุระมุค
สนามคุณพุนสวรรค์ขัดศิวิลย์
มีสุรฉัตรบันช่ำสาหวังกล้อม
เสริมอริยสมณสารไม่ขัดเคลน
ให้โกกเอียเคยหันปุ่มปั้นมรร
แม่นพุลกลมอย่างนั้นห้างพื้น
นี่สัมผัสพุนครบถ้วนอย่างตื่นตระ
นี่สัมผัสพุนครบถ้วนอย่างตื่นตระ
เห็นนี้ปองทรงสุขบัณฑิตถา
พังถั้นบุร COPY ไว้วังให้ว่า
โค่ยเวียนเสี่ยงกล้วยให้ทุกวัน
สามารถเพื่อหาไม่อาหาร ๆ
At Bell Temple we pay homage to the most excellent relic\textsuperscript{340}

Of Her Highness, that Divine Flower.\textsuperscript{341}

Too late! She has already passed – I had longed for you to stay the whole *kalpa* between Buddha-ages,\textsuperscript{342}

But with haste you have made her way to the heavenly realm.

You have abdicated your affluence, your echelon and your attendants all.

What sadness – I think of your face and tears well up.

Sadness that you’ve parted, my partner in merit,

She with faith immense in the making of merit,

Who, even without her eminent station, had still a heavenly heart.

Without any objection, you aided, assisted and amended us,

\textsuperscript{340} This is *Wat Rakang* or Bell Temple. This had been the chief palace temple of the Thonburi period (1767-1782). This noblewoman may have wished to have been cremated there because she had previously been a courtier in her youth at the court of Thonburi.

\textsuperscript{341} This likely refers to a courtier known as Jao Krok Thong Yu. She had been one of Sunthorn Phu’s literary patrons after he was expelled from court. She had been the wife of Prince Anurak Thewet, chief of the Rear Palace. She had been a courtesan in Ayutthaya and was known for upholding the customs of Ayutthaya, dressing as an Ayutthaya noblewoman until her death. Her nickname above has itself an Ayutthaya-period flavor. The entire poem is likely written as an act of commemoration for her. Her cremation ceremony took place in November, 1836.

\textsuperscript{342} A *kalpa* is an aeon lasting many billions of years. One Buddha arises for each aeon.
For your favor was beyond all rank, all beauty.

Even though we were plunged into such poverty and low station,

I Pat and my brother Taap could yet carry you upon their shoulders

Up until the grasses and greenwoods of the grave,

But yet no further, as they had so dearly wished.

We asked to be ordained and to offer up that amaranthine water,

Offer up to you the fruits and blessings of our austerities

To bolster the abundance of your blessings, blue-blooded,

That they be a vehicle that might steer you to the heavenly abode.

There to have female deities sing soothing songs to you,

Before your perfumed body to bow and guard

As you partake there of rapturous mind, without lack.

May our deeds be recompense for what we can never now pay back to your living highness.

Oh, that kindness of yours that once nourished me!

I was sated entirely, without sadness.
As we take leave of you, both younger and elder brother,

We must endure hardships, such sufferings of the body.

That this shall be the end of our lady’s blessings – it grieves our hearts.

We must now only wander and stray in distress and despair.

I see what was cremated – it is still there on the sandy mound.

A thousand regrets, that you have come to the end of your life.

I and Taap bow and both cry out:

“Now we go, vanish, disappear unto the ends of the forest!

How you used to look after us, tying our topknots each day.

In every way, tending and protecting us, forever accepting.”
ถึงปากง่ามบอกบางกอกน้อย
ห่มผ้ายาวตรัพขึ้นหน้าเริ่ม
เคยเยี่ยมเรือกระธั่มละบับแล้ว
เคยดูดีพี่ป่าหน้านวลนวล
เคยชมเมืองเรืองระยำจะลับแล้ว
ไปชมแถวทุ่งท่าล้วนป่าสวน
จะว่างเว้นเห็นแล้วแต่เมื่อมามแม่ม
จะชมหาดหัวแต่ก็บังคับบอกเข้า
จะยิ่งเศร้าสร้อยทรวงน้องดังต้องเศร้า
พร้อมเดินหุ้งท่าล้านป่าสวน
จะร่วงโรยรสสิ้นกลิ่นผกาฯ
We come to the gate of the river called Little Bangkok.

Great sadness hits our chest like the crack of an arrow.

For it is like our ‘little’ wealth that has disappeared and parted from us.

Now we go, wandering the forest with aching hearts.

Once we had greeted the glittering city, now those glitters fade.

Now we go to greet the fields, naught but forests and farms.

Once we had looked upon those good good ladies with their white white faces.

Now that’s gone - we’ll see only the grim and the grubby.

We had once admired the refreshing scent of face-powder, fresh and clean.

Now on to admire the beaches, the water lettuce and hardy sugar cane stalks.

Oh, our hearts are as dark as a moonless night!

They disclose not, those fragrant petals, permit no wheedling.

What waste! You blossoming florets of divine magnolia,

Seen distant and faint, I beseech you - come back!
For if you guard yourselves, the bee shall never beat his wings.\textsuperscript{343}

And those blossoming flowers of yours shall only fall, their flavor faded.

\textsuperscript{343} The word for ‘bee’ is the same as Sunthorn Phu’s given name ‘Phu’. He often plays with this fortuitous homonym.
ถึงบางพระพรหมเมื่อยู่สิ้นพักตร์

คุณรู้จักแจ้งจิตทุกทิศ

ทุกวันนี้มีมนุษย์อยู่ช้า

เป็นเรื่องหน้าพ้นหนึ่งอย่างว่าพระ

โอ้คิดไปใจหายเสียดายรัก

เหมือนกรีดเจ็ดซีกกระเทียม

จงเจ็บกองทุกข์ระกำกรม

เพราะฉันกล้่องฉะราสั่งใช้emonic
To Brahmin Village. The Brahmin has four faces

And people know it well from all four directions.

To this day, the human denizens of Ayutthaya

Have one-hundred faces, surpassing by far the number of faces of Brahm.

I think on it and am stunned, the squandering of love.

Like being cleft, cleaved, cracked into seven splinters - tiny me

With a hurt heart, bruised black-and-blue, broken -

For those words that will seduce us, after take us where they will.
ถึงบางจากน้องไม่มีที่จะจาก
เผอิญหญิงชิงช้างน่าคลั่งใจ
จะรักใคร่เขาไม่มีปรานีเลยฯ
ถึงบางพลูพลูใบใส่ตะบะ
ถวายพระเพราะก่ำพร้าวนิงจ้อย
แม้มีใครใจบุญที่คุ้นเคย
จะได้เชยพลูจับหมากดิบเจียน
นี่จนใจใต้เดผลมาข้มแล่น
เปรียบเหมือนเช่นกลางกายพอหายหักย
แม้เห็นรักจักได้ตามด้วยความเพียร
ถี่กุธรียงหนามหนังดูสักกระวาฯ
Arrive at Away Village, yet we have nowhere to get ‘away’ to.

Oh, in what past life did I amass such sins and hardships

That fate has decreed women should detest me, ignore me.

I love, I long and labor – but show me pity they do not.

Arrive at Plu Village, Plu leaves that are for holding offerings.

We use them to honor monks who are orphaned, helpless.

If only someone with a heart of great merit would come offering,

Would caress and twist a fresh betel nut for me, cut the leaves.

Yet all my poor heart gets is a cold wind coming,

Fast-quick it comes, wafting, whirling and going.

In the trials of love too, there are tests of perseverance.

Rip off the thorns from a durian fruit and see sometime.\footnote{Durian is tasty but difficult to separate from its thorny shell and is frequently used as a metaphor for love. The idea of this verse is that a monk or novice needs to ‘persevere’ through difficulties.}
ถึงบางถิ่นจะใครได้ไม่ถิ่น
แต่ไม่เคยได้ใคร
ทําแผนขอบถิ่นเท่าที่เคย
สุดจะกล่าวกลอนปลอมให้ชอบใจ
ถึงบางซ่อนซ่อนไม่เห็นแย้ม
ถึงหนามแหลมเหลือจะบ่งที่ตรงไหน
โอ้บางเขนเวรสร้างแต่ปางใด
จึงเข็ญใจจนไม่รัก
เมื่อชาติหน้ามาเกิดให้เลิศโลก
ประสิทธิ์โชคชอบฤทัยทั้งไตรจักร
กระจ้อยร่อยกลอยใจวิไลลักษณ์
ให้สาวรักสาวกอดตลอดไป

acts of bodily hardship, such as experiencing the cold. Being offered no betel nut and, by implication, having no lover is compared to deprivations of the holy life.

427
Arriving at Reed Village, I think I desire a reed-wood

To make harp, a melody to go a-courting about the houses.

But from that I’ve never gotten consoled or sated.

No words or verses can ever now give me ease nor comfort.

Unto Hidden Village, your clues of love are hidden without a peak.

Just thorns – where can I twist off your thorns, where can I get a hint?

Ken Town, hardships accumulated in any past life

Until your heart is pierced, without anyone to love.  

In the next life, I wish to be re-born beyond this world,

To attain all the merits of gladness from across the Three Worlds -

And for all the stunning girls too, the sweet-hearts, their exquisite parts.

To have the girls, love the girls and embrace them forevermore.

_____________________

345 The name of the town rhymes with ‘kem jai’ – hardship.
ตลาดแก้วแล้วแต่ล้วนสวนสแลง
แม้นขายแก้วแนวทิ่งเหลือ
ประดับเรือนเหมือนหนึ่งพระสังรี้แล้ว
ไม่เห็นจนนั้นตรีตรานำลานงอม
ประดับเรือนเหมือนนั้นตรีตรานำลานงอม
เหมือนกันยอดกลอยใจมีให้หมอง
ไม่เหมือนนั้นตรีตรานำลานงอม
เห็นแต่นั้นของหนุนแน่นด้วยอุตรา ๆ

ถึงวัดตั้งเรียงสมุทรพระพุทธสร้าง
แม้นแก้วเขี้ยนอยู่อย่างติดต่อกา
กรณีถึงอยากอย่างคำที่ร่วมอบอก
ถึงรู้ขึ้นดังจะคิดถึงมิฉะมัน
ว่าท่านวางไว้ให้คำตอบร้อน
แม้แก้วเขี้ยนอยู่อย่างติดต่อกา
นั้นถึงใครหัวใจจับปาะเป็น
กรณีถึงจะรู้ใจนั้นก็ไม่เห็น
ถึงรู้ขึ้นดังจะคิดถึงมิฉะมัน
พอถามถึงเขี้ยนแห่งโพยม ๆ
We reach Glass Market, it out-stands up there.

And the name follows what there is to be found there.

They sell sparkling sky glass.

I would buy it and put it on spread-out cotton,

Put it in a ring for you, almost like a diamond

So that glass of yours would be preserved, never going cloudy.

But I am alone, dreams unfulfilled – my tears flow.

I see only little Taap close-knit-fit about my chest.

We arrive at a temple at the side of the ocean-like river, a Buddha-image abandoned.\(^346\)

He put down there a Dharmic Puzzle.

I cannot solve it, though I pound my head with it.

I think on it and it makes me want to laugh -

\(^346\) A *prisana* is a Dharmic puzzle which could be something that has been written on the walls or something a local has told their party. Or it could be the place or Buddha-image itself and the fact that it is abandoned that gives cause for reflection.
When I think of it the same words, re-state them, re-iterate them.

Where can I crack it? – I can’t see.

It seems so deep, so deep I have to think of it with tight-shut eyes

Until the coolness of the evening come, when the sun’s rays have been hidden.
ถึงวัดเขียนเหมือนหนึ่งเพียงเขียนอักษร
เถาะขั้นลักลอบปล่อยประโยค
ขอให้โน้มน้อมจิตสนิทใน
ถึงคลองขวางบางศรีทองมองเขม้น
ไม่แลเห็นศรีทองที่ผ่องใส
แม้นทองคำอรรถจะพาไป
นี่มิใช่ศรีทองเป็นคลองบาง
พลอยโบกสะท้านมากทะหนม
ยิ่งไตรตรองตรอกตรองให้หมองหมาง
ถึงบางแพรกแยกคลองเป็นสองทาง
เหมือนจิตทางใจแตกต้องแยกกัน

กลบลงกล่าวกล่อมสอนน้อม
ขอให้โน้มน้อมจิตสถน
ไม่แลเห็นศรีทองที่ผ่องใส
มิใช่ศรีทองเป็นคลองบาง
ยิ่งไตรตรองตรอกตรองให้หมองหมาง
เหมือนจิตทางใจแตกต้องแยกกัน

432
We reach Writing Temple, like how I now only write

Verses said like a lullaby, a song to console.

Yet my fate is to have the consolation and comfort of love thieved out from under me.

So I ask in supplication that you soften your heart, and consent that I be near you.

I reach the wide canal of Golden Temple and I scope and I stare

But no sacred gold do I see, only the canal.

If it were gold, I’d go on a trip to see it.

But there’s no gold here, only the canal.

The wind whisks to me the whiff of sadness flowers.

Sadder still, thinking over it, I feel estranged, clouded.

Until Junction Village, where the canal splits into two paths,

Like my insipid, bitter heart when it had to break from yours.
ตลาดขวัญขวัญฉันขวัญหาย
แม่นขวัญฟ้าหน้า—oneเหมือนหนอนจันทน์
จะรับขวัญข้ามเย็นไม่วันว่าง ๆ

ถึงบางขวางขวางอื้นสักหมื่นแสน
ถึงแม้เดินคงนอนสิ่งขวาง
จะตามไปให้ถึงท้องกระgünกลาง
แต่ขัดขวางขวัญความขนะระกาย

เห็นสะดวกพัดที่มันสนัท
เป็นรอยใต้คืนสะดวกให้ขาดสะอาด

(sqrt)นิ้วขัดสะอาด
แสนเสียดสะอาดสวาทที่ขาดลบ

เห็นรักไม่รู้แท้ท้องแดด
ไม่มีคนรักกรมมาหักลบ

เป็นรักปล่อยสร้ำหมองเหมือนน้องน้อย
ความ Lloyd เรื่องล่างหนังเกิด ๆ
At Soul Market, my soul has forsaken me.

Who here will buy or sell me a soul?

Even if that heavenly soul you sell is as young and soft as sandalwood

I would receive it into me, day or night, again and again.  

To Wide Village, wide as ten-thousand leagues.

It rotates around a mountainous forest with a wide summit.

I wish to follow you, until I reach your room, your succor

But only obstructions upon obstructions, shut off in anger and fear.

I see lovely-nuts cut, their branches cast down,

Marks of cutting, cuts in rows.  

And our love too is cut, used up.

---

347 Kwan is a ‘soul’ or guardian angel that lives with us since we are children, entering through the nape of the head. If we are scared, it might temporarily leave. Noo Pat is no longer a child but an adolescent so his original kwan would be the same age. But he is willing to accept a childlike kwan in its place.

348 In English, these are nickernuts. But their name in Thai sa-waat is, literally, ‘lovely nuts’ which is used here in word play.
A thousand sorrows, the sapling of that love, axed.

I see water-love flowers, water drip-dropping from their fruits.

I have no lover to cut nor sever those water-love flowers.349

Unrequited are those flowers of love, like little me.

I have travelled down the river on the boat of love, until that boat was weighed down.

349 Rak-nam or ‘water-love’ flowers are used to make simple garlands, usually along with jasmine flowers. These are still popular and sold today.
ถึงบ้านบางตรีแล้วพึ่งข้า
แกบกินหมูนุ่มด้วยกั้นเกลือ
ไม่ยั้งฟัก Thị ไม่ริ่นไม่มีแช่
ถึงปากเตร็ดเตร่มาเร่ร่อน
เที่ยวสัญจรตามระลอกเหมือนจอกแห่หน้า
มาถึงเตร็ดเตร่ด้อสุนของจะ
ลูกอ่อนแอออุ้มจูงพะรุงพะรัง
ดูเรือนไหนไม่มีเร้นหนึ่งลูกอ่อน
ไม่หยุดหย่อนอยู่ไฟจนไหม้หลัง
ไม่ยิ่งยอดปลอดเปล่าเหมือนชาววงศ์
ล้วนเปล่งปลั่งปลิ้มใจมาไกลตา ฯ
Arrived at Torani Village. “Brother dear...

This ambrosial land is far from lacking in aubergines.”

He’ll eat pork but I, Noo Pat, will merely munch on salt.

I care not for the boat’s procession, nor for the splicing of fish.

At the Mouth of the River Tret, we are weaving and winding about,

Roaming and rambling these rippling waves, like dots of duckweed.

We come to Tret Island, land of the Mons, so many to see:

Little babies, held up and suckling, messy everywhere.

No matter what house we pass, I abstain not from a lovely-lady peek.

Those girls must never stop being near the fire, till they’ve burnt their backs.

According to Buddhist myths, Phra Mae Thorani is personified as a young woman wringing the cool waters of detachment out of her hair to drown the illusion devil Mara who was sent to tempt the Buddha as he meditated beneath the Bodhi Tree. Images of her can still be seen throughout Thailand, a young woman ringing out the water from her hair. In the literature of this time, she is a goddess associated with fertility and abundance.

The idea appears to be that our author, Noo Pat, is too lovesick to eat.

Yu Fai means staying near a fire after having given birth. It was believed that this would make the womb dry. Carl Bock, a visitor to Siam in the 1880s, describes his encounters with this practice: “As soon as the woman is safely delivered of the child, a couple of old women cut some
They’re not a jot less resplendent than court ladies,

All radiant and rosy, a delight to bring close to the eye.

stems from the banana-tree into lengths of from three to four feet, split them, and lay them round the woman as she lies upon the bed. These are covered with twigs of the same tree, and the whole is then set on fire, so that the poor woman is literally half-baked!” See Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants: Travels in Siam in 1881-2*, p.259.
พอออกคลองล่องแม่น้ำวาก
กระทุงทองล่องเลื่อนค่อยเคลื่อนคลา
ตกน้ำดำปลากระสาสูง
ตกยางจากทางยางมีทางปี
ถึงเดือนไข่ไปลับแล้วมีเมียมา
พอบินไปประเทศทุกเขตแคว้น
เห็นนกหกหึ่งร่อนวันว่าเหง
ตายตาดออกบ้าเข่าคล้ำคลี
เป็นผู้ผูกนางเข้าใกล้แม่น้ำไปเลีย
เป็นตัวแม่หมดสิ้นทั้งดินแดน
ขึ้นไข่ชายเขาโคกนับโกฏิแสน
 คนทั้งแผ่นดินไม่ได้ใช้ใกล้ยาง ๆ
Leaving the canal, descending the turning trunk of the Wok River,

I see birds hover and over-hang, ranging and roving in the sky.

Golden pelicans descend, glide soft-soft in

Droves and droves entering lotuses, coaxing up close.

Crows dive into the water, yet fish herons stand tall.

A flight, a flock we come near –and off they flee.

Heron has pigtail tails –

All females they are, until the ends of the earth.

Their rounded eggs go to Lap Lae, that land of unwedded women.353

They put their eggs way up near the summits of mountains,

For they can fly all over the wide country, to every nook.

People of every territory cannot get to the eggs of herons.

353 It is believed that herons laid their eggs in Lap Lae, which was said to be a land where only women lived and only men with a good heart could enter. It is therefore called ‘divorced women’ (mae mai) land. Noo Pat is lamenting the fact that he does not have enough merit to follow the herons to this mythic land of women.
ถึงบางพูดพูดมากคนปากหมด มีแต่โปรดเป็นอันมหาจำกลาง
ที่พูดน้อยค่อยประกอบแล้วถูกทาง เหมือนหญิงช่างเดินอะไรประหลาด
ถึงบางกระไม้ได้เห็นหน้าบรรดาพวกนารีเรืออ้อยมาลอยขาย
พecnรีเรืออ้อยมาลอยขาย
ดูจริงดีจะมองเป็นมองกลาย ส่วนแต่งภายนอกเรือเหมือนไทยทำ
แต่ไม่มีกิริยาคดีอย่างท่าน กกระเพาลมแล้วไม่ป้องปิดของท่าน
นั้นเดือนว่าผ่าแลงเช่นนั้น อ้อยสองล้านจะเอาสักเท่าไร
เชรู้ด้วยหวั่นไหวพ้นน้อย แมกินอ้อยแอบแหล่งลงไว
รู้กระนั้นไม่ยอมบอกยังออกใจ น่าเจ็บใจจะต้องจำเป็นต่าง ๆ
I come to Talk Village. Everyone talks so much.

Just lies for the most part, sarcastic scoffs

Those that speak less, gradually playing their chins,

Are expert -sweet-talker ladies, hemming and wheedling their men.

At Woodpecker Village, I see before me only ladies,

A group of women in boats floating up, selling sugarcane.

Their manners are like those of the Mon

Yet all dress their bodies just like the Thai do.

But not quite as dainty, they are not in the habit of fixing the fabric of their dresses,

which

They let flutter in the breeze - they fix and defend not their legs!

I was wide awake to their satiny silks, wetted in the water.

Oh, those two stalks – how much would a taste be?

They see me and laugh – “Little one,
Come eat some sugarcane and get a closer peek!

Well, if you’re going to be like that, I don’t want to talk with you!

What a pest – I’ll be sure to remember the likes of you!”
ถึงไพรอบขอบเขื่อนคูเหมือนเจือน
ชื่อวัดเห็นอาอยู่ฝ่ายขวา
ข้างข้างมือชื่อบ้านใหม่ทำใจ
นางแม่กล้ายต่ำราพีย์
ปิดกระหม่อมบั้นกระหม่อมเข็มเหมือนหม้อ
ดูมือขอสั่นเป็นมันหม้อ
ไม่เหมือนเหล้าขา่นหัวรำลึก
ว่าไม่มีก็แล้วก็ไม่มีใครฟังฯ

พอฟ้าคล้าค่ำพลบเสียงกบเขียว
ร้องตรอดเกรียดกรี้เจ้าดังแตรสัง
เหมือนเสียงฆ้องกลองโหมประโคม
ไม่เห็นฝั่งฟั่นเฟือนด้วยเดือนแรม
ร่องกระ�件ตั้งที่ฝั่งหน้าด้านแม่น
หน้าทางชายคลังส้วนดังห้องใหญ่
สว่างพรอยพรายพรายในปลายแขม
อร่ามเรืองเหลืองงามวามวามแวม
กระจ่างแจ่มจับน้ำเห็นลำเรือฯ
Arrive at Bamboo Grove, it’s like a dam of bamboos stalks, pretty as a picture.

Tien Taway Temple lies on the right side.

The left is called New Village, where they plant rice.

A spinster seller lady, decrepit as a tortoise,

Stuffs some soot into her dirt-besmirched pot.

Dowdy and dank she looks, like ink.

Not like that group that I saw and now recollect -

Oh, enough enough, I’ll hear no more about it.

When night falls, dusk, the sound of frogs croaking.

They sing in a creaking, shrieking unison like a brass conch shell,

Like the songs with bells and drums celebrating in the palace.

I don’t see the other side, obscure it is in the moonless night.

Mangrove apple trees in a row a across, all fireflies

Iridescent, opalescent across the sugar canes.
They scintillate, fulgurate, glitter and glow.

Their sparkles catch the water, mirroring the body of the boat.
ถึงย่านกว้างบางทะแยงเป็นแขวงทุ่งดูเวิ้งวุ้งหว่างแฉวกล้วนแฝกเฝือ
เห็นไรไรไม้พุ่มเคร่งครัดมันผินหน้าออกนั้นกันฉิบหาย
แม้ปากมันหันเข้าข้างเจ่านะจารึกไว้ให้เป็นทานทุกคนช่วง
ท่านบิดรสอนหนูให้ดูว่ามันผินหน้าออกนั้นกันฉิบหาย
แม้ปากมันหันเข้าข้างเจ่านะจารึกไว้ให้เป็นทานทุกคนช่วง
ท่านบิดรสอนหนูให้ดูว่ามันผินหน้าออกนั้นกันฉิบหาย

เห็นไรไรไม้พุ่มครุมครุมเครือ
เหมือนรูปเสือสิงห์รูปโคควาย

แม้ปากมันหันเข้าข้างเจ่านะจารึกไว้ให้เป็นทานทุกคนช่วง
ท่านบิดรสอนหนูให้ดูว่ามันผินหน้าออกนั้นกันฉิบหาย

เห็นไรไรไม้พุ่มครุดครุดเครือ
เหมือนรูปเสือสิงห์รูปโคควาย

แม้ปากมันหันเข้าข้างเจ่านะจารึกไว้ให้เป็นทานทุกคนช่วง
ท่านบิดรสอนหนูให้ดูว่ามันผินหน้าออกนั้นกันฉิบหาย

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ท่านบิดรสอนหนูให้ดูว่ามันผินหน้าออกนั้นกันฉิบหาย

เห็นไรไรไม้พุ่มครุดครุดเครือ
เหมือนรูปเสือสิงห์รูปโคควาย

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เหมือนรูปเสือสิงห์รูปโคคว่าย
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มาสั่งพวกหนีชาติจะสังหาร
อันอินทรีย์วิบัติตั้งตา
กลับเกลียดกลัวร่วมแม่ไม่ข้าบ้าน
ยินดีเพื่อทรงทรัพย์ให้สักษา
ค่อยคิดเห็นอันองปนมิตร
พยาธิตมจิตติทานบุตร
ประทับทุกวัตถุรอบริม
จริงจังขอโทษอธิบดีย้อง
ประหยัดทุกชั่วชีวิตของมือ
ออกพระสมนิปภามหาโย
แล้วต่างตายตามกันไปมั่นคง
ค่อยคิดเห็นเย็บเยียบไม่เกรียบกริบ
ประสาบสิบนิ้วตั้งประสงค์
พยายามตามจริตท่านบุตร
ประทับทุกวัตถุรอบริม
จบพระเณรในอารามตื่นจามไอ
ออกจงกรมสมณาสมาโทษ
แผ่กุศลจนจบทั้งภพไตร
จากพระไตรแสงทองผ่องโพย
We come to a wide land, Tayaeng Village, broad fields.

It looks vast, agape and outspread, all grasses and swards.

We see only dim and darkly, plants and bushes, blurred and bleary.

We see something like the image of a tiger, a lion or a mammoth-sized buffalo.

Our reverend father teaches me:

“It turns its head and that protects its owner.

For if its mouth were faced forward towards the owner of the house,

They would fall dead, faster than a flash.” 354

Mark that well, every man woman and child in each and every house –

Yay, my brothers and I have recorded all of his lessons.

In the fecund night, the animals depart and doze off.

At the base of a Mon temple Cheng Raak, at the roots of the canal,

Beneath the somnolent shade of the Banyan tree, voiceless and hushed,

354 They are seeing here some house-guardian statues who, like the ones protecting the gateways and doors of temple halls today, would have been powerful or mythical animals, like lions or yakṣas. There was a belief that images of animals or powerful beings should not face one another because then they will fight. If the images faced one another through the walls of a house, presumably, the occupant would get caught between them and be killed.
The wind breathes in sighs and purrs, it prickles our flesh.

This is a charnel ground, wild with wraiths and wights.

My brother and me stray not from our father’s side.

He is fast asleep, yet still attentive to sound in the silence.

Colder still, numbingly sharp, body hairs a-bristle.

A ghostly sound! A caterwauling squall calls out from a spirit.

We are in prayer, frozen stiff, stone-still.

Father’s disciples who slept beyond,

The ghost had tricked, wrestled to overturn them up and prone.

They wake and each says how terrified he is.

The ghost scatters sand, sound spattering like rain on a roof.

It has climbed the Banyan tree, shaking leaves, all crunchy and crisp.

A glistening shadow, a peering head, a white torso.

Klan dares to grab the roots of the Banyan tree saying,

“This must be the hair of that crying ghost-lady!”

Father awakes, comes to his senses.
All his disciples stay close, none stray.

Stern, he covers his shoulder with his robe, eyes unwavering.

He goes to the shore by himself, looking quite alone.

Composed and serious, he inspects the cemetery upon all sides,

Expresses *metta*, as a monk must do, without distraction.

He finds the corpse and prays, sends merit.\(^{355}\)

We see a fire – dimly, dimly turning and swirling.

We are soundless, speechless, struck-dumb.

With prayer we recollect the Buddha in our minds, now calm and warm.

Father’s disciples bravely think to set up some candles.

We practice the Way of the Tree-dwelling Monk with great stores of faith.

We do *asubha* meditation on the causes of death:

Circling in samsara, your life and force will age with the body.\(^{356}\)

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\(^{355}\) *Bang sukun* – the name of a prayer for the dead.

\(^{356}\) *Asubha* meditation means reflections or meditation on ‘repulsiveness’ in order to overcome lust and attachment to the bodily form. This could involve chanting in Pali the thirty-one parts and organs of the body or, because they are currently in a cemetery, could involve actually contemplating a physical corpse.
Doing bad is the Cause. I return, reflecting to think of one’s own life - stopped.

The body and senses, extinguished, devoid of intrinsic self.

This cemetery is like that house in which you shall pass away

It makes me upset, afraid and incensed – I wish not to return home.

*Phra Nibbana!* I wish to accumulate merit – for I wish to disappear.

To have a body is only to co-habit with sickness, sadness and gladness

Yet in the end all die the same – for life has not stability.

I think of it and the air is cold, silent.

I bring together my ten fingers and make a devout wish:

To endeavor to follow the ways of my reverend father, to be

Careful, composed in the ethical conduct with which I am well-versed.

Scrupulous to place my foot, to walk with an even measure,

Conduct myself in the manner of a great ascetic and

I sit beneath each tree that is around the Mount Meru cremation ground.

357 The monks and novices are now practicing walking meditation.
Now the novices of the monastery awaken with sneezes and coughs.

We stop our walking meditation and ask for forgiveness,

We under the shelter of the sacred Banyan tree, delighted in shade,

Spread good deeds until the end of all the Three Worlds.

And from the Banyan tree, bright rays of gold spread out into the sky.
เลยบางหลวงล่วงทางสว่างแจ้ง
ยังถือมันขันตีหนีประโยชน์
พอดียางมีกองกองแซ่เข็นเท่านัก
ร้องล่านราฟบอนระthroat
ถือขันตีนั้นก็ขันแตก
ทั้งศีลแทรกเสียดออกกระบอกหู
ฉันนี้เคราะห์เพราะนางห่มสีชมพู
พาความรู้แพ้รักประจักษ์จริง
แค้นด้วยใจนัยนานิจจาเอ๋ย
กระไรเลยแล่นไปอยู่กับผู้หญิง
ท่านบิดาว่ามันติดกว่าปลิดปลิว
ถึงบ้านกระ��จุ้งจังหันดันผักไทย
ยิ่งรู้โปลอมฐานทองไม่แข็งเวย
ผู้หญิงมากมายก่าสาวสาวสวย
ชาวกล่อมขับแท้ได้แล่ดู
ทั้งหน้าแรกเสียดออกกระบอกหู
พาความรู้แพ้รักประจักษ์จริง
กระบี่เลยแล่นไปอยู่กับผู้หญิง
ถูกจริงจริงเจียวจ้องจับเป็นบทเพลง

455
Past Yellow City – blonde with light, the path bright.

Arriving at Screwpine House – a repast of bitter melons.

Still I maintain my devout perseverance, fleeing pleasure.

Those mere images of bewitching beauty affect me not.

When the peal of bells acclaims a lofty procession of Nagas.\(^{358}\)

Many women come, Mon ladies young and old, lovely ladies.

They sing ballads and songs, they swing and they sway in a languid way.

They take us to come help with their parade, “Come and see!”

My holy endurance at that point broke,

That moral fiber within me shattered - blown out of both ears it was!

But I had bad luck, for those dear ladies were dressed in pink.

That knowledge will lose to love – it’s self-evident.

My heart and mind are resentful at this, these women. Alas,

\(^{358}\) A ‘Naga Procession’ – a procession taking an applicant to go the temple to be ordained. These are very much festive occasions. They are formed like a make-believe procession of a ‘prince’ on his way to be ordained. To this day, the people involved in the procession act as if determined to show him exactly what he will be missing – chaos, noise, the carnal and the carnivalesque.
I have already gone to glide alongside those ladies.

My reverend father says this addiction is harder to pull out than a leech’s suck!

Oh, too true and it got me, well and truly, so that I wrote it down here in verse.
ถึงต้องง้าวหลา轸หลาดนลับแสบมือ
แต่ต้องตาฝายละลายหรอน
ทั้งใหญ่ยันนั้นคนใจจะมองที่
ถ้าทิ้งถูกวุ่นระบายประกาศกัน
นางน้อยน้อยขอรอนนูกลูกขึ้นพร้อม
ออกตรีตตรีราชาข้าผีสิง
ท่านหมายผู้เจ้าจังที่หมายมาคิตับ
ไม่เมื่อถูกถ่วงหึงห้อย
ทันเลยขอสองถูกก้าหนัง
ลงม้วนตั้งม้วนหน้าม้วนตาพระ
แท่นใหญ่ล้นนั้นหลั่นจริงดังเสียงจรับ
ร้องอยู่แล้วแก้วพี่มา

ให้ติดเตมตัววูดจะหลุดถอน
สุดจะถอนที่ข้างเสียกลางกัน
บอกให้หญิงร่างคับขยับทัน
แชร้ทันเราก็ให้ไปแล้วเพียง
ว่าละม่อมมีแต่ชาวบางสาวกว่าหลอง
ขยับเขยมขยับแล้วเลยถลอม
เขาวิจิตรพวกหน้าไม่ราวライブ
พวกเพื่อนพวกใจทั่วทุกตัวนาย

ถูกปุ่มปุ่มสูญที่ปูนหมาย
ถูกปุ่มปุ่มสูญที่ปูนหมาย
ถูกปุ่มปุ่มสูญที่ปูนหมาย

พวกมอญมาโห่แห่เสียงแซ่ไปฯ
Then came the time for throwing the javelins, a thousand sticks.

If you get hit by a real javelin stick, you can always just pull it out.

But if a lady’s glance has struck you, you just can’t stop thinking of her -

Try to pull it out, tug at it, twist it out- you simply can’t.

Klan is merry to try a throw in the betel nut game.

He tells those jigging and gyrating ladies:

“If the boys hit you with betel, you’ll each get baht coins.

But who below scores a catch, gets a slice of silver.”\(^{359}\)

All those little girls stood up in suspense, up and ready together,

Dancing softly, only girls of whitish skin.

They make moves, strutting and sashaying, the boys look askance.

Twist and turn they do, disclosing smiles, revealing appeal.

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\(^{359}\) A game played while the Mon women dance. If a man throws a betel nut and it hits a woman, he gets a baht coin from her. If, however, she catches the betel nut, he has to give her a whole silver piece. It does not appear as if this game is still played. However, later in the poem, Klan wants to go back to call in on the ‘twelve Mons,’ probably referring to twelve female dancers. There is still in the repertoire of the Mon orchestra a dance and song called ‘Twelve Languages/Peoples’ and this possibly could have been the one seen by Phu and his followers. See Ruenthai Satjapan, “Nirat Wat Jao Fa and learning about culture” in *Sunthorn Phu the poet who made long songs*, p.138.
The boys try their best to throw ripe betel nut.\textsuperscript{360}

The girls grab and snatch, faces not holding back,

Yet no one has seized yet a single one.

Me and my friends throw off betel nuts, each and all of us.

I make two throws and they get snatched full force,

Get grabbed straight and true,

The lady falling in a spin, spinning face, face a-sparkling in tears.

The boys heckle, merry with a hey and a ha.

But Klan hurls a nut with a whipping noise, whip-crack!

It hits a bulge in the crowd, mouths shrieking and screeching in fear.

Crying out, elders come running here and there.

The Mons come booing – ho and hey - shouting out aloud.

\textsuperscript{360} The chewing of betel-nut was a ubiquitous feature of daily life in Southeast Asia. It was strongly associated with love and courtship. To show his dedication to a woman, a man might make the sacrifice of taking the first bitter chew before offering the now softened betel to his beloved.
แล้วเล่าขานยากข้ามฝ่ายสามโคก

ถามดีว่าผู้ผ่านทำมา đấyไว้

หวังจะไว้ให้ประชาชนเป็นคำจำก

พ่อท่านสัมพันธุ์เป็นสุญลับ

จังที่นี้มีนามชื่อสามโคก

ผันดินหลังครั่งพระราชกิจได้โปรดแปลง

ข้อประทุมฐานที่เสด็จ

มาวันสังดรรณที่สานัก

ได้รู้เรื่องเมืองประทุมค่อยขู่ซิ่น

เห็นพวกเขาสดเดยมอนยอมแต่ก่อนมา

พวกสาวสำราแก่ลายสวางออก

ทั้งพวกเขามักเมื่อนสำร็จ

เมื่อออกเดินห่างสวางเวลา

น่าหากเห็นเป็นเด็กข้ามจัน

ชาวบ้านนั้นบัวฉ่ำใช้พิ่งพะ

ท่านบนนั้นปั้นฉ่ำใช้เจ้าที่

เจาะเพื่อนนั้นไม่รู้ด้วยเดิม

สินศรีไปหาบ้านหน้าร่าง

เป็นลึกลึกล้มสดคุณทีสัญสัย

ว่าที่ไทยท้าวอยู่ทองต้องทรงทวัญ

ด้วยจะสร้างบ้านเมืองเครื่องประดับ

ทองกลับกลายสั่นเป็นดินแดง

เป็นคำโลกสมบัติสุดแสน

เป็นคำแห่งมองผจญมาสมภัตติ

เดือนสัปดาห์บวกองพื้นคงกลก

พระยาพิทักษ์ทวายหาญผ่านพระรา

อุทุมทิ้งวัตถับานนานหน้า

ล้านสักษาขียนเหมืองรอภู

แต่ขายาตอผู้ดัสว่าผู้ลงทุน

แห่งผู้นั้นที่ก็อ้อมลงครอบตัน

เหือนผู้ผ่านเล่าตามทรงบาง

เจียนจะปีนซุ่มซ่ามไปตาม

ชาวบ้านนั้นอีลเลิ้งไว้พิ่งพะ

ว่าบางขวางหรือไม่บางข่วงมะอย

จะถามเขาข้างหลังที่นั่งสอน

ก็ที่นี่มีนามชื่อสามโคก

ฝีปากมอญไม่เบาเหมือนชาวเมือง
We pass Na Kabat and cross till we reach ‘Three Hills.’

Three Hills – it is a strange and worldly name.

I ask father and the old man said some folks say that,

“King Uthong once had great wealth.

He wished to give it to the people as wages

And had them build a great city-capital, richly ornamented.\textsuperscript{361}

When cholera came, his merit had ran out, his life at an end.

All returned in the end to black earth.

And so here has the name Three Hills,

For it describes something very much of this world.”\textsuperscript{362}

This was by our old king was graciously changed.

\textsuperscript{361} This story appears to be something of a semi-mythical history. King Uthong was the first king of Ayutthaya (1314-1369). In the legend at least, he had to move away from his first capital and stopped off at Samkok on his way to found Ayutthaya. Samkok (Three Hills) itself was an area in which the Mons settled during the Ayutthaya period.

\textsuperscript{362} The word used – \textit{lok sa-moot} or \textit{lokiya samudita} – is literally the same for ‘assumption’ or ‘conventional’ reality in Buddhist thought. In the domain of Buddhist philosophy, this is the word used to describe the conventional world of pragmatic perceived reality, as distinguished from the constantly in-flux world as it really is. Here, however, the meaning is more prosaic and \textit{sa-moot} means something more like ‘commonplace.’ The commonplace-sounding toponym ‘three hills’ is as common as the depressing history the name emerges from.
It is a Mon land, who under protection of his majesty.

The name Pathumthani, that was royally given.\textsuperscript{363}

In the tenth month, lotuses come out, every bud.

They come to express their wishes at the noble offices.\textsuperscript{364}

The local lord protects his ward and all brave people who pass this city.

I know well this country of Pathum, pleasing to know.”

Look at this land, temples and houses, across the eye,

You see Mon people who came long ago.

All have tattooed legs, written in ink, inscribed across their bellies.

The ladies tie their hair up, pretty and clean.

But I’m afraid that now they follow the style of a longyi-like skirt,

All covered in chequered cloth like rainbow colours.

It covers them all the way down, hanging over their feet

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
  \item The name is Pāli-Sanskrit and was given by Rama 2, Sunthorn Phu’s most generous benefactor in 1815. It means ‘Land of Lotuses’ – pathum dhāni. This place and the king’s renaming of it appears in almost all of Phu’s nirat.
  \item A samnak is a place where the king and his attendants would stay stop off and rest during journeys. Locals would sometimes come to offer gifts and also occasionally to express grievances.
\end{itemize}}
Yet when they lift their feet, advancing, a sparkle and a flash -

Like lightning! I’m afraid it will challenge my morals!

If there was a little boy, a Chinese one,

He’d be climbing over himself, blundering and bumbling to follow those ladies. 365

The villagers here have made a wide lean-to shed with

Spittoons, pots and pans, basins, flower pots and incense jars.

Father asks little Klan to ask:

“Can we go this way, or that way, lady mons?”

They turn their heads away, saying “Dunno! Why don’t you just take a look yourself?”

So we ask the girls sitting behind them.

They do not respond so we swallow our pride, and follow others on the river.

The eloquence of the Mon is not as light as those of the capital.

365 It was assumed that Chinese people were rather rude and outspoken, especially with Mon people, from whom they lived in separate quarters. Pat (and Phu) imagine that an adolescent Chinese boy might carelessly follow these pretty Mon girls.
ถึงบ้านแล้ววั้งดันแต่พ้นหน้า  
เมื่อแลบทับพักครั้งช้าเหลื่อง  
มาลับมวลหนันให้หนึ่งไม่ว่า  
เพราะเสียรักหนักหน่วงเพิ่งทรง  
โตรม

ถึงโพแตงคิดถึงแตงที่แจงจัก  
ไม่ลืมรักรสชาติฉลาดเหลือ  
แม้นลอยฟ้ามาเดี๋ยวนี้ในที่เรือ  
จะจิกเนื่องนังกลืนให้ชินใจ ๆ
Arrive at Cotton village, the cotton trees fruits are only thorns.

Not elegant nor exquisite as the ladies in Cotton Village with their light-dark skin.

When I see their faces, I look askance.

They look ripe and natural, emitting aura, ready for caresses.

I move on from that creamy-white, no longer seeing the cotton tree

Yet I forget not those radiant faces, which will now have turned to gloom.

For they have lost my love, and must now have only tortured chests.

Who will help those ladies now, who will give their life flavour?

I come to a Watermelon Village and think of watermelons I once had.

I forget not that flavour, that wonderful flavour.

If only it would float through the sky now, into this boat

I’d grab a slice of that fruit and devour it, cooling my heart.
ถึงเกาะหาดราชครามร่ารมราก  เห็นนกหกหากินบินโปร่ง
เขากลางกรุงวังยาวัลลาไทย  ผ่านกว่าร้านค้าปลูกรักษา
สุวดดะแซะเก้าวังสว่างใจ  แลงใจล้อมแนวบุกเขตแห่ง
เห็นควันไฟไหม้ป่าจับฟ้าแดง  ฝูงนกแร้งร่อนตัวเท่าถั่วดำ
โอ้เช่นนี้มีคู่มาดูด้วย จะชื่นชมชิมให้อิ่มหน้า
นี้ยามเย็นเห็นแค่ของที่น้องทำ  เหลือที่รักลึกถึงอะไรมาก ๆ
We come to the beach of Rajakram, cluttered with coralberry trees.\(^{366}\)

We see birds flutter and fly, ferreting out food.

People cut the land the width of the land, both Thai and Lao.

They do farming, planting vegetables, planting gourds

The land looks open, the eye full in every direction.

We see smoke and fire in the forest, touching a red sky.

A wake of vultures circles, looking like black-eyed peas.

Oh, like this a couple would come to admire them,

Come and take in the sight till their hearts are sated.

Like this in the evening seeing all those things that we could do

I think of you, those recollections soft and consoling.

\(^{366}\) Coralberry trees are *Ardisia Elliptica.*
ถึงด่านทางบางไร่ขว่อลำ
เห็นโพนามหลอนยุบยืน。

หงปรังมันขั้นกวาดน้ำตาล
อยู่วานขนลุนลงคันเรือ。

ไม่เห็นของต้องขั้นถ้าล้า
มะละกอกุ้งแห้งแตงมะเขือ。

ขอเข้าสู่กิจกรรมที่ปริศนา
ยังขาดเรียกหลีลออาร์ดในใจ。

แต่ว่าเราเข้าไม่ถึงมากพ้นค้าน
คุ้มฐานที่ชาวหลานกล้า。

มีธารمعالجةซ่อมแซมทางอากาศ
ต้นไม้ใหญ่อยู่ที่นั้นนั่งวันท่านท่าน

เทพรักภักดีสิงห์สถิตวัยบุรุษ
พระเคยอุ้มอุณรุทสมภูสุภาพ。

ใคร์จำลองปรุงเหมือนน้ำผึ้ง
ช่วยอุ้มมาให้มั่งเถิดจะเชิดชม。

สนอมแน่นอ้อมหุ่นหนูน้ำตาล
ได้เยี่ยมยื้อหัวติดสนิทสันสมบูรณ์;

นอนนอนหลังเล่นเย็นเย็นยิ้ม
ชวนพบแน่ไม่รีบไปกะชิว

ลูกหย่าเรื่องหม้อหนักขี้อ่อนเดือน
เห็นลิลเปิดฝาปิดไฟหายไป

ลิป

เขาปลูกพืชทำกิจธุรกิจพลิก
ชมบานบานแจงด้านแห่งน้ำมัน ๆ
Come to Banyan Village checkpoint, all a-buzz,

See peasants and slaves, flow and fly about in a pavilion.

They smoke marijuana from pipes, sit down, scooping and snacking on sugar.

They shout back and forth that they have to come and inspect the boat.

“I don’t see your wares, I have to see them till you can pass.

Oh yes. There’s papaya, dried shrimps, eggplants and

Let me just have some oranges, just give us a bit, and some chillies and some salt...”

Till those people in the boats start to regret and curse in their hearts.\(^\text{367}\)

But for our boat he comes not to search out of his checking point.

What we see is like a land of water and monkeys.

There is a monastery called Banyan Village

A large Banyan tree there, we pay our respects.

Potent angel protectors reside in that tree like

\(^{367}\) This is one of the many customs duty checkpoints along the rivers and canals. This system of taxing boats as they pass along the canals was greatly expanded by Rama 3, then the reigning monarch. These officials appear to be corrupt, pillfering liberally for themselves from those boats they are meant to tax.
That angel who had once carried off Unarut to see Utsa.

Please, if you know a dearly kissable face, a celestial maiden

Please help carry me to her – that would be wonderful, truly.\(^{368}\)

Nuzzle nuzzle, tickle and snuzzle young young I to tenderness.

A blaze of smiles, our inflamed hearts locked in on one another.

Recline, sit and play in the cool wind.

We’d admire the mountains, the rows of trees in the distance,

The houses over there - picture perfect.

See them just, just way over there – till our hearts disappear.

They plant bolsom apples and beans with bulls and buffaloes.

Admiring at leisure, pointing out the names of places.

\(^{368}\) This is a reference to a popular literary tale from the Ayutthaya period, *Unarut*. Lost on a journey, Prince Unarut stops by a Banyan tree and asks the spirit that resides there for protection. As he sleeps the tree spirit, seeing that he is a good person, decides to award Unarut by ‘carrying him off’ to see his beloved Lady Utsa temporarily. There are many such stories in Thai literature and this trope of ‘carrying off’ to see the beloved is called *um som*. Romance stories were extremely popular since at least Ayutthaya times and this trope provided storytellers with a means to have the two lovers meet and fall in love, before beginning the main story of impediment and peregrination.
ถึงเกาะเกิดเกิดสวัสดิ์พิพัฒน์ผล
อย่าเกิดคนติเตียนเป็นเสี้ยนหนาม
ให้เกิดลาภราบเรียบเงียบเงียบงาม
เหมือนหนึ่งนามเกาะเกิดประเสริฐทรง
ถึงเกาะพระไม่เห็นพระประแต่เกาะ
ช่างชื่อเพราะชื่อพระสละลง
พระของน้องนี้ก็นั่งมาทั้งองค์
ทั้งพระสงฆ์เกาะพระมาประชุม
ขอคุณพระอนุเคราะห์ทั้งเกาะพระ
ให้เปิดประชุมทองสักสองชุม
ขอคุณพระอุทัยทรงทั้งเกาะพระ
ให้เปิดประชุมทองสักสองชุม
คงจะมีพี่ป้ามาชุ่มชุม
ละอ่อนอุทัยábadoกรีเป็นอาจิณฯ
We come to Arising Island, to arise one’s fortune and prosperity.

Have not those who would talk down to you, splinters and thorns.

But be born with luck, well-ordered, quiet and pretty,

Like the name of this island – Arising Island, excellent and esteemed.\(^{369}\)

We come to Monk Island but no monks do we see, only the island.

A fitting name, for monks who renounce delusion.

All of us and your monk comes to sit there, every one.

I ask for the assistance of the merits of the monks

To show me if there are any gold treasures hidden, even just one or two.

Then there would surely be some ladies gathering here.

I’d speak well to them, touch their slender breasts – that’s how it would be.

\(^{369}\) For both of these ‘islands,’ island is perhaps too grand a word. The original word \textit{koh}, of Mon-Khmer origin, would seem to have meant something islet or a mound of land surrounded by rivers rather than as it is used today to describe larger landmasses far from the mainland.
ถึงเกาะเรียงเคียงคลองเป็นสองแสก
ได้หม่อมห้ามงามพร้อมชื่อหม่อมอิน
นึกถวิลวันนั้นจะออกไปยี่ม
จึงตัดธุ่นที่เกาะแสนงาม
จะหายอดส่วนนายยาก
แสนเสงี่ยมงามพร้อมเหมือนหม่อมอิน
อาบันน้องต้องเศร้าสลดถึง
คงจะงามพักตร์พร้อมเหมือนหม่อมอิน
เวลาเย็นที่นั้นก็บทวิน
ไว้ที่นั่นท่าร้างประนังนอน
บังบนวุ้นชีวิตใจเชื้อเผา
เสียงจ้องใจจับสลับสนอง
บังฟุ่มเฟือยเดิมง่ทางเจริญ
เอาปากปองปิ่นประกอบยิ้ม
ที่ปรุงรูปแบบในวันเดียวโคตร
ไม่มีดันใดแสดงเนื้อเหมือนเศร้าหมอง
ลูกน้อยน้องเคยเห็นจะแย่มอง
เหมือนน้องบี้หนูน้อยคอยดู
มาตามคิดบิดก้าวพร้ำแม่
ฝากเล่าเหตุว่าหน้าตาไหว
เห็นลูกนกน้อยนั่งห่างใจ
ที่ฝ่าให้ส่ำคั้นมิ่งเลยฯ
We come to Couple Island that closely hugs the canal as it parts in twain.

The forest at a juncture is a royal palace, a royal outing at the river.

There was once a commoner-princess called Lady In

And that is why the name of this island was given this well-considered name.

I think to you, glossy and fresh,

Beautiful in a thousand modest ways like a commoner-princess.

Oh, I will endeavour to achieve a ranking

And so get a lady with a beautiful visage, lovely like that of Lady In.

I long for you, thinking on and on of you,

Wishing that I could rest my thoughts only on you evermore.

In the evening time, I see a bird fly off,

Flown off to a place to make a nest to gather and rest.

Some bunch together, craning necks, chattering,

Chitter-chatter sounds, hopping and frisking, mingled and miscellaneous.

Some fall face down, mix and mingle beautifully.
They use their beaks to feed, their wings criss-cross, mesh and meld.

I see one, sad to be solitary and alone,

Not frisking and frolicking but looking lonely, poor and confused,

Looking up for his mother.

Like little me with little support for his heart,

Coming to follow his father, bereft and motherless.

I look up turning, searching and tears flow.

To see these baby birds, my heart is clouded.

A person to take care when sick, when old – no, alone.
ถึงเกาะเรียนเรียนรักนั้นหนักอก
แสนวิตกเต็มดวงเจี๊ยวน้อยเอื้อย
เมื่อเรียนกลจนจบถึงกบเกย
ไม่ยากเลยล่าได้ดังใจง
แต่เรียนรักนักก็มักหน่าย
รักละม้ายมิได้ชมสมประสงค์
ยิ่งรักมากพวกเพียงใจเย็นวาง
มีแต่หลงลวงแฝงทางตรงโทรม ๆ
We come to Study Island. To study love makes one’s heart heavy.

Ten-thousand catastrophes, obsessing, burning inside.

When I studied a’s, was done with b’s and c’s,

It was not difficult. I could read as readily as I would want.

But when I studied love, love was only ever irksome.

Love led to disappointment, a frustration of effort.

The more I concentrated on love, the more I was carried off in circles.

Only distraction, deception until your heart lies almost razed.
มาถึงวัดพนังเชิงเทิง
แห่งก่ออยู่มืดมิื่นช่วงโคม
มีสายเบาะน้าบุ๋นลั่นชื่น
บิดทะรัวท้าให้เข้าใจ
ถ้าบ้านเมืองต้องเร่งช่วยจะเป็นเหตุ
แม่พระหาสุขสนุกสบาย
ทั้งเจ็ดธนบั้นนี้กับยัย
ด้วยบานบางกำใต้หางใจ
นั่งใจเย็นเมื่อมีใจโปร่ง
ทรงท้าท้าชายเป็นกว้าง
เช็องเครื่องเหมือนหน้าเศร้าวัด
ขึ้นเต็นท์หาหย่าวาสุมาลัย
กับดอกกระถั่วเต็มใจสอด
ให้กลั่มม้กังบูมแค่เพียงถาม
ว่าวัดมีข้าก็ต้องพระพฤตติ
แต่ห่มองคงจะเหมือนตาเคย
ใส่รินนิบัลภูมิอนุชิน
หอมจำนาบ่ในปะสวางราชา
ถิ่นวิหารสะอ้านสะอาด
รุกขชาติพุ่มไสวเหมือนไม้เขียน
ที่ภูมิพื้นรื่นราบด้วยปราบเตียน
ได้สวมรอบขอบธรรมท่านนี้ยัง
ต่างจุดพืทยอนกว้างกระจาย
ทั้งรูปชั่วตแวด้ด้วยศักดิ์
แม่นเมื่อไขโครงข่ายแม่กัก
พัฒนาล้อมหนีกว่าหาสาว
พัฒเนื้อนล้อมเฉลียวเพื่องพิภู
นันกับเนมมองเอลูเดพระ
แต่พระแตกเท่าบีนที่ล้อมวัง
tัวของหยุดจิตเท่าน้หอ
กับหน้าอบกรอบกับเป็นคิด
ขอชะพระกุศลที่ปรนนิบัติ
มาคาระบพุทธปฏิญญา
ขอเฉพาะบินสิ่งสิ่งสิ่ง
แม่นอิงไปไม่ยึดที่พระเป็น
จะพวกพี่เรียนวิสัยแล้วไตรเพท
แม่นรักใครให้คนนี่กระรุณา
ขอรู้ธรรมคำแปลแก้วิมุติ
มีกาลังดั้งมาระสามเน
ต่างเดินเวียนทักษิณพระชินว
เข้าในห้องแห่งข้านเทัสิงช
ท่านบิดได้ประกาศว่าชาตินี้
ยาวรักเสียกับพระชินสี
จะกระรอกอบพระรอบดุล
ที่เสียวใจใจไปเหมือนก่งกระสน
got ให้ผู้อนถ่้กวางไม่น้ำพื้
ผู้ดูสูงกว่าฝาผนัง
สำนั้นปิ่งฝั่งฝั่งพิณิจ
โดยหน้าบังนั้น
ทั้งนูพัดพิสวาสพระศาสนา
มาคาระบพุทธปฏิญญา
เป็นมามหาศรัทธาสัน
สำรัญภูพหลังในสงสาร
ขอสระญาจ้องอยู่เป่า
ขอสระญาจ้องอยู่เป่า
ให้ผู้คนชายกลาง
ชามาอินเท่าเขาพระเมรุ
เทมีนพระพุทธไจามหาการ
รู้จักเจ็บจังจับทั้งฟุตไอ
480
อนั่นแล่เจ้านายที่หมาพิ่ง
อย่าหลงลืมหินชาติขาดอาลัย
ให้ทราบชื่งสุจริตพิสมัย
นั่งพระราชูปถัมภ์ให้ธาตุยืน
We come to a temple with vast walls.  

It is said it is the temple of the Prince Phrakala Hom.

The walls are built like the arch of a lantern

That floats in the sky, visiting the abodes of the gods.

There is a pavilion at the pier that looks refreshing,

Shaded and pleasant, a base delightful to reside.

Father prattles on, teaching us so that we may understand.

“The large Buddha image here works as a form of divination.

Should this country be in grief, catastrophe or strife,

A bad omen will here appear, a breaking, shattering or crumbling.

Should the city come to happiness and contentment,

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370 This is Wat Phanan Choeng Worawiharn in Ayutthaya. It was built in 1324, probably slightly before the founding of Ayutthaya itself. The Buddha image is famous for its large size and dates from 1334. It is called Luang Pho To. Allegedly, prior to the destruction of Ayutthaya by the Burmese, ‘tears flowed from the sacred eyes to the sacred navel.’ (The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya). The name of the temple is Chinese and, at least in one variation, means ‘Temple of the Lady who Lost Her Wits.’ There is a legend that it is so named because a Chinese woman who was to be married to an Ayutthaya nobleman arrived and was not greeted by her husband-to-be but by soldiers. Unable to accept this indignity, she held her breath while sitting in the lotus position (as Chinese people were thought to do, rather than Thai people who sat on their sides) and died.
The Buddha’s face will shine, twinkle, a grin all over.

Chinese of the area also worship him,

Call him *Phra Jao Pun Tao Tung*

And also come to make wishes to him. ³⁷¹

If their wishes come true, they dress his loving-kindness in robes.

But they say that if you are a sinner

And enter bowing, you’ll be full of fear he will smite you, and exit via the back.” ³⁷²

In front of the pier, a river swirls.

It looks fluid, free-flowing - a thrilling gush.

We enter on our boat, north of the temple’s pavilion.

I’m gladdened that my brother has not lost his joyful mood.

Wandering and walking, looking for flowers.

We spot them, sad flowers on a grassy knoll and, along

³⁷¹ More literally they come to make *bon baan* or ‘recompense wishes.’ They ask for a boon such as wealth or luck in love and, should they attain this, they promise to recompense the Buddha image with, for instance, flowers or new robes and other offerings.

³⁷² The image, then, was known for being able to tell between genuine and falsely pious visitors. Falsely pious visitors would be afraid of the image and would run away.
With love flowers, we pluck out seven stalks.

We put them in a vase, set them out, evening out their blooms.

We give them to Klan, to Jan and Bunaat, dear friends who have come.

Our reverend father is put in a good mood!

He fixes his jiwon prettily like he does.

Great fun it is, to skirt round the bridge, go up to the courtyard.

He says that from ‘sadness’ and harmful ‘love’ we must separate ourselves.

“To offer these to the temple is a good thing, children.”

What fun to skirt over the bridge, go into the courtyard.

Little by little, we smell Spanish cherry blossoms, vital and vibrant.

Orange jessamine flowers, as joyous and fresh as if they would never fade.

We smell magnolia champaks at the face of the main hall and rows of lotuses.

Flowers spread cheerfully, petals as if trimmed and prepared.

We see the huts and the halls, neat and well-ordered;

__________________________

373 The idea is that one leaves one’s sadness or heartbroken-ness at the temple. This is doubly effective in this case because the names of the flowers that they have brought to offer are ‘love’ flowers and ‘sad’ flowers.
Flowers and bushes, profuse as in a picture.

All around these grounds are bare and well-ordered.

We walk in circles, on the right side of the Buddha image.

We make three rounds, I enjoying the Dharma and leading my brother along.

We enter the hall and see the Buddha at the summit.

We light incense and candles, worship as the smells dispense.

My reverend father announces that: “In this life...

No matter how ugly, dark, or lowly you are,

If you give your love and failure the Victorious One -

No matter when – they shall loyally love you,

They will love you for you loving generosity.”

But Klan says “I wish for girls!

With long fingernails, curved upwards like a bow.

I wish for the sweet smells of their cherry-flower flesh

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374 Again, these ‘offerings’ could refer to the ‘sadness’ or suffering which is ‘left’ at the temple, or the flowers that Phu and his followers have collected to offer.
To hug and caress me in tenderness.” It’s really not worth listening to.

Me and my little brother just look at the Buddha,

Holy it is and taller than the ceiling,

The lap as big as the fortress walls that defend the palace.

Sitting properly, staring fixedly

My body looks as miniscule as the Buddha’s hand.

Colossal, stupendous – truly potent.\(^\text{375}\)

Taap and I bow, bend, stoop,

Make resolute wishes for the religion.

We have come to pay our respects, to see the Buddha image.

It is truly miraculous, I feel it utterly and innately.

I ask for courage in my wishes, until I may achieve them,

In every way to overcome this dream of samsara.

Even though I may not reach nirvana,

\(^{375}\) The word saksit is often translated as ‘sacred.’ But it further carries connotations of ‘charged,’ ‘magical,’ and ‘potent’ as well as the sense of being special and set apart.
I ask to be happy and free from suffering.

I shall study and practice, and so learn the Three Vedas.  

I shall make my learning extraordinary in the arts of astrological calculation.

If I love or desire someone, may I show them loving-kindness,

May they live as long as Mount Meru.

376 The Three Vedas are the ancient collection of hymns which are central to the Brahman religion. It is not often associated with Buddhism, though the Fourth Veda, the *Atharvaveda* ("Knowledge of the Fire Priest") is often drawn upon by Phu and other writers as a fount of magical power.
ขอรู้ธรรมคำแปลแก้วิมุติ
เหมือนพระพุทธโฆษามหาเณร
มีกำลังคีบหมายสามเณร
รู้จักแจ้งเก่งป้องกันภัยไตร
อนึ่งเล่าเจ้านายที่หมายพึ่ง
ให้ทราบซึ่งสุจริตพิสมัย
อย่าหลงลิ้นหินชาติขาดอาลัย
น้ำพระทัยหลุมแล้วให้ข้าวอิน
I wish to know the dharma, to translate and correct the *Visuddhimagga*

Like the greater elder Buddhaghosa.\textsuperscript{377}

I wish to be as powerful as the novice monk Magha\textsuperscript{378}

To have clear-sighted knowledge of all Three Worlds.

And also, for that noble lord whom I might wish to rely on,

May it be known to him that I have beauty and virtue

And may he not become lost to the wagging tongues of the depraved, lamenting.

May that noble lord be of kind heart and live long.

\textsuperscript{377}Buddhaghosa was a 5th-century Indian Theravada Buddhist commentator, translator and philosopher who resided in Sri Lanka. His *Visuddhimagga* or Path of Purification is a comprehensive summary of older Sinhala commentaries on Theravada teachings and practices. It is highly systematic and is referred to as a key text of Theravāda Buddhism, particularly regarding its descriptions of practices of meditation.

\textsuperscript{378}Novice Magha was a novice monk who the Buddha praised as having particularly strong supernatural abilities.
แล้วลาพระปฏิมาลีลาลง  เข้าลำคลองสวนพูลค้อยชื่น
ชมแต่ให้ไม่ทุ่มลุ่มชุ่มชื่น  ระรินรินลัวควนร้างเงาใจ
โอ้ยามนี้มีไอพู่น้ำอบสด  มาชะรสองบานน้ำตาไหล
เคยหอมเป็งแรงรินถั่ว  มาเหลือกิลคลัวต้อยม่วงอม
เมื่อยามมีพี่ระงูพานุ่งเหม  เคยบรมรักกลืนไม่สันทราย
โอ้วยาสมสมคริกมาปลูกปลอม  จันชิบผอมผีหักกระกำใจ
จึงหมายอาญาวัฒนาะ  ตามใต้ปลายแห่งแดงใจ
เข้าลำคลองลงเรือมาเหยี่โลงโกล  ถึงวัดใหญ่ชายทุ่งดูวุ้งโว้ะ ๆ
We leave the Buddha image and proceed, down along the canal.

We go down the canal of Suan Plu, bit by bit rejuvenate.

We admire the bamboo thickets looking humid and fresh.}

Exhilarating and rejuvenating are the white cheesewood trees.380

Oh, on this night, I meet not with freshly-anointed perfumes,

But come only to appreciate the local flora – tears flow.

I did once smell scented face-powder intoxicating my heart.

I come perspiring advancing, my body besmeared, besmirched.

In the night, I would have someone to scent boldly my dress,

I saturated in perfumes, perfumes without fade.

Oh, but now those smells are gone, love gone, coming in hardship,

379 Words in Thai meaning ‘wet’ or ‘moist’ almost always also have the connotation of ‘fresh’ or ‘rejuvenating.’ By contrast, more or less every single word in English meaning ‘wet’ is negative, e.g. dank, drenched, soggy, miry, drizzling. The Buddha and his teachings are often compared to such shelter from the heat and rain, with umbrellas and the cooling shade of Banyan trees being important symbols.

380 Lamduan in Thai, with the botanical name Melodorum fruticosum. The English name ‘white cheesewood tree’ hardly does justice the beauty of this flowering tree. Women are often compared to its flowers and use it as an ingredient for wax lip-perfume. There is also a type of Thai traditional cookie made in its shape.

491
Sick, skinny and dark-skinned – disconsolate.

I have come to find the life-prolonging drug,

Following those traces in the landscape.

We enter the canal, a river going far off

Until we reach a large temple in a wide and open field.
พระเจดีย์ที่ยังอยู่ดูตระหง่าน
เป็นประธานทิวทูงดูสูงเทา
ด้านโพไรไกรหูมันเป็นชูมัจจุราช
ขึ้นรอบเชิงชั้นแล้วช้างเจดีย์
เสียหาญทั้งที่ทรงคุ้งครัวรูดัง
ใครจะสร้างสูงกินจับปีศาจรักร
หันนิวะถึงให้ทรุดคำวานี้
ก็ไม่มีผู้ใหญ่ใจใหญ่
ผู้หญิงย้านบ้านราชาบางกอก
เขอมกอดอกสีแสสระเสียวใจ
แต่พระเจ้าสะทิ้งริมท่าโพ
ก็เต็มใจแต่ชาววังเขยังกลืน
หันกลัวบาปกราบพระอย่าปะปน
ไม่ขอคนโขมดที่โหดหืน
The chedi that still remains looks towering,

It is a landmark for all these fields, sky-high.\textsuperscript{381}

A Banyan tree, a Bodhi tree, bamboo thickets envelope top-to-bottom,

Fringing around the base and sides of the chedi,

That’s split and chipped, shattered and abandoned -

Who would again fix up a temple to such immoderate heights?

Father says that, “If there was a chedi even larger than this

People would not say it was really large.

The women of our area, the people of Bangkok,

They chew on lies, swallowing Buddha images in abundance.\textsuperscript{382}

Even that statue at the great swing at Bodhi Pier,

\textsuperscript{381} This temple is likely to be Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon (Great Temple of Blessed Victory). It was built by King U-thong in 1357 C.E. However, the famously large chedi itself was built by King Naresuan (r.1590-1605 C.E.) in 1592 C.E. to commemorate his victory over King Maha Uparacha of Burma to mirror the famous temple of Wat Phu Khao Thong (Golden Mountain) which itself was began but left unfinished by the Burmese King Bayinnaung (r.1550-1551 C.E) in Ayutthaya to commemorate his own victory over the city.

\textsuperscript{382} Om Phra Ma Phut is an old saying. It means ‘to chew on a Buddha image and speak.’ Which is to say someone who lies but uses the words, feeling of a monk (who is known for honesty) or some reverend authority in order to be believed. The idea is that the people of the capital are so skilled in lying that they could swallow even a very large Buddha image.
So massive, yet those courtiers still may swallow him whole.”

Sunthorn Phu is probably referring to the Buddha image known as Phra Sirishakyamuni, which is housed at Wat Suthat Thepwararam near the ceremonial Giant Swing in a central part of old Bangkok. It was crafted probably sometime around the thirteenth century and housed in Sukhothai until it was ‘invited’ to the new city of Bangkok by Rama I. Smelted from bronze, it was believed to be the largest Buddha image in the country until the 25th century B.E., around sixty years ago.
พอคำกล่อมพุ่มพุ่มภูมิลุ่มครึ่งคร้าน
งาทะมันผีเสื้อถับอับโพยม
พยุผงะกระประเพณ์ของกล้วย
พุ่มของพุ่มใหญ่ที่ห่อหุ้มใส
เที่ยวดีกระหว่างอุ่นจนคลี
พุ่มผุพุ่มใหญ่ใหญ่ที่ห่อหุ้มใส
ดักผึ้งครึ่งมองกล้วยต้ม
จุดเห็นไปอยู่ดินกำราบชาวเชิง
หวังจะโปรดโปรดที่ย่อมยั่ง
ประนมนี้คงย่าพินสรเสริม
ส้ารวมเรียนเห็นอยู่กระจายเกียรติ
จินตหิน กับหนั่งหัววิญญาณ
ที่เห็นตัดสรรพแสงสีนีดวงเจ็บ
เชื่อมโยงน้ำที่ต่างพร่างพลูกษา
เห็นผักวิจันฉัตรใหญ่
ปรกภูมิสมบูรณ์น้ำผึ้งงาม
กรั้นกล้าได้ในกลางกินกินทุกสูตร
t่งจัดจุดอาหารเห็นเพื่อรำวงสุร
ประกายฟรุ่งฟักต้นหนักเห็น
dังโคมช่างโซดิม光芒บรรดาดาว
งันแจ่มข้าวหวีห้องหวีหวัง
ป่นแก้วก็รั้งเรียงสำเนียงหน้า
ยิ่งยืนผ้น้ำต่างพร่างพราว
พระพายผ้วพัดไฟหูกบใบโพยม
In the fading of day, the flowers look merry and cheerful.

Shadows grow long and mists gloom the sky.

A storm, gloominess agitates the fields,

A dust that diffuses the sky, a groaning that shakes and pounces.

Father lights a lantern, enters the monastery, we follow its glow.

We go winding and finding, zigzagging about till it’s dark.

We see a thicket where a golden Bodhi tree glows.

We take a scoop of honey water in a glass, placing it beside flowers.

We light large candles, as our manual instructs,

Wishing to find that most acme of mercuries.

Hands together - sitting, calling and praising,

Joyful, the candles lustrous, luminous, radiant.

The hour late, the rooster un-crying, our spirits terror-struck.

Every candle flick-flickers out, every sound is hushed.

A piercing cold, the dew sparkles.
A flicker and flash in my eyes -

The mercury has come, sucking on the honey.

Father tumbles and gropes for the mercury in the night, but it slips out of sight.

We light the candles and incense to propitiate the mercury.

The Morning Star pierces the darkness – we see its sphere,

Like a lantern where the light burns, brighter than all other stars,

Clear and strong. Indistinct, the cicadas *ring-reet,*

Pipe-like sounds, loud, a sound of coldness.

The colder it gets, the more the dew sparkles

And the wind shakes and rustles each leaf of the Bodhi tree.
พอรุ่งแรกแปลกกลิ่นระรินรื่น
เหลือออนน้ำร่ำดำปราสาโท
กันนั่งพ่ายพระปะหมาดปล่ำ
เชิญพระชุราถูกถักทุกครั้ต
ที่ทูพระปะหมาดปล่ำ
ท่านอานเหล้าใหญ่ผู้นั้นได้ยิน
ถึงทีกั้นก็อกหมอกษา
ประแยกรอยในแขวงเมือง
กับหนุกกลมก้นกับบ้านคนที่
ไปตามลายปลายปล่องถึงหนองหลวง
นี่กล่าวที่ตื่นปล้องปล่ำ
เถ้าหย่อคลิกถักถุมนะ
ค้อเคลี้ยงคงธุระเหือง
จนเช้าตรู่ไปกลางเตียว
ถึงป่าเกรียนเกรียวแซ่จอแจจริง
With the first light of dawn, a queer smell revives us.

Oh, it smells like a garland of sesbania flowers,\textsuperscript{384}

As if to perfume one’s clothes in a destitute way.

A mood of sobs, grief increases.

In the morning, we encounter the mercury in its entirety.

All three of us monks try to grab it, but it flees from us.

We beseech the relic each night.

We wash in resplendent water, freed from impurity

To do the work of making mercury, safe and pure.

We still look for traces in the earth, clear and bright.

Father read on a great leaf, I overheard,

That once he’d eaten the mercury he’d be beautiful, dazzling.

He dreamed that they would all be hacked off right at their sprouts – his greying hairs,

\textsuperscript{384} There is no common English name for Sesbania Javanica. It is an undershrub whose shoots are often fried and eaten with spicy sauces. Its flowers are yellow and are used as a coloring agent in deserts.
That he would be as he was as a young buck, his flesh with a yellowish glow.

It will be in the east, it is made clear, of this area.

Father sets up his instruments all, including sandalwood.

Along with Klan, Janmak, Bunnaat,

At about nine in the evening, we search for a way out of Yellow Field.

We follow along the canal until we come to Carp Lagoon.

In amongst the water-weeds, I spot a sleeping buffalo.

A sound like a ghost beating a bell – with a bong-bong-boh!

The buffalo bobs up, belches, pounds down, lunges, heaves itself out.

Clusters of water-plants cover it at close quarter,

It’s like a ghost emerging, entangled and encircling.

With the sound of its crying, this time we saw what it truly was.  

We walk searching for a temple, circling rapidly.

Until the dawn we see a clear pathway,

385 This is perhaps confusing. Pat sees a buffalo which emerges entangled with water plants which he thinks at first is a ghost. One cannot help but think it would have been more effective if he had revealed that it was really a water buffalo at the end rather than the beginning of the section.
We reach an uproarious forest, boisterous and crowded.
กระจาบจับนับหมื่นดูดื่นดาษ
เหมือนตลาดเหลือหูเพราะผู้หญิง

ยามอื้ออึงหึงหวงด้วยช่วงชิง
ตัวมันโหนหวงคู่คอยดูคน

จันดันไม่มีใบออกจากไม้รอด
บ้างคาบแขมแซมรังเหมือนดังสาน

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
ปลูกขึ้นงอกออกไม่รอด

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
เด็กขึ้นดอยแท่งตั้นอยู่ดูมี

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้นตั้ง

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้นตั้ง

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้นตั้ง

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ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
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ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้นตั้ง

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้นตั้ง

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้นตั้ง

ลมกระทั่งรังกระจาบระยาบโยน
dูกCAPEคัดเจริญกลมตั้ง
Weaverbirds grasp and huddle, ten thousand teeming.

Like a marketplace overabundant on the ear with women’s voices.

Chatterings, jealousies, snatching-aways.

Crowds and crowds of them, stealing, jumping and thieving.

The leaves of the trees cannot even germinate -

They look twisted, dwarfish, deformed.

A wind comes to the weaverbird nests and the leaves glitter.

One branch sways perilously, a worried couple watching people approach.

Some hold in their mouths dry leaves, inserting the into their nests like a weave,

Knit expertly tight the filaments like a necklace,

Pick and twisting, preparing, thrusting into the flank,

Like artisans embroidering and binding.

Oh, these birds yet still have their own homes.

They can live as lovers, day and night, without grief.

Living in a single house, these birds embrace.
With only one single room, I’d be at peace.
จนพ้นป่ามาถึงโป่งหอยโข่งคุด
มันหมกมุดเหมือนเขาแจ้งแถลงไฟ
เห็นตาลโดดโขดคุ่มกระพุ่มไม้
มีทิวไปทาง البعิ่นกลางสายที่
ท่านหลีกลัดตัดทางไปกลางทุ่ง
ตั้งแต่รุ่งมาจนแดดก็แผดแข็ง
ได้พักเพลเอนนอนพอผ่อนแรง
ต่ออ่อนแสงสุริยาจึงกลางวัน
แต่แรกดูครู่หนึ่งจึงถึงที่
ต่อถึงแสงสุริยาจึงกลางวัน
เห็นมือลอยหนีว่างหันหินดินไม่ให้
เหมือนเรื่องราวข้ามข้าพเจ้าใน
มาหลับไปแล้วกระดาษคงจะลึก ๆ
We come out of the forest and see Shell Feeding Place.

It’s burrowed under the earth as its name suggested.

A single palm tree, well-evident, arches out from the undergrowth.\textsuperscript{386}

There are lines of bamboos like in our treasure map.

Father twists and turns along the path, in the midst’s of the fields.

From dawn till midday, the sun has been strong.

We stop for our midday meal, relaxing with the heat.

Once the rays of the sun soften, we begin to move again.

At first, it seemed like we’d be there in just a moment.

Then it’s as if we’d walked backward, so far off I could walk no longer.

It’s just like with love, seeming near near,

Then again far – I fear the shame of it - and we must coax our lovers back once again.

\textsuperscript{386} Here begins the approach to the actual ‘Temple of the Prince.’ Many scholars have tried to actually find this temple around Ayutthaya, using Phu’s poem as a sort of treasure map. In 1965, Nay Pleung Makon and Nay Hen Wechakon travelled the route described in the poem and believed that they found it at \textit{Wat Khao Din}. There is currently a request by the temple to change its name so that tourists might re-live Phu’s journey in full.
พอเย็นจวนด่วนเดินขึ้นเนินโขด ถึงตาลโดดดินพูนเป็นมูนสูง
เท้าเวลาเย็นมั่มนิ่มนิ่นถึง เมื่อผู้ป่วยฟื้นทางที่กลางกระจาย
ท่ากรีดปิดหลักเสี่ยงข้าเก็อง้วุ่น คงยังคงดุลกระหว่าถูกวาง
กระหว่าวตาเลาที่เจื่องชำแจงกระจาย เหมือนมั่มมั่มนิ่มมั่มมีมื้องฟื้นร้า
โอเคสแก่แลงแสงสำราญรีป ได้เข้มชื่นข้ามทีกนะเข้า
มาห่างแพลตอบขับระร่า มาดูร้านแผนกน้ำตกคก
ออกครูไปใช้สิ่งข้ามบินว่อน แฉลบร้อนเริงตามดูงามสาม
เห็นชิงไทรได้ไฟตะโกนพนม ระร่วมรุ้งขาดิคำเดียว
พิลูดอกดอกหอมพ่ออย่ย้อย นางน้อยน้อยจับเหมือนกลับเขียน
ในเขตแคว้นแสนสะอาดดังกวาด คลิปเปลี่ยนมั่มนิ่มยั่วอัตรา
เดยิ่น
สารภีที่ริมใบระส์สาโรช่วง มีฝีร่างรั่งสิงกังพุกษา
สารSCPสาคูนชูคธา ภู่มาร่อนร้องละองเวลา
โขบบุปผาสารภีส่าฟาวรีน เป็นที่รับชื่นชอบอยู่ค่วยทาน
เห็นม้าลายล้อไรร่าง เหมือนจะชวนเชษฐาน้าตากระเด็น...
On the eve of evening, we hiked hurriedly up a hill,

Till a palm tree, solitary and striking, aloft there upon the mound.

We travelled, enjoying the wind, seeing peacocks.

An ostentatious pride of peacocks brandish their tail feathers amongst the sand.

They slowly open their feathers, by and by approaching one another.

We lie and watch as if witnessing a royal dance.

They surround as if in a procession, deviating in a brilliant strut

Just like those delicate ladies of the court theatre as they dance.

Oh, once I had looked upon their pleasant play, beautiful and gladdening.

In joy, I admired those elegant beauties,

Now I watch only a procession of dancing tails,

Come only to admire the fan-dance of birds – my heart aches.

I come out to chase them and they fly off in a flock,

Tilted and gliding, beautifully arranged.

We see up above pale moon ebony trees on the hill,
And the refreshing shade of abundant foliage.

Spanish cherry trees release their sweet-smelling flowers, two-winged-fruit trees drape.\textsuperscript{387}

Itsy-bitsy birds, peck and grab, pretty as a picture.

All of this wide-open area is as clean as if it were swept with a brush.

A smooth wind blows over this tract of land continuously.

From the \textit{salapee} tree at the side of temple, blooms fall.

There is a beehive upon the branch of a tree,

A stimulating scent and well-adorned-woman trees\textsuperscript{388}

Where the bees drone amidst creamy-coloured pollen.

Oh flowers skirt the \textit{salapee} like a saree-skirt tree in the shade.\textsuperscript{389}

It is place to refresh yourself, to cherish the flavours.

We see their garlands and our hearts burn with desire.

It’s as if they invite me, their elder brother – tears flow.

\textsuperscript{387} Pale moon ebony trees, also known as Malabar ebony, are \textit{Diospyros malabarica}. Two-winged fruit trees are \textit{Shorea Roxburghii}.

\textsuperscript{388} These are \textit{sumuntha} trees. This is the name of a tree and also a rare word meaning ‘well-dressed woman.’ He is comparing the love of the bee for pollens with love for a woman.

\textsuperscript{389} Again \textit{saree} is the name of a kind of skirt, or the name of a kind of tree.
โอ้อย่างนี้ที่ตรงนึกร าลึกถึงมาเหมือนหนึ่งในจิตที่คิดเห็น จะคลอเคียงเรียงตามเมื่อยามเย็น เที่ยวเลียบเล่นแลเพลินจ าเริญตา
โบสถ์วิหารฐานที่ยังมั่ง เเชงผนังแน่นแข็งดังแผ่นผา
สงสารสุดพุทธธรรมปฎิมา พระศิลลาแลดูเป็นบูราณ
อุโบสถหมดหลังคาด้วยนั่ง พระเจ้ามั่นยู่เด่งค์นำสงสาร
d้วยชื่อเรังสร้างสมานนามาน แคบบาราเรื่องพระเจ้าClickableท่อง
มาเที่ยวเล่นที่บทนิบันดินใจส์ เคยสันโดยดังสีนัยไม่มอง
จึงจัดช่างสร้างอารามตามลำอง ทรงจำลองลายพระหัตถ์เป็นปฏิมา
รูพระเจ้าเท่พระองค์แล้วทรงสร้างให้ย่าวปรารถนา
พระเจ้าสิ่งเสียทรงตามมา ถวายยาอายุวัฒนะ
ขอไม่อยู่รู้ว่าหลวงในสงสาร ทำให้ทานแห่งยาอุตสาหะ
ใส่ตัวทององไว้ที่ได้พระ ใครพบปะเปิดได้อาไปกิน
ช่วยสร้างโบสถ์โขดเขื่อนไว้เหมือนเก่า บำเพ็ญเจ้าเสียเจ้าที่แห่งหิน
วัสดุเจ้าที่อภิเศกจนนั่งวิหาร ให้ทราบสิ่นเสียพระสะอาด
เป็นตัวพระมาแต่แรกนั่งซื่อสัตย์ คู่หูนั่งสะอาดคู่สิ้นเสีย
มหาประจุชูชีพสู่แท้ ธัชดินเจริญปราบผูกพันพระ
ถึงสิ่วนานพ่อนภูมิภูมิเกิดกันยุ่ง เที่ยนเหลียวรู้ที่จะทำให้สันรัง
แต่จะต้องมองตัวราชามืด เคือจะเสร็จสมวิลได้กินยา ๆ

511
Oh, like this I recall, revive the memory.

It comes like this to my mind

When side-by-side aligned we were, as the evening cooled.

Travelling here and there, we see a fire that illuminates our eyes.

A Buddhist hall base is there that still barely remains.

The walls are packed densely like a sheet of rock.

So pitiful, this image of the Buddha,

Its stones ancient and aged

The hall, walls, ceiling all gone –

The Buddha sits just by himself – truly pitiful.

Neglected, abandoned, built well long-past.

Long ago, there was the story of King Samphao Thong.\textsuperscript{390}

He came on a trip and saw a rock upon a hill,

All alone as a cotton tree, without second.

\textsuperscript{390} The name means King Golden Boat. This story does not appear anywhere else, nor does the name of this temple or of the name of this Prince.
He ordered craftsmen to make a temple there according to custom.

A design he made with his own royal hand, of the Buddha image.

The image then as large as himself, he added a sworn statement:

That it would last until the dissolution of the Buddha’s dispensation.

Then four hermits flew down

And offered up the alchemical drug.

“Know you not that I still live in the realm of samsara?”

“Then we shall give you a piece of the drug of endurance.

Place in a golden jar, underneath the image.

He who finds it, may open it and eat.

Help build the main hall and dig a dam beneath.”391

The name he wrote on a piece of rock:

“Temple of the Prince of the Skies Most High.”

To make known the treasure, he inscribed it well.

391 The hermits offer the elixir but the prince does not wish to circle in samsara forever and so does not consume it. The hermits then say it should be placed in a jar beneath the Buddha image.
There is a manual-guide got from the Northern country, which father follows.\textsuperscript{392}

He scans that book, seeks and pursues.

We have found it, desiring to dig the earth in all strength.

Yet this earth is hard, built with diamond-mortar.

All our axes and chisels are destroyed, blunted by the hill.

We saw that it was beyond our knowledge to complete,

But first we must use our manual of tricks,

To finish my father’s longing and consume the drug.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{392} In another nirat, \textit{Ram Pam Pi Laap} (Lamentations), Phu writes that he got the alchemical manual from Phitsanulok. This is a very old city in what then would have been the very far North, nearer to Chiang Mai than to Bangkok.}
พอเย็นรอนดอนสูงดูทุ่งกว้าง
ดูกว้างจวำงโรงแห่งตึก
สุรียนแซยิ่งท้องฟ้าแต่
ริ้วแล้วสุรียจะลงบับ
สดคงแสงแห่งข้าพบบัง
แต่กันราวาวงท้องทวีป
ไม่รู้จะร้างชาติพ่อภาคใด
อันยืนดำน้ำดำให้รำกลาง
แสนแสะท้องต้องเก็บตะโค
พชุกหลับแจ่มมานคน
พอดีอาหาชาติข้าวดะโคละ
พิคุลคืนห่ามรอบดัน
ของเราเมืองจะค่อยดองค์
ท่านบิดผอนส่งให้คิดจิต
เข่าร่วมพระมหาโพธิบูปสิต
เมื่อยกลั่นกลิ่นขันท์จื้กในเนื้อหอม
สมคือผอนอยู่และยุ่นและไม่
วิวกว้างแจดทุกที่
เห็นแต่หัวแหลมขันแซงแซม
ไม่เห็นท้ายที่สังเกตทุกเขตแซง
yิ่งโรยแรงรอนรอนก่ำลัง
มิได้คับดวงได้อาลัย
เหยื่อนจะ้งโลกาตัวอาลัย
มาเรียบรำ่งมิตรพิสมัย
ไอальнойเลบบางวิญญาณ
เป็นหมอกเจมสถิตทุกทิ่ม
นิกระออออกมาเมื่อยามโซ
ข่วงกันสองเท้ากริ่งโซ
.Password.
เฝ่ยจะค่อยดองยืน
ครั้นเกิดพลбуิ้นให้เห็นฟืน
ที่จะขึ้นแต่ไม่ขอกิน
โปรดประสิทธิสิกขารักษาศีล
เข้าร่มพระมหาโพธิบนโบสถ์
ระรื่นกลีบกลับเกิดค่อยขึ้นใจ
แนบสนอมสนิทจิตพิสมัย
มาจำใจกลอสมารหวอนฉันในฐานะ

515
As the coolness fades over the high hill, the wide fields

It feels solitary, silent, alone truly on all sides.

I feel excited but to my eyes there is loneliness.

I see only a sky of elephant grasses and sugar cane grasses intertwining, mixing.

It looks so sweeping and outspread,

And I see no traces to tell me which place is which.

The sun reaches twilight, the sky crimson.

Exhausted is the sun’s strength, less and less, soft and sleepy.

Oh, look at the sun—it’s falling asleep!

I do not wish its orb to fade, I miss it already.

Sadly sinking, elided and obstructed,

As if to order the world to fall into grief for it.

Yet that us court-folk, of every continent,

Rush and run to be without dear friends,

No delay, no parting words – strange.
Oh, sadness for souls that so fast flicker out.

As the air cools, a free and easy feeling, the dew dropping and twitching.

There is a murky smog, darkness closes in in each direction.

A thousand hunger pains in my stomach, so we collect evergreen acorns.

I’m fed up and take up ebony tree nuts in my hungry time.

Klan, Janmaak and Bunaat the youngest,

Help each other separate, store, cut copious numbers.

We chew them, raw and unripe, these evergreen acorns.

In dark times, with a sore belly, one must swallow.

A Spanish cherry, fruits half-ripe, so many.

When we eat its fruits it makes us feel slippy, stomach-churney,

It’s astringent and acrid, like I’m about to die – I spit it out.

All bitter and nasty, glued down my gullet - gulp it I will not.

Our reverend father teaches us to fix our minds,
Bids us continue our training, to follow the Precepts.\textsuperscript{393}

We enter the shade of a Great Bodhi tree above the earthen hall,

Redolent with aroma in the middle of the night. We are steadily resuscitated.

Its like smelling sandalwood upon scented flesh,

Close cuddled to this comely conception

Her flesh a pillow, smoothly sweet and silky.

\textsuperscript{393} As novice monks, they cannot eat proper food after midday or before sunrise. There are exceptions counted as ‘medicine’ such as certain roots and leaves.
โอ้ยามนี้ได้แช่เหงือกเย็น
ห้อมพิกุลผู้ใจอาบยวน
ยังเสียค่าคืนพิกุลหอม
ไอเดือกล่วงเหงาสุดดวง
ยิ่งพิมพีหอมมีสมธรรมรอบริม
เสน่าวัฒัสวิจิตษาทั้งเกว่
เสียงทรงจั่งใจใจใจใจใจใจ
จำแนกนิ้วเรือเลือยอดิว
แม่น้ำงามผ่านล้วนนิ้วยา
อันสียามยากวิกิโน่แล้ว
ชะยากระรักประจักษ์จริง
นาคันว่าอายูรู้รู้หมั้น
ไม่รู้ว่ามีขวัญใจข้าแค้น
ทั้งหนูกลั่นว่าเมื่อล่องเรือกลับ
แม่เอวเนื้อแน่นร่าล้วนส้าอาง
สมเพชเพื่อนเหมือนหนังบางประสพนุ่ม
จันทร์มีเดินเรือนขี้เกียจเห็น
ที่พุนพินท์เกดรูบธรรมชาติ
ราษฎนำมาไว้สินด้วยยินดี  อัญชุลีแล้วกันระวังภัย
น้ำค้างพร้อมเร็ยกันยื้อหยิบ  ไปพอพลิกแพลุงพลิกกวีริกไหว
บ้างหลุดหล่นว่อนร่อนไร้  ตัวยแสงไฟรางราวกระจายเส้า
Oh, but now I cannot caress you in contentment as

Every night – gone is your perfume and now I smell now only blossoms,

I smell cherry trees – a bitter heart, longing.

The cherry petals they slip, they sail, they glissade upon my chest.

More and more thrills and tingles, the stronger the cherry smells.

I shall keep some, shall cherish their enchantment that they may ever fade.

Oh jessamine flowers burn in the sky, my beloved,

But they fall not - I ache to embrace them.

Bit by bit, peaceful and cool in mind with the dew

That sparkles and sprays, spotted in small droplets.

Distracted am I, as if a lady slept by mind side.

It makes me lonely, this silent sleepy silent sound.

Harmonious like the whirling whistle of cicadas,

A sound euphonious, a round resounding sound.

A sound of reek-reek, rai-rai round the branches.
A thrilling sound, sleeping and seeing only stars.

Till late, languid and lazy, continually lounging.

Cold, the cotton flowers – they make people cold.

Though cotton is beautiful, the name *niew* is your long *niew* nails,\(^{394}\)

Lined up warm with a quilt, stealthily sitting into one another.

We four decided that, once we have eaten the drug,

We’ll be shiny and bright, and we’ll go to get with the girls.

That the fate of the drug is wonderful – that’s self-evident.

You’ll be able to run around this wide land.

Bunnat says, “The alchemical drug allows for one-million years.

You’ll be able to fondle and feel girls in the ten-thousands!

You’ll know no end to their savour and flavours, be without lack!”

“I’m ashamed of you, who so crave those cream-colored girls.”

Klan says that, “When we take the boat back,

We’ll call in for those twelve girls and not delay.

\(^{394}\) Sunthorn Phu had once had a lover called Niew which means ‘nails.’
Whether they be slender-waisted dancing Mons or debonairs,

Just how angry they can get – we’ll soon see!”

“I pity you, my friends, under the madness of the ways of youth.

All of you base and deluded children – it bores my ears.”

And so father turns away, walking about, holding a candle aloft.

The light throws upon the temple boundary stones, one and all.\(^{395}\)

They are all tumbledown, but an urn still contains the relic!

White and pure it is, the Arahant bright.\(^{396}\)

We ask for good fortune, we all smile gladly.

We salute them with both hands, then sit heedful of danger.

The dew sprinkles, the wind crisply cools,

The leaves of the Bo tree, swish sway and susurrate,

\(^{395}\) Sima stones are the ritual boundary-markers of the main halls of temples. They are important because various rites and meetings by monastics must, legally speaking, occur within their boundary.

\(^{396}\) An urn has fallen out from walls and spilled. Arahant is the name for a monk who has achieved awakening. Here it refers to white bones, ashes or diamond-like glass pieces which are the remains of a cremated monk. It is not clear who these are the relics of and they may be of the mythical king who founded this temple. Nevertheless, it is thought by the group to be an auspicious discovery.
Some drop and descend. All is vague and indistinct,

As fiery candle lights in lighted lines illuminate our eyes.
จนเที่ยงคืนรื่นรมย์ลมสงัด
ดึกกำลังดาวสว่างพร่างพฤกษา
เหมือนเสียงโห่โร่หูข้างบูรพา
กฤษฎาได้ฤกษ์เบิกพระไตร
สายสิญจน์วงลงยันต์กันปีศาจ
ธงกระดาษปักปลิวหวิวหวิวไหว
ข้าวสารทรงพระกรุณากรำราไป
ปักเทียนชัยฉัตรเฉลิมแล้กิจฉัตรทาน
จุดเทียนน้อยยักษ์แปดวันปักรอบ
ล้อมเป็นขอบเหมือนห่วงหนึ่งเชิงนั้นๆ
เมาคั้มหาวุ่นพิทักษ์บรร
แก้อาราธนาอุทัยที่ปิดชั้น
แผ่โยธินดินค้าวัททองใจ
จะเปิดไปปูนเพชรเป็นเคล็ดลับ
พอปักธงลงที่ดินได้ยินดัง
เสียงดังลึกบริ่งเชิญเสียงคน
แห่งเทียนกลับหลังให้มั่นคง
พูดอิงอ้อมเมื่อน้ำตก
ถูกฤทธิ์เจ็บป่วยแสนสาสัตร
เหลือจะทนทานลงถักภัทร
เสียงบริหารรวบรวมพลางพลาม
สะเทือนทุ่งที่โอสถวิหาร
พุ่ง
กิ่งโพโผงโกรงกรางลงกลาง
สาเหตุสารกรากรถไม่อยากฟื้น
ทั้งฟ้าร้องก้องกีดภิกษุ
อินทรีย์สันชนพุ่นเหมือนหยุดหลัง
สดีสั่นยูฐันต์และล่าละล่าง
สู่วังกู้ใต้บาบเหมือนหลับไป
เป็นวันติดต่อกันบ่อกั้นเหตุ
ให้ถึงพื้นฟองหุ่นตามวิสัย
ทั้งพระพลอยม่อยระงับไป
จนอุทัยเหยี่ยงคำ่วิ่งฟันภาย
เที่ยวนำคำ่าราษัฏ์ฝ่าเหยี่ยง
มั่นตามลมลอยไปข้างไหน
ไม่มีพบเห็นน่านรากระจาย
จนเบี้ยงน่ายบิดะกล้าโค้ด
รัศมีดวงดวงคงอยู่ก็ยิ่ง
ยาววัตถุดุดต้นไม่อาลัย
เมื่อรู้ความมาถูกต้องวิรัช
จะใคร่เห็นข้าพเจ้าบอกถึงใจ
ไม่เรือรังจ้างจัดไม่ขาดวัด
ขอคุณพระธรรมธรรมช่วยซักซ้อม
มาเห็นอุษาอุดมอาสนะ
ให้คร้านั้นกว้างขั้นบรรบาย
ทั้งเข้าทุ่งกวางทางทรัพย์
พระเจ้าอาสาสมานั้นยินดี
ใจแก่งมอมกลืนก็กินเด็ด
ทั้งพิภูปริชัย趑จิก
ออกเดินทุ่งมุ่งหมายพอบ่าย
จนเจ้าขัดก้าวตามจะล่วง
ผ้าห่มผืนหนึ่งไม่ติดอนิจจัง
เจ้าหนูกลั่นนั้นว่าเคราะห์เสียเพลยแซม
เฝ้าบ้านที่มิ่งเสียที่เดียวดินเหลี่ยมหลัง
จะรีบไปให้ถึงเรือเหลือกำลัง
جرุ่งทางเพื่อนไม่เหมือนแก่
จนถึงจังหวัดเหลือระยะยอ
เจ้าพ่อเรายะว่าสำรูรู้
พอมีคนคนคลุมครุ่มครุ่มเครื่อง
จะเลขตรงไปวัดพักขั้นชอง
ไปฟังบูญคุณพระยารักนagara
ท่านเต้าข้าวหวานสำราญรื่น
ท่านสุงศักดิ์ตรั้วให้ชิงเรียอย
ได้ครองกรุงผู้ยังเฟื่องเรืองปรากฏ
ท่านอารวิมใจอเลาowan
มาที่ไว้ให้โนมน์จะปรนิบัติ
ต่างชื่นช่วยอยู่สุขสมผลบุญ

ครั้นหยุดนั่งหน้าใจเจ้าโลกลา
ต้องเดินเห็นท้องเข้าขาด
อายตายก้วยพิภพเพ้อเรือ
เครื่องยังคงว่าเอาไปช่างไม่เหลือ
ให้กลับเรียรับล่องกองห้องคู่
ไม่หริ่งของขบฉันจังหุ้น
ทานบุรุงรักพระไม่ละเมิน
t่างชูขึ้นชายนั้นสรรเสริญ
อายุเกินกัปตัลพุทธันตร
t้องก็ปกกลิ่นพุทธนัตคร
เกียรติโศกผูอดค่อยอดคดดน
ถึงจากจรใจยังคิดคุณ
สารพัดแต่เพื่อช่วยเกื้อนหนุน
สแนงคุณคุณพระยารักนagara

527
Till midnight, the breeze balmy and fine.

Late, budding stars glitter and gleam the night sky,

A sound like ho-ro-ho comes from the East.

The auspicious time has arrived to begin our ritual of opening the banyan tree.397

With potent string and diagrams, we repel demons.

Paper flags pitched proud, fluttering in the flow of wind.

Rice and sand scattered, subduing and subjugating.

Large candle pitched anointed with perfumed powder.

Candles, all one-hundred-and-eight, circled about us,

Like a boundary line, strong as a dam.

Mantra of Great Wahudee, we officiate.398

Dispel protections, withdraw Vedic spells which obscure.399

We spread black dirt and overturn a conch shell,

397 It was a common custom to ‘open’ a tree or ‘open’ a forest, especially before an elephant hunt, asking the tree spirits for their blessings before an important operation. 398 This is a particular spell to negate the protective spells of Arthavedas. 399 The A-taan or Atharvaveda are the Verses of the Fourth Veda, thought to be potent magic spells. However, here this means protective curses which must be dispelled.
And will open the diamond-strong earth with our powers.

Pitching the flag in the earth, an ear-splitting sound,

A crack, a *tung-tang-tum* roll, like a person’s voice.

All the candles quench, tense and terror-struck in the dusky gloom.

A storm comes, a brouhaha, a devastation of rain,

Many stinging balls of hail stab in ten thousand scores.

We cannot endure them - we prostrate ourselves.

A pandemonium of uproar unrolls all over outspread,

Trembles the field till the hill of our temple.

The branches of the Bodhi tree snap and crack, fall about the courtyard.

Tossed-rice sounds- *kraak, kraak* - I cannot listen!

All of the sky cries, echoes jangle-clank – a freakish noise.

Bodies shaking, falling like someone hit us from behind.

Our concentration failing, our spirits subdued, shattered

Our consciousness flickers in and out, about to fall asleep.

A miraculous catastrophe, a massively significant cause,
An ill-omen here has told us that we must not continue our course.

Each of us monks fall asleep.

At sunrise we wake, our bodies recovered.

We go to find our kit-bags, our manual and blankets.

But they have followed the wind, carried off to goodness knows where.

We find them not – a truly embarrassing business.

Till in the afternoon, father is ready to go.

We speedily pack and preserve our monk’s robes and kettles,

Venerate and adulate, pay our respects.

We give homage to the temple, offering it our manual without sadness.

We ask for forgiveness from the Buddha image.

“When we had known times of sadness, hardship and disease,

We came to follow what we had read, to search and to find it.

We had our book already, so we had to come and take a look.

We brought neither ruin nor havoc, nor did we dig or cut the earth.

Now we merely wish to set up candles to open the time of Rahu.
And we called upon all rites of Dharma to assist us.  

We had not known of you, you beautiful Buddha-image, for it was not written down.

Yet now we have witnessed this area’s power, puissance and potent spells.

And I’m afraid it seems as if our manual is lost.

We have sprinkled water of merit and now we over-turn the vessel, never to return.

We offer it to the spirits, souls and shades who reside upon this mound,

All of the spirit-lords of the fields, of the city of Dvāravatā, the angels that overlook,

Who protect the crevice wherein is hidden what that lord placed,

The temple of the prince who serves the sovereign,

400 Phu is telling the Buddha-image that he no longer intends to dig for the drug but merely wishes to ‘open Rahu,’ to recite prayers to ward off the evil effects of the time of the demon Rahu. In Buddhist lore, Rahu is a demon associated with eclipses. In the Pāli canon, he kidnaps the deities of the sun and moon respectively. The sun and moon deities recite verses paying their respects to the Buddha and Rahu releases them as he ‘does not wish for his head to be split into seven pieces.’ Monks would still recite these declarations of devotion by the sun and mon deities – from the candima sutta and the suriya sutta – as protective verses. In modern-day Thailand, people still make offerings to Rahu to negate bad effects. Wat Srirathong in Nakhon Pathom specialises in his worship. People come to make offerings to this god of eclipses, expecting him to prefer black items such as black coffee, black liquor and black pudding.

401 The monks are trying to flatter the Buddha image. Buddha images were thought of as semi-alive and certainly powerful. However, they are not the Buddha himself and were often thought of as highly susceptible to vanity, hence why they require constant offerings and adoration.

402 Again, a saying. One often sprinkles water from a vessel as a way of donating merit to, for instance, a deceased loved one. To ‘sprinkle water and overturn the water vessel’ means that one has donated merit and shall never return, presumably because one does not like that person and so only does the bare minimum to commemorate them. In this case, however, the monks are scared and are vowing not to return to dig again for the drug.
He who built on this place the temple and Buddha image -

May you call overcome pain, suffering and hardship,

To be re-born in whatsoever life you desire.”

Now we must leave the lofty Bodhi, bamboo and ebony trees.

Those saplings of the evergreen smell sweet but taste bitter

But when there’s nothing to eat, I love them in abundance.

The cherry trees smell excellent -

Sad it is, shameful that we shall go far from this place.

We walk off in the fields to our goal till late afternoon.

We were able to follow our original path until we come to abundant grasses.

Until that evening time, seeing indistinctly,

Noticing trees, showing us the way to the path in the night.

We had to invade the clutter, veer and swerve, wade through the thicket,

A struggle to part the sugar-cane grass, we push to overstep them.

We come to follow the path we came to reach the life-prolonging drug,

But now with our over-robos no longer covering us – oh anicca!
Klan says that it was our fate to lose that admirable thing

And he walks ahead of us, as if casting us aside, looking back at us.

We rush back to the boat with the rest of our energy,

Then stop and sit, cold, trying to remember where we must go.

Till daybreak, the way is still forgotten – “But it was here, I’m sure!”

We have to guess the way walking till our legs are sore.

Till midday we reach the boat, utterly wearied.

Ashamed to meet the sparkling eyes of the boat rowers.

They laugh copiously, saying “Sadhu, sadhu! Blessed it is!

For of those eight requisites that you carried off, none you bring back!”

Darkness comes, drizzle shade rain and mugginess

Make us return in a rush, riding down the river.

We go straight on – temples would be a distraction,

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403 The “eight requisites” (aññha parikkhāra) are the eight meagre possessions monks are permitted to carry as their personal property. To lose them is a sign that one is careless and is certainly embarrassing for a monk, who is supposed to be rigorous in self-care. The eight requisites are: an outer robe, an inner robe, a thick robe for winter, an alms bowl, a shaving razor, a needle and thread, a belt and a water strainer.
For we have nothing to eat, we cannot turn nor dally.

We go to rely on the merits of the Lord of Ayutthaya.404

He who causes it to prosper – him we shall not forsake.

Morning and midday meal, sweet rice and fine moods,

All delighted, all are invited to extol

He, of highest rank, we wish that long may he prosper,

For an age longer than a Buddhist kalpa

May he rule the capital, make it flourish

With supreme dignity, unending, unbreakable.

To you, noble sir, we long and beseech,

Though gone and wandering, still we think of you.

Whenever we come, you invite us and offer us your hospitality.

We give all our blessings for you shall us aid, assist and avail.

A delight it is for us to offer you the fruits of our merits and good deeds,

404 This refers to Phraya Chaiwichit (Peuak), the Lord of Ayutthaya, a friend and benefactor of Sunthorn Phu.
As recompense for your kindness, he who preserves the capital.
เมื่อกล้าปลายน้ําคลื่นออกคลื่นล่อง
ทั้งฉันท์หนาวหิ้วน้ําส่งกลิ่นฟู
ที่พระยาหลานนางสอาดโยม
ขั้นใจเธอเราใช้แก่ในเมือง
พวกโพงพางนางแม่ค้าขายปลาเต่า
จับกระเหม่าไม่เหลือชั้นเรือแห
จะล่องลับกลับไกลอาลัย
เจ้าของขาวสาวสอนชะอ้อนพลอด
น่ารับขวัญฉันนี่ร้องวาน้องลา
As we take our leave of his lordship, slip and sail, freewheel downstream,

See the face of a young girl called Hun mending a skirt,

All fry their faces, apply tamarind, the smell diffusing,

Bolstering their beauty, lustrous and gleaming.

At the pier are many women beautiful,

Pretty and pleasing, their looks shining and well-adorned.

Tamarind face powder was once only used in the capital,

But has diffused and spread north to all the piers.

Groups of ladies paddling and selling fish and turtles.

They are adorned only with soot, top to bottom, a procession of boats.

We’re returning, far off, in grief glancing back.

We come to a pier, the sound of a blossom-headed parakeet chitter-chattering.

Its white-skinned owner has taught it to entreat and beseech,

“Come pay me a call, park your boat right up here and see me!”

“That looks well worth getting! But I’m afraid I’m off for now!”
So the bird prattled on: “The girls will hug and hug you!”
โอ้นกเอ๋ยเคยบ้างหรืออย่างพอตก
แต่นั้นก็มีที่ปักที่อาลัย
นี่ถึงพอตกน้อยใจจึงไม่ตก
ไม่เรียกเป็นเช่นนักแก้วแล้วจริงจริง
ได้ดื่มก็หิ้งกินในน้ำ
ประสาทเหลือรื่อร้องจริงจริงเจ้า
จึงตกหมากรายเรื่องที่เกื้อเชื้อนิ่ง
เห็นสิ่งไรในจังหวัดรัฐ
ไม่อ่อนหวานขานเพราะสะอาดสด
เห็นหมากรายที่จังหวัดอาลัย
นี่กล่าวแก่แม่แต่แม่เพราะเป็นม่าย
gิดรื่นปองตัวน่าหัวเราะ
นางสาวสวมจะตกให้ที่ไหน
ท่านยังไม่ช่วยตกแก่ตกที่บัง
หน้าตกตกด่าไว้ก็ไฟฟ้า
จะสูญนั่งนำพวกอยู่คนเดียว
ถึงพบกลายจะได้หูดงดอยู่ข้า
มักเกิดถวายได้ยุดดซิ่งอยู่ข้า
ไปเพื่อช่วยแล้วแท้บรรยงหา
ไม่จดหมายรายเรื่องที่เกื้อเชื้อนิ่ง
ให้จดหมายมือหนังมีแผนที่ไว้
ค่ำอย่างโรยมีได้ยังคงม่านไหน
ได้รีบร้อยแห่งหญิงจริงเพราะ
เหมือนเร่ขายคนเรื่องจะเชื่อเพราะ
เก็บกะเท่าหน้าวันแสนเสียดาย ๆ
Oh bird, do you really have something of what you speak?

These ladies who will hug me – where are they?

At home, I have an auntie who I miss,

Yet she is of no help in hugging me, bullying me till I give it up.

I think of it and anger rises that I cannot embrace her.

“Cold?” she’d say. “Well, then I’ll just stoke a fire at the stove.”

Surely it cannot be said that I am like this parakeet -

Pursuing doggedly this coldness, staying alone,

Cut off from love, abstemious, in the water.

Seeing a river of unmarried ladies, not looking back.

Oh, it’s strange – the boat at full haste hurtles.

Just one night and we’re already stopping at Ayutthaya.

And so I intended to write down this irksome anecdote.

We went on a trip to find the alloy,

Seeing many things through the provinces and pathways.
I wrote it down in a way rather like a map.

I did not make it soft and sugary to be sweet-sounding to the ear.

I was shy with my mouth, not speaking of any particular lady,

But still as if to say I had someone whom I was leaving and missing.

I did sing and discourse of dashing damsels because

I was just writing in jest. In truth, I’m a bachelor.

It’s like roving and rowing to sell eggplants and herbs.

You have to think of something that’ll get a good laugh,

So much that your face feels as if it’ll flake off – oh, what a shame!\(^{405}\)

\(^{405}\) Some of the words of this come from a children’s game which is something like ‘this little piggy went to the farm.’ The children surround in a circle and the singer counts their fingers, one for each word of the song. At the end of the song, the person’s finger she is counting ‘loses’ a finger. The person with no fingers at the end has lost and gets their hand rapped. The rhyme itself goes something like: “Jam Jee, eggplants and herbs, peel off, face off, row the boat with a proud chest, take a shower where, take a shower at the temple pier, get your face powder from where, put it on, get a mirror from where, have a look, take a peak, take a peak, Nok Khun Thong cries Woo…”
สุดาใดใจจืดพังผืดมาก
อย่ากระดากดับเดือดให้เหือดหาย
ห่อมเหื่อโบกที่ร้องเวลาดัง
ถึงร้องโพธิ์นเฝ้าหลังภูมิ
แต่เศร้าไม่ใช้หัวใจใจเจ้าด้วย
ไม่พันซึ่งพวกหุ่นแม่สุข
เดนกระจ่างกายสิทธิ์นี้ผิดเพื่อน
ขันจำเพื่อนให้จนชิดสนิท
เสน่หาอ้ายในนิลม
จะใคร่ช่วยเขากระดานไม่วางตระ
แค่เมื่อนเมื่อเห็นแฝงใจ
สุคงเจื่อมสักนี้ไม่หวั่นไหว
ขอแค่สิ่งล่าสัตว์จะพึ่งได้
ขอให้รู้ใจให้เจ็บใจ
ไม่เคลื่อนกล้าหุ่นแต่จะยังเส้า
ให้เหมือนสำนักด้วยสมุนยา
ภูมิคือป้ายชื่นชุ่มพุ่มผกา
มีให้แก่เวียนทหาร
เมฆบาทย์กลับบ้านกระดาษมัน
ภูมิหรือจะร่างทำเลย
จงทราบความทุ่มใจเอาด้วย
จะเห็นกลับกล้าวปลอกให้ตอบค่า
จะครองพันคงต้องมีเห็นสบาย
เมื่อเหมือนมาตามจะเชื้อให้ยิ่มหน้า
ถ้าใคร่คว้านร่วมปล่ำแล้วเราย่
All you ladies with a heart, tasteless and hard as ligament,

Be not ashamed to abate your anger, let it disappear.

It is with metta that I wish to offer up to you my body and so

Insult not this boy, I ask you to think on it deeply.

We are like insects flying for the lotus.406

For one hundred miles, partly revealed, smelling, flying towards.

But this flower is the foot of the spheres of our nearest heaven

And we cannot ever overcome, we insects, to reach that which we admire.

Like that rabbit with a heavenly body, different from all,

Who in the end went up and became a mark on the moon, nuzzled close and constant.

407

My attraction, my longing, my love

406 Again, although this nirat was supposedly written by Noo Pat, this final verse makes it clear that its true author was Sunthorn Phu. His name is ‘Phu’ meaning insect or bee and he makes at the conclusion here one of his favorite comparisons between his own lusty nature and that of a bee.

407 This relates to the proverb: ‘Like a rabbit aiming for the moon.’ It means you are dreaming for things more than you can accomplish. But this verse also relates to the rabbit-like mark on the surface of the moon. The idea is that the rabbit, against everybody’s expectation, managed to accomplish his goal of reaching and residing with the moon.
Is such that I long and admire like a rabbit for the moon, my ardour undiminished.

Only I fear that your moon is in its waning phase, un-bright, that

You will be hidden, engaged to shadow - yet still I shall defend and adore you.

I ask for the fate of relying on you till I reach the zenith of that moon.

I ask that you come down to me, I vow not to stray,

Nor to grow restless nor succumb to doubt – I shall only preserve my love.

I’ll be like a shadow stuck on you, little sister,

Every night to be refreshed by your heavenly flowers

Never shall I let my eye-striking-one have cause to worry.

Let those sacred magnolias reveal their petals, their bewitching whiff.

This bee shall never be parted from your pollens

I ask that you know of my devotion, my disconsolation.

That is the fate of poetry – I can only wait for you to console me with your reply.

I linger and listen, I await to garner your charms.

If you are as I think, what I desire shall leave me sated and full.

Yet, if this time you cannot speak nor talk well of me,
Then, my only recourse shall be to moan and lament.
Nirat Suphan

*Nirat Suphan* is a *nirat* travel poem which records Sunthorn Phu’s voyage to the province of Suphanburi, a densely-forested region north of Bangkok. It is the second of a duo of travel poems in which Phu travels with his sons in search of mercury, alchemical materials and life-prolonging elixir, the other being *Nirat to Prince Temple*. While that poem is written in the popular *klong* meter in which Phu excelled, this poem is written in the older and more difficult *klon* meter. Damrong held that Phu wrote the poem when he heard rumors of other writers saying that he was only good for writing *klong*. And so he produced this, one of the longest *klon* poems in existence. The choice of meter however means that this poem is more terse and less playful than his other poems. As is the case with all of his later *nirat*, Phu begins in a traditional *nirat* style then gradually becomes more inventive and eventually the story turns into something like a fantasy adventure story.

This abridged translation provides translations a selection of verses as well as summaries of those sections left out.

เดือนช่วงดวงเด่นฟ้า ดาดาว
จรุญจรัดรัศมีพราว พร่างพร้อย
ยามคืนนีกนนคานาวาน เขนยอดแออบแอ่ย
เย็นนั่งนิ่งดงย้อย เยื้อกฟ้าพานาวฯ

มหาnakดาวกุ้ง หุ้งคลอง
ชุมชื่นรุกขีส่อง ผึ้งน้า
ฤกิติมิสาหมาครอง สังสาดิชาลอออย
กลั่นกรเกือข้าว ใสกังหมางсмерฯ

ขอฝากขาติสาดร้อย สุรธรรม
ไว้ท่านสำกร เขดนน
ศาลาน่ากวัคกร พื้นทักษ์)+(ก+เขย
ใครที่พี่เป็นผี้ พื้้ให้อภิแท้ธูยฯ
In the monthly phase where the moon is stark in the sky, the spheres, the stars

Are crowns of light luminescent, glistening and flickering.

Late hours of the night, thoughts cold, close-up to my cushion.

Dew perilously sways, ready to bring me the chill of the frosty skies.

The Great Naga Canal, it curves and curls

With cooling, soothing trees on either side of the water.

I am brought to think of all my lovers and my wishes,

My promises of love – broken all.

My courage fallen to wrack and ruin, my sadness, my failures in love.
I ask to leave with you the husk of my love – my garlanded words.

I leave them out at the pier of Sakhon, right here.\(^{408}\)

The sala in front of Blessing Temple, I gave you betel nut to share.

Whoever is now my foe, I offer you my forgiveness.

\(^{408}\) Often one would put out rubbish on the river, or in general wish that something will be left in the protection of, for instance, the resident angels. Here, Phu is both blessing and asking to be finished with his attachments to his past lovers.
จรั่ง่งต่างน้องนึก
หัวสวน
สองฝ่ายชายหญิงยวน
ยั่วเย้า
หัวชายฝ่ายหญิงชวน
ชื่นเช่น เหนเอย
กลับเห็นข้ากั่วรา
แสนผ่อนฟื้นเกษม

เดียวกั้วบัคเกี้ยน
คุณ
ภูษฟันบานมา
เกิดเกล้า
เขาพระภูสุด
พัน โลก โอคเกอ
เสวยศุกข้นทุกลำ
ช่องชันสรรารางค์

เชิงเลนเป็นตลาดสล้ำ
หลักเรือ
ใจงอบประดิยเดือ
เกลื่อนกล้วย
หลักล่องชักเหลือ
ลำปะ ยางแสง
ออกเมนำข้าลูกม
นิ้มทองสองขามค
He remembers, bare and empty, your lover - your cheery face.

Both sides, woman and man, irking and irritating, the pique and the play.

That boy hopes that the girl will invite him

To play that game of pushes and pulls, to absorb and gorge in delight.

Turn across Wat Saket, stooping down at the river’s curve.

The hut of corpses, dearest mother, above my head.

May my fate and merit allow her to transcend the world, the basin of attachments;

To partake of gladness and sadness each morning, to pass through to the heavenly realms.
(6)

Out of the muck, a market rises up in rows of boats.

Pots and crocks, selling bricks and salt, slosh and splash,

Squeezing through a tiny channel, wearisome,

We leave the Mae Nam river at three strikes of the bell.
แซ่เสียงเวียงราชก้อง  กังสตา
แห่งหนังประจันหน้า  แห่งชิ้อง
สังคตแร่เสียงประจำ  สังขิต คิตลอย
ymเด็กครั้งครั้งเก่ง  ปีเก้าแย้มเสียง ๆ

วัดเลียบเงียบสังคลุมน้ำ  อาราม
ชุกเกิดดอยญาาม  แห่งน้อง
รายรินกันสาปทรม  สาวร่าง ทรงเผ่า
สุรภิลันสันก่อนพร่อง  เพราะเข้ามาใจ ๆ

เจริญบุญสุรธรรมิไว  ไม่สมร
สิบสวัสดารหรร  สองแฝง
เขียวขาวมากหลอกลง  ก้าวก้าน  อวินอย
จำหาขาดทีนเดียว  กลาดเนองช่องสาว ๆ
The round sound from pounding resounding, the moon-shaped bell.

_Gong-rong-ma-mong_, baste the bell

Conches in concert, sounds spread out, a toe-tap tune

Late night tolling, zip and zing ring out, the pipe a round and clear sound.\(^{409}\)

We skirted Liap Temple, silent the ashram.

I think back to those times, fighting for you favour.

The scent, redolent, your breast-cloth

That loveliness fell, oh my heart.

But your flavour faded, your favour for me forever gone.

---

\(^{409}\) These are sounds from the palace.
I offer all my merit, I offer it to you, my love.

Continue in well-being everlasting, radiant and shining.

I ask you to know these poems and rhymes I write - of smells and recollections,

Remembrances cut, severed and split from the one I truly cherish.
วัดแจ้งแต่งตึกตั้ง เดียงนอน
เคยปกน้องนกน้อยคู่พร้อง สมารสมักรักเอย
จ้าจากพวกนุชน้อง นกน้อยลอยลมฯ

สาวแก่แม่ม่ายแม้น มีคุณ
ขอเคราะหารุ่น ราชรู้
ถามดึกนิงสั้นบูญ แบ่งสักมากอบย์
วัดช่วยอาจารย์วัดดีญ์ กิดพระองสองเพลงฯ
At Wat Dawn, I decorated a building and set up a bed.

I once looked after birds, perched two together.

I once secretly replied to your letter, the beginnings of love

But I must now part - far from her, my little birds flew off into the wind.

Elderly ladies, divorced ladies, assisted me.\footnote{Phu’s ‘fan club’ seem to have comprised to a large extent of elderly noble ladies.}

I call upon the powers of Phra Warun, God of Justice, to know:

In this late night, I send my merit, share it all amply.

This temple helps me donate gladness and prosperity and to write

Inspired, as if someone were singing in harmony with me.
In the next few verses, Phu continues to offer up his merit to his lovers, the king and others. He passes alongside the quiet houses of Bangkok Noi, remembering the sights and smells of his lovers.
เดือนตกนกร้องร่าง สุวิทย์
เยี่ยมยอดยุคุนททรง ส่องห้า
เดือนคลั่งบัลโคลง ถิ่นขั้ว อิเกอย
จันทร์นี้ลับหน้า นับสรรัตนิมศวรรษ ๗
The orb of the moon fallen, the birds cry out to call to rise the sun.

He has gone to visit the summit of Yukunthon Mountain.\(^{411}\)

The moon disappeared from this world, but will re-rise and again.

My Jan (Moon) has also disappeared from this world, has disappeared from this earth and heaven.

Phu now passes through a variety of places in Bangkok and outside, such as Wat Pikun (Temple of Spanish Cherry Blossoms), Mango Village, Big Village. He laments the situation of the buffalo that must pull boats along the canal, who must suffer so that their owners can make money. He donates merit to the buffalo, wishing that all animals may be at peace and that in their following lives that they may overcome Mara (Verse 48). They being to enter a more forested area, the river villages along the canals becoming ever more sparse.

---

\(^{411}\) The name of a central mountain in the Traibhumi cosmology.
เขาควายรายร่องนิ้ว
นิทาน นานเออ

ว่าพญาภาษีทาน
ยุทพล้า

ศรีศะกระบือกระบาน
บังบัง ยังแพ

นึกเช่นปะนorghนิ้ว
เทนิยวนหนแนงยอ ๆ

เลขทางบางบ้านแห่ง
หินมูล

เดิมว่าเตาปูน
ป่นไว้

อาภัพลับชื่อสูร
เสียเปล่า เราอาย

อภิพนิธิใต้
ดูจ้อองอย่างปู ๆ
The horns of the buffalo had finger-marks on them – a local legend.

Like the monkey Pali who fought with a buffalo. 412

Took the head of the buffalo, pull-pulled it

I think of those finger marks, tight pulling-out marks.

We come until the area of lumps of rock

Before there had been ovens to burn limestone into powder 413

But this fame and name is gone, disappeared, vanished.

My heart is as bereft and forgotten as limestone. 414

412 This relates a local legend which is very dimly connected to a story from the Ramakien.
413 The limestone was for mixing with betel nut to give it flavor.
414 This comes from a saying ‘left out like limestone’ – aa-pap meun poon. This is because although betel nut was sometimes called ‘betel’ or ‘leaf’ it was never called by its third ingredient, limestone. A person who is ‘left out’ or ‘forgotten’ like limestone is someone who is always forgotten, skipped over or not given opportunities.
Phu now passes through more villages. He praises at length the fish in the rivers.
<table>
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<th>แหลมคุ้งทุ่งเดื่อนไม้</th>
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<td>ติดเข้าเกาะlaps ฯ</td>
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</table>
There is a pointed part of the river, fields and forests all.

We come to Wrecked Ship Village, the cracked hull.

Before, this area had been a beach by the sea.

The boat blown here, stuck and destroyed.\(^{415}\)

*Phu passes by yet more villages, such as Unmarried Ladies Village, where he writes that all the women here do not have husbands, though this description likely derives only from the name itself. He sees alligators ‘long and large, chasing, crawling pouncing... playing in the water, overturning on their backs.’ Phu writes prays that he may escape from the alligator just as the Buddha was destined to escape from Mara (Verse 103). In the next verse they paddle their boat through the forests they sing songs of Inao, a popular epic, of the time when the hero disguised himself as a bandit in the forest.*

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\(^{415}\) There are many towns in this area that are named after ships and such. In fact, it is possible that this area was next to the sea at the time as the sea level changed drastically at some point before the Ayutthaya period. It is possible that many of the old capitals such as Nakhon Pathom were next to the sea at the time to facilitate trade.
ใบร่มลมเรื่อยแหล้น
ลีลา
เหล่าหนุ่มชุ่มชื่นพา
เพื่อนร้อง
อิเหนาเค่ามลกา
กลเม็ด มากแสง
ฟังเสนาะเพราะพร้อง
พรั้งพร้อมข้อมเสียง ๆ

ฝั่งซ้ายฝ่ายฝากโปรแกรม
พิศควร
มีวัตพระรูปปูราน
ห่านสร้าง
ที่ดั่งวัตประตูสาร
สงสู่ อยู่เอย
หย่อมย้านบ้านชุนข้าง
ชิดข้างสวนบันลัง ๆ

ประทับหน้าทำสิบเนื้ย
บูราน
ห่วงวจีดฝักโถลง
บ้านร้อง
มหาโพทโบศิหาร
หักทับ บ้านเอย
ภิมพีลาไลสร้าง
สิบชั่วสู่พรรณ ๆ
The sails of the boat catch here and there the wind, gliding at a pace.

The pack of young ones feel cool and happy, friends singing songs

Of when Inao entered the forest of Malacca, skillfully sung.

Listen and it sounds sonorous, singing together, a harmonious ensemble.

On the right side of the river, strangely beautiful -

A temple that has an ancient Buddha image.

Temple with Market Door which has monks residing.

Around this area, the house of Khun Chang,

Next to the park of Banglang.
The pier of Ten Cowries, ancient,

There is Wat Far To (Temple of Urns), abandoned.

Bodhi trees, a bot and vihara, collapsed in one another.

Pimpilalai built it, a place of Suphanburi.⁴¹⁶

Having passed by many temples and villages as well as abandoned temples, Phu and his entourage spend the night at a temple and then go to worship at Wat Pa LeLai, an important temple built in the fourteenth-century that at that time had fallen into a state of mild disrepair, the following day.

__________________________

⁴¹⁶ Pimpilalai is the former name of the female protagonist of the epic Khun Chang Khun Paen, whose story takes place around Suphanburi.
ขันโคลใส่กั้น
พระป่าเรุ่น
ยื่นย้อยนับหน่าย
ปล้องปล้องผิวพื่นพร้อม
พระหนั้งด้วย
เที่ยวนบพราดับ
นิกพระเต็จมา
ลิงเต็กลือสมอพวา
ช้างเต็กลีฟแห้งหู
ขอเดชะ
ขอพระพุทธเจ้า
จงเหนือมาเช้าเย็น
ปราศนาว่าจะเป็น
บุญช่วยด้วยให้ได้
ครบยูง
สมชาตินบ
อย่างยิ่ง
นางกแก้ว
บงกชแก้ว
พระหนั้งดังองค์
บุญช่วยด้วยให้ได้ดุจข้าอาวอร
บุญช่วยด้วยให้ได้ดุจข้ำอาวอร
บุญช่วยด้วยให้ได้ดุจข้ำอาวอร
บุญช่วยด้วยให้ได้ดุจข้ำอาวอร

Ascending the hill, we bow to the dual legs

Of the Buddha of the Palileyaga Forest which seems to smile

His hand lifted, dangling his feet above lotus flowers

Beaming, grinning – like the Buddha himself.

With candles and incense, flowers I do worship.

I reflect upon that time when the Buddha did there tarry and

That blessed monkey found wild olives, mangoes to Him did tender;

And that blessed elephant found a bee’s nest on a branch which did render.

The name of a forest which the Buddha retreated to when the Sangha were in discord. He was served there by an elephant who brought him honey and a monkey which prepared bathing water for him. The image would have a monkey and an elephant on either side.
I call upon the attainments of the Buddha, to observe

My endeavours, that I have come, morning and night in hardship.

I wish that I may be a self-made Buddha on this very earth.

May my merit help me, just as I wish and pray.\textsuperscript{418}

\textsuperscript{418} Here Phu is wishing to be re-born in the future as a \textit{paccekbuddha}, a ‘lone Buddha.’ Such Buddhas achieve enlightenment on their own and do not teach or form a sangha. This is a somewhat unusual wish.
ยังไปไม่พ้นภพ สงสาร
ขอประสรริปสริยา อีกเหล้า
กราบถึงชังพระณิพพาน ผ่ายกาย หน่ำแอย
ขอสุขพุชโคสร้า สิ่งร้ายหายสุรา ๆ
อนึ่งเจ้าเหล่าเล็กส้วน ลูกหลาน
อนั้นเจ้าเหล่าเล็กส้วน ลูกหลาน
หมายมั่งดังพิศถาน ถี่ถ้วน
หมายมั่งดังพิศถาน ถี่ถ้วน
ขอให้ใส่นามขนาน ตาบพัท สวัสดีเอย
ขอให้ใส่นามขนาน ตาบพัท สวัสดีเอย
กลั่นชุบอุปรำล้วน ลูกเลี้ยงเหี้ยงธรรม์ฯ
กลั่นชุบอุปรำล้วน ลูกเลี้ยงเหี้ยงธรรม์ฯ
Though I shall not overcome the birth-lives of samsara,
I ask to meet with Sri Ariya Metteya in the future.
I bow. Until I may meet Nirvana in the far-off future,
I ask for happiness, to be delivered from sadness, until all ill things shall disappear.

For all my little children and grandchildren
Should they have a wish such as mine in every way
I ask to write down all of our names, Taap and Pat\textsuperscript{419}

Klan, Chub - sponsor them in merit, giving equally to all my children.

\textsuperscript{419} One would often write down the names of who made a donation or in the name of someone else. Phu is asking that should one of his children wish to offer up merit in the future that they include the names of all of the children here in this travelling group.
Having finished their prayers at this important site, the group continue on their journey, passing by more abandoned temples. They begin to pass various ominous-sounding places, which foreshadows a forest full of malevolent spirits and brigands.
บ้านซ่องช่องขาวแก้ว  เซิงหวาย
เหล่าที่หนีมุนนาย  เนินซ้า
ซ่องสุมชุมเรือนราช  วิมกับ เกรียงแสง
ใครจับกลับรุมข้า  ขัดซ่องช่องหลวง ๆ
We come to Hideout Town, hidden in an estuary, wooded.

A place where people fled their corvée-masters, since olden times.

Thick as thieves hiding houses alongside the Karen.

If a pursuer came, friends would help kill them, all to stay hidden from authority.

As the evening falls, they stop on a beach where many ‘Mon, Chinese and Thai’ had houses. They call out to the owners of the houses if they can stay the night and are accepted. In the morning they leave, the women of the village ‘making sad faces.’ They pass by more villages and their boat, not for the first time, gets stuck in the shallows near some tiger tracks. Here they glimpse the supernatural perils of the forest, including a spirit-lord controlling a snake Phu must make offerings to the lord to appease him.
ยนย่านสารปูเจ้า จอมโพธิ์
ปลาคลานน้ำจังโจ ศาลสกัด
ชุ้นเกลือเติมเต็มใกล้คลอด กลางกลิ่นเล่งแยลง
โตร่อนเสิร์นกว้ำนิลา วาดน้ำค่ายปลาฯ
ติดตื้นขิมเก้อ้ล่า เฉนรื่อ
บนบกรกรังเสือ ชวนชูม
นำเหทุเลือยเหลือ หลิยยาก กลางแสง
ศักครู้ดีกว้านกู้ม กลับข้างทางจรกฯ

เคยเห็นข้ามนูหนัง หลังรู
แวกวับคลีบคลายฟู พองเพื่อง
รู้ชิดจัดหากพลู พลีปุ้ง เจ้าอย
รุ้งกระท่อมเติมเต็ย หลีกคล้ายหาสูรฯ
We came to see the Sala of the Spirit Lord, chief of the Forest

Many fish abundant and shining, clean and many.

A python, shining, sliding, rolling and coiling.

As big as the pillar of a house or a ship’s hoist, it plunges into the waters diving for fish.

We are stuck in the shallows, some punting, some pushing the boat.

On the shore, many trees, tigers, rocks and bushes.

In the waters, a snake hissing, turning – unavoidable.

In a moment, we saw smoke closing off the path ahead.

My children saw something like a person sitting on the snake

Flashing there, the snake was swelling and cresting.
I knew what to do – I took my betel nut and leaves to offer to the spirit lord.

The snake rippling and glistening, slid off and disappeared.

*Having escaped the snake and the spirit-lord, they then come across some tigers who they only just manage to escape. They sleep near the beach with a fire, but are in fear of tigers who lurk in the bushes. The next day, they pass by various villages and Phu spots a ‘circle of monks’ who are ‘close in on each other, proudly o-ho-ing, chests out breathing big.’*
อยุตราวรรณห้อง ไก่ตั้ง ดีอัน
ไฟพยายามเหลือพ้นนั้น ผานบั้ง
ไก่แพ่ร่าขับพ่น ฟัดอุบ ทุบเธอ
เจ้าวัลเดิมร้องดัง แต่งเหล้นแน่นใจ ๆ

เสียเทียวกี่ยี่หุ่นขา เสียละพา
เสียที่มีกระฉลอมมา ในสแนคมะ
เสียดาภูผาสนา สัมประแซงเธอ
เสียนำภูผ้าร้อม เพราะรู้ดู่เห็น ๆ
They kick a rattan ball, play with chickens, fight them.

Their robes are casually hung, passing around their begging bowl as a betting kitty, clutching it at their sides.

Wandering about after with their losing chicken, grinding their teeth, whipping and boxing it.

The abbot has set up boats for racing, playing it for his own pleasure.

A waste of candles, a waste of incense, a waste of faith.

A waste that my mind, my heart bowed for them

A waste and shame for the order, for all monks.

A waste and shame for the eyes and ears to witness and to know.

As it gets dark, they stop off and make offerings to the Spirit lord of the Forest and are immediately greeted by a couple of old villagers, the man one-hundred-and-twenty and
the woman one-hundred-and-eighteen years old. Phu compares them to angels. The two teach them ‘ancient stories’ of the area.
ผู้เล่าเรื่องย่าน บ้านทึง
ท้าวอู่ทองมาถึง ถิ่นที่สอง
แวะเชือกหนังขึง เขาไม่ให้เรา
สำคัญบ้านขัดคู่ คือที่ถิ่นแปลง ๆ

วัดพระโรงชุงคู่ย่าน บ้านทึง
ชื่อวัดคู่ถิ่น ถิ่นที่สอง
ผู้เล่าเรื่องซิ่ง จะแจ้งแสดงเลย
ท่านนั่งสั่งสอนพระ พระไปไม่ได้ครับ
The elders tell us the story of Stingy Village,

Of King Uthong who came to that place of flat fields

Stopped in for leather straps to tie, but this they would not give him.

He cursed this River-bend Village, and it changed to be Stingy Village.

There is also a temple nearby on the curve of this Stingy Village

Named clearly is the temple as Stingy Temple – just as in the story.

The elders had told us the name to make it clear for us,

Sitting, teaching us that you must put the accent marker above the name.

Leather straps were useful for making strong houses. King Uthong, the legendary founder of Ayutthaya, was on his way to found a new city. It would seem that people often misspell the name as Baan Teung, which has no obvious meaning. But the elders are saying that it must be said with the accent, making it mean ‘Stingy Village.’
Soon after, while still with the old couple, Phu comes across the corpses of two monks in the forest.
ต้นเหิ่งเสี่ยววั่งแห้ว แง่สันง
เสือตับกบกิ้นส่อง รูปไม้ย
ต่อไปล่อนถนนพง นามเห็ดเหลา
เสือพลัดเด็กน้ำวาย บางซ้ากรรมหน้า ๆ
ต่อนกยางเนียดตั้ง บั้งยา
เสือตีกีกโครงลาย หลักท้อง
กินคีบกับโพยกหา แทนน่าขาอย
ภิขุฟูศริตอง ไถยนั้นทันตา ๆ
ต่อนกยางเนียดตั้ง บั้งยา
เสือตีกีกโครงลาย หลักท้อง
กินคีบกับโพยกหา แทนน่าขาอย
ภิขุฟูศริตอง ไถยนั้นทันตา ๆ
At noontime we heard the sound of someone running, loud and resounding.

A tiger had pounced and hit two monks, both perished.

They had been snaring pheasants, chasing without shame, named Thet and Ket.

The tiger had come to fight and devour them because they had sinned, terrible karma.

Trapping birds in a pillar cage, hiding themselves.\textsuperscript{422}

The tiger had ripped open their stomach, insides spilling out,

It ate the liver, their hips until you can see the bones at their lap.

These \textit{bhikkus} violated their precepts and so had to reap their punishment.

\textsuperscript{422} A \textit{pa-niet} is a kind of trap for birds and (in larger versions) for tigers and elephants. It is basically a cage made of wooden pillars which the hunter tries to get the bird to enter by scaring it or by enticing it with another bird, then shuts the door.
Trapping birds, unable to fight the tiger, hit and killed.

The area one of a spirit lord, waiting hidden long.

The tiger ate them all – liver and kidneys, feet and calves and stomach.

What a pity, that this situation was foretold by our old man and really did come true.\textsuperscript{423}

\textsuperscript{423} The old couple’s foretelling of this event is not described except here.
สงสารท่านสอื้นใส่ โศก
พลังพลังหลั่งน้ำตา ตกด้วย
หนูหนุ่มชุ่มชลนา นั่งเจ้า เหงาเอย
ร้วงทำไม่มั่น ไม่สริ้นถวินหวัง ๆ
เรือออกนอกท่าบ้าน ทานยาย
ย่อไวกะหัวซึ่นหาย มุกย้อย
เซ็บบ้านท่านทั้งหลาย แสดง หมวดอย
ให้มีผังใหญ่เจียว นั่งรัวน้ำตา ๆ
The group then take their leave of the old couple, both the children and the old villagers in tears at parting.

(242)

Pity pity these wailing, whimpering, greeting ones.

Gushing, gushing rivulets those tears, falling too.

Those little boys wet with tears, sitting cradling themselves, forlorn.

Over and over I say – should we not perish,

Should we not die, we shall surely meet with them again.

(243)

As the boat leave from the pier of their house, the old lady

Curtseying and wai-ing, crying, sobbing, lamenting - her nose in rivulets.

All the villagers, many of them look sad all

Sitting, old and young, young and small, babbling in tears.
Next, the group comes to Kratua Village, where there is a top-knot shaving ceremony for women. They invite Phu who is a monk and so an expert in ceremonial matters, to come and help them decorate the crowns for the ceremony. Then there are entertainments (mahrasop). Some girls give Pat and Tap betel leaves. The next day, an old woman leaves a love trap for Sunthorn Phu to try to make him leave the monkhood (lasikaa). He decides that as he is already old and aiming for spiritual release, he should not think of worldly things. He laments that his children do not feel the same way.
บ่วงผูกลูกรักแล้ว แก้วรำ
ตั้งพ่อท้องท้าย แก่แล้ว
ห่อนอยู่ซู่สมรหมาย มัติโมฆ โอซอย
แผ่เหล่าเจ้าลูกล่วง ก่อร่อนสอนแสง ๆ

น้อยน้อยพลอยว่าน้ำ ลาสุพรรณ
สาวแก่เอกสมัน สะกร้าน
ดูมากว่าสิบวัน ตลอดเวน แควนเยอ
โปรดทุกทุกบ้าน บ่อเวนเหหนสาว ๆ

บุราห่าน่ว่าน้ำ สำคัน
ปั๋ดนองสุพรรณ แห่งแห้ว
แคนคลิกันที่สุพรรณ ธรรมชาต มาสะย
ผิวจิ้งเคลี่ยง้เคียด แจ่มบ้างทำสนาม ๆ
That is the snare that children, the lure\textsuperscript{424}

The trap for their father – a disappointment is this body, now old.

Once I had aimed oh-so for the ladies, now I but pray for moksha from re-birth.

But these young boys of mine, troublesome they are and as if allergic to my counsel.

\textsuperscript{424} It is said that there are three ‘snares’ that keep laypeople to the worldly life. The first is at the neck which are children, the second is possessions at the hand, the third is our wives and partners at the foot.

\textsuperscript{425} The word for ‘large-eyed’ implies that they look like Indian people which, compared to those in Bangkok who are largely mixed with ethnic Chinese, have large eyes. The fact that they wear their hair in a top-knot surprises Phu because, although he is in a far-away region, it is similar to the fashion in Bangkok.
The ancients say that these waters are of great import.\textsuperscript{426}

The trees, the forests and people of Suphan - golden, flickering and glittering all.

This land of Suphan, indeed heaven-like, its nature to be rich in gold -

Their skin smooth, their accents good-sounding, clear as this water, like the name of their land.

\textsuperscript{426} The Suphanburi River is thought of as important because it is one of five rivers whose waters must be used for a royal ‘sprinkling’ or coronation. These rivers are Phetburi, Suphanburi, River Pa Sak, River Lopburi.
ถึงถิ่นสริ้นบ้านป่า โป่งแดง
เรือติดคิดขยาดแสยง พยัฆร้าย
สวมสวมอาวดี้แดง พื้นสรา วาบแฮ
สองฝั่งทั้งขวาซ้าย สัตร้องซ้องเสียง ๆ

ทุ่งรางบางแวกต้น พันทรง
กระหวามหางพระลาย เล่อมพร้อย
เหยื่อธนพิจพระตราย แอร์บอร์ม งามเอย
ดูน่วงแนวแก้วก้อย นพเก้าวาวแหวน ๆ

สุดเหมืองย้องขึ้นค่าง หว่างเนิน
ล้วนแระแกะเกิน เก็บทั้ง
พลวงเหล็กเด็กสุดต้น กระโดดคั้น ตามแสง
ช็อมเล่นเห็นเกลือนกลิ่ง กลาดสแตงย่างเส้น ๆ
We come to a place where there are no longer houses, a saltlick earth.\textsuperscript{427}

The boat is stuck, ten-thousand terrors, frightening tigers.

Tred, tred, crunch, hiding between trees, a stinking-animal smell flashes past.

Both sides, right and left, animals cry out together all at once.

A large and wide bend at Bang Waek, Turn Village, the river shallow, a floor of sand.

Scattered and sprinkled, glittering and gleaming, lustrous and brilliant.

Like a shard of diamond, jewels, beautiful and shining.

Like the dazzling gems of a ring of the nine types.\textsuperscript{428}

\textsuperscript{427} These are patches of ground rich in mineral deposits. Animals such as buffalos and elephants come here to lick the earth to gain essential nutrients. It therefore a feeding as well as a natural hunting ground. Suphanburi was well-known for its abundance of saltlicks and was, since Ayutthaya times, one of the realm’s key sources of horses and elephants.

\textsuperscript{428} Here Phu is describing the mercury deposits in the river. The ‘nine types of gem’ refers to an ornate type of ring which had a gem of each of the nine classical types. It was believed to be both beautiful and auspicious.
We come to the end of the country, ascending a hill.

Mercury all over, too old – throw it away.

Royal mercury and cinnabar, the kids walk over tripping, they have to jump over it.

We look at it as it rolls all over this land, beautiful as in a dream.

_In this area filled with glittering mercury rock, Phu eventually comes across the sala of the Two Siblings at which a mysterious event occurs, related to the local legend of a boy called Fak who was punished for being cruel to his mother by ‘two siblings’ who are two spirit guardians who reside in trees on either side of the canal._
ถึงหว่างยางพี่น้อง สองยาง
gēแถวแห่ก่อนยาง ป้าดัน
เกิดแระแห่ออกจากยาง ข้าวกระ พระแสง
ถูกประจำในเร้าล้น สล่างแหว่แห่งสอน ๆ
ปลายน้ำลำภูผิ่นปัก โจดเขิน
ขักก้องต้องคิดอยู่ แง่งต้น
จอดสองที่น้องพลิน พล่องชะล่ายางอย
ขันขุมพุ่มพุกุยกรืน หว่อนน้ำลำหลากหลาย
ปลายเหลือเรือหุ่นน้อย ลอยพาย
ถึงหว่างต้นยางตาย ตกน้ำ
ช่วยจุดสุดชีวพาย หลักเลือด เฝือดแห้ง
เมื่อมีแม่ข้ามปล้า ปลูกกระช่อเสียง ๆ
We come to between two trees between, two brothers.

As old as the very beginning of the forest.

There are mercury slabs jutting out, wide and huge.

Those who scrape past them are pained and hurt, the beautiful mercury jutting out plentifully.

Along the waters, curving narrowly

Stuck on an impediment accidentally, in waters shallow.

Parked at the two siblings, two rubber trees resplendent,

The canal waters they coolly shade, their foliage overhanging darkly.

Strange it is! That this boat, floats along without us paddling
Till between two resin trees, both fallen in the water.

All of us work to lift it, to the utmost of our lives, hands bleeding, yet budge it will not.

Ladies and women screech, trying to wrestle it up, raised voices and sounds.429

429 This is the only mention of ‘ladies’ on board the boat with the group. This is likely only a convention of describing the difficulties of prim ladies in the wilds in order to stress that this is a deep and dangerous forest.
ถามเขาเล่าว่าอ้าย ฟักเพื่อน
ดิ่มเมตร้างเรือน ร้านวาย
เจ้าสองพี่น้องเหมือน มุ่งปราบ บาปแฮ
โพล่งผลักหักคออ้าย ฝักม้วนตัวยกรรม ๆ
ชาวป่าภาศภเศร้า สู่สถาน
เราเปลี่ยนเหลือหนหลา สองพี่น้อง
อารักสักฟ้าซาน เชี่ยวช่วย ด้วยbbox
โป่งป่าอย่าแผ้วพ้อง พวกฃ้าอาไศรย ๆ
สรวงข้าวพร้าวอ่อนกล่วย ด้วยbbox
เชิญพี่น้องสองเสวย สว่างร้อน
แปลกอย่าอื่นเลย ลูกกระโทม โปรดพ่อ
ขอแร่แม่เก็จก้อน กับเต้าเจ้ายาง ๆ

601
I ask our guide and he tells me that it was crazy Fak.

He who hit his mother, made her run from her house – a deed most terrible.

And so those two brothers did aim to recompense,

In an instant, the tree cut, fell, broke his neck. Fak died because of his karma.\(^{430}\)

The forest folk took out his corpse, taking it to the resting place.

Silently we turned and saw there the *sala* of the two siblings.

You spirits - preserving, potent, in arcane matters well-versed – aid us.

Those things of the saltlick earth - we wish not to meet them, we beseech you.

\(^{430}\) Presumably, the spirits made the tree fall on Fak as he passed between the two trees in order to correct his bad deeds, breaking his neck.
We offer those spirit lords fresh coconut and bananas,

Calling on the two siblings to partake, to lessen their vexation.

To we who have come this first time, be not angry. Forgive our transgression, we beg you.

We ask for a large, beautiful mercury piece, of you two tree lords.
หูน้อยพลอยร้องบ่วง
เสียงด้านน้าหม่น
เปิดฝ่าเท้าฉอก
หูมีรัปสรัพเสียงซ้อง
เหมือนครูผู่เท่าแจ้ง
.sax ้านมหวาน
แว่วก้อง
ถูกท่วน เอบย
เสนาะซ้อนกลอนในฯ
เหมือนครูผู่เท่าแจ้ง
แหจุดเหี้ยไรซ์
รับฝ่าเหี้ยไว
พรเสรธยาสลบ
เดี๋ยวหนึ่ง้ออู้อู้
พรมสมุทอยุดแฮ
เดี๋ยวหนึ่ง้ออู้อู้
ลมลั่นครั่นครึกฟ้า
หนาฝน
ซู่ซู่หนูวิ่งวน
เทียรดับกลับมืดมน
เหมนเบื่อ เซ้อย
จวนค้าจ่าอยุดค้าง
คิดแก้แร่โพรง ฯ
My little boys also sing, asking to offer up to the sala,

Their sounds as beautiful as sweet breast milk, all over echoing,

It opens the forest, from this port of angels, all over in every place.\textsuperscript{431}

Older youths sing also, following those words sung, repeating the verses in harmony.

Our old man guide knows and informs us that the spirit be unsatisfied.

We must wait, light Victory Candles as he knows,

Making vanish the potent powers of the gods of the waters, make them stop.

At that moment, a whistling \textit{uu uu} - a soft, large tree has fallen.

\textsuperscript{431} The phrase \textit{berk pa} means to ‘open the forest.’ This refers to a variety of ceremonies performed, for instance, before an elephant hunt to ask for the permission of the spirit lords to enter the forest and have good fortune in what one seeks there.
The wind loud, cracks into the sky, now with rain thick.

Sluicing sounds, the mice run around, thinking that an elephant passes.

The candles blow out, returning to darkness. Vexation - once again tigers will worry us.

Almost dusk and we must set up here, thinking still of how to get the mercury.
ขอเรื้อนเงื่อนนั้นก็

ภาควิเคราะห์พระไพ

จัดสรรเชื้อไฟ

ทุ่งทำป่าจะต้อง

เราถือข้อสังสาร

แล่งลำฟ้าดาดพญาน

หวังแย่แกบฏาน

ข้าวศีลปิฎกของชู่

ติกสัจสัตสบล้อม

เย็นย้อปรินวง

เกลี้ยหลับกลับหลังองค์

เห็นสิริแห่งหน้าไว้
I look at my boat above the waters with a vexed feeling.

What misfortune, all because of those sibling spirits.

I will battle them, invite fire to come. It will utterly envelop all -

The field, the port, the forest must all be destroyed, every part.\(^{432}\)

We who are upright, honest, who practice the precepts.

May the earth and the skies bear witness to this, all know.

I wish for this ancient mercury only to lessen the sadness of this world.

For what do you lords hide that which rightly belongs to humans?

\(^{432}\) Here Phu is vindictive towards the tree spirits who refuse to allow him to dig for the mercury.
Late, silent are the animals and the bushes and trees.

Cold, in our string-encircled area, ensconced.

Sleepy, asleep, dreaming. I am near those spirit-protectors, calling them.

I see them all over, sit and 

\textit{wai}, saying that if I have said anything wrong I ask 

forgiveness.
รูปจ้าสาวหนุ่มล้วน
นางงาม
สองพี่มีเป็นสาม
พี่น้อง
เรียกสองพี่น้องสาม
น้องพี่มีเอ
สามแน่แต่คำพร้อง
พี่น้องสองชายฯ
รู้สึกนึกเรื่องเจ้า
เล่าความ
ทราบหมดคำหมายตาม
แต่ไว
ไอผุดกลบบัดขา
ยุกยามมากเอ
บุญบวดกรวดกระสินให้
แห่งเจ้าเล่าความฯ
เล่าความตามเรื่องเหลี่ยม
แต่หลัง
ใช้คิดบิดเบือนบ้าง
บอกเจ้า
ขัดแยงเพราะยุกยั้ง
อยู่อย่ามาเอ
ภัยสิทธิ์การตลาดแกล้ง
glabกู้คุ้มกู้ควานฯ
There are both young women and men, white and beautiful.

Those two siblings are really three, young all.

Those that they call the two siblings – three there are!

Three for sure, those that the villagers call the Two Brothers.

And so I spoke to them of how I search for the alchemical materials.

Don’t think that what I say is merely concocted, a tall tale.

I tell you, it was a place of terrible fates and many difficulties – do not come!

Those magic bodies of the mercury with their power had engulfed me, enveloped me in their smoke.\(^{433}\)

\(^{433}\) Mercury was believed to emit an enveloping smoke to hide itself from the rays of the sun which, because it is a quintessentially cool element, it dislikes. Mercury could also fabricate illusions.
(275)

I feel that I must let you know all of this,

And so that you shall be properly informed, I have written it all down in entirety.

Oh how pitiful I am to have fallen so low, to such wretchedness.

I offer up the merits of my ordination, I sprinkle them to the lords of this forest.
ตามร่องคลองที่เจ้า
เด็คคลองคลอดด้วย
เสี่ยงคลองผลิตนาม
เสี่ยงแต่เดี๋ยวเสียร้าย
ร้านร้องถึงกระหึมฯ

สุคคลองหนะองหน่วังชาว่าง
อ่างแดง
ที่ธนีนตาแดง
dูจงพร่อง
สังเกตเขตขอบแขวง
ความที่ชี้อย
ขันท่างทางชาวท้อง
ทุ่งช้างวางขาวงฯ

เขาเขียวโอคูมขัน
เกียงเกียง
รั้วรินรุ้งราเรียง
eriyบัวย
ใหญ่หัวดวงนาเทียง
tัดหวด เข่าแช่
ย่างใหญ่ยอดธงย้อย
ยกใช้โยนอย่างฯ
The siblings apparently tell Phu of the path he should follow henceforth. His dream over,

Phu wakes. Having slept the night near the sala of the Two Siblings, he and his party
depart in the morning to follow the path that Phu had heard about in his dream:

(278)

I follow the elephant-path that the siblings told me of,

Gradually, ducking, weaving about following,

Turning, taking out thorns, saplings get stuck stinging.

Sounds only of evil tigers, snarling out, growling echoes.

(279)

We reach the end of the canal and find a wide pool, as they said.

A place clearly red, like they said.

I notice that in this wide place, that is pointed to me,

I get up to the right side, a field lonely and afraid, for elephants.
Phu then praises the country and forest the following morning:

Hills green, elevated, rounded, high, abutting and adjoining.

Shaded, cooling, lined up, just so.

A concentrate of yellow rattle-pod flowers at a landing beach

Rubber trees with huge hangings, standing large.

Rustling, leaning over, making a cooling shade.
ถึงธารบ้านเกรี่ยงร้าง
กลางดง
ไร่ฟ่ายหมายมั่นคง
คิดค้าง
รอนรอนอ่อนอัศดง
dำพยับ ลับเอย
ภักผ่อนนอนเรือนห้าง
ก่อให้ไฟโพลง ฯ

ถามไถ่ใช่เหล่าร้าย
กรายมา
พูดเล่นเป็นคนชา
รักใขร้
ถามชี้ที่ว่านยา
ระยะย่าน บ้านถอย
ชื่อกันยังส่งซ่ำให้
แพร่เข้าเยาะเรือนฯ
We come across a Karen house, abandoned, in the midst of the forest.

There are fields here and so we decide it is a good place to camp.

The heat wavers at dusk, the mirages of sunset disappear.

We rest and sleep in a treehouse, making the fire as tall as we can.

Phu wakes up during the night to hear the sound of crickets. He goes outside and sees a group of elderly Karen people:

I tell them, “Well you don’t seem an evil bunch who have walked over here.”

We chatter saying, “Oh you’re an old one!” – getting along.

We asked whether there was any special herb around this place.\textsuperscript{434}

\textsuperscript{434} The word \textit{waan} is a large group of herbs, characterized by large underground roots. These herbs have medicinal properties, but these medicinal properties include protection against spirits and misfortune.

617
“My name is Kwang,” says he, “Come and drop in at my house.”
ค่ามั่งช้ำผ้มัน
ค่าเยน
ผ่าทะนองกุ้ง
ปล่อยโปรดโทษ
ย่ามพ่าพร้าะก่ำทิ้ง
ให้เจ้าอาญาณฯ
สิ่งของต้องแต่งตั้ง
นั้งสูน
ปล่อยพระศักดิ์สิทธิ์
แบ่งให้
กระดานร่างกระรุก
เตรียมกระรบาท
แต่กว้างส่งบูรฯ
ตายผู้มีความประสงฯ
จากศพหลับคักลั่ม
พู่พวง
ป่าวันยายส้มป่อย
แต่นั้นว้า
ตามกระรี่เอี่ยงลั่ม
เหล่าอ่วยวงแสง
หักอย่างคำ้ที่ถ้า
อันนั้นสำราฯ
We cross the saltlick, a miry patch, in the evening.

There we spot a trapper of kingfisher birds, toppled and rolled down.\textsuperscript{435}

The trapper had perished, but those birds were still alive. I release them from their punishing fate.

A hanging bag and a basket he left, a bag of rice long and large.

This and that I assemble, setting up funerary rites.

I lay down the corpse, with it merit we share

Pouring water, singing compassion, the Karen bowing down flat.

The old men Kwang and Sangbure get a knife and bag as they wished.

\textsuperscript{435}Mo to – a bird specialist, who would go with a female bird into the forest in order to lure and catch, then sell birds. Kingfisher birds are small and not used for food, but usually sold to Chinese merchants to make jewelry and hats.
We walk away from the body at dust, into the murk of bushes and trees.

The herb forest is a patch of the forest, land of the Lawas.

Follow the Karen, winding through short-cuts, coming to a pond, property of the Kueay.\textsuperscript{436}

We cut down logs to sleep near the course of the river.

They then go down near the river, trying to get some honey and Phu’s children joke about. The Karen men then warn them that this is a spot of ‘evil herbs,’ which cause one to be ‘drunk’ (mao) or rather intoxicated, dizzy and sleepy.

\textsuperscript{436} A minority group which at the time lived in the forests near Bangkok and Ayutthaya, and tended to be work with elephants.
เกรี่ว quáก์รำย ควายจ้ว
เสือบอแก้กั้มแก้ว กลิ่นหวาน
เข้าขัดพิเศษมั่ว มาฆา สมบัต
ด้วยย่างก้าวไร้ร้น ตอดได้ไม่ตาย ๆ
คิดค้นชื่นชมไม้ ไฟฟ้า
พริ่งพร่นั่งค้างพระ พรานท้า
กลิ่นหวานช้านสังเม กระ⚽ทรงกรุณ ภูเนอ
ยั่งมีครัตสว่างกล้า กลิ่นกล้ำกล่อมมา ๆ
The Karen says that this forest of herbs is evil, buffalos and cows
And even tigers dare not come here, so terrified are they by the smell of the herbs.
Coming close, the herb’s poison will make you dizzy and blind, drunk then unconscious.
We must set up a fire near our treehouse so that we may escape death.

That night, the whole forest is alight with strange lights and colors. Those lights are in lines, and are thought to emerge from Plai, a type of ginger root. Phu’s children want to go and dig it up, but the two Karens forbid this as it might lead to their deaths:

In the middle of the night, moist were the forests and hills
Little by little, the dew sprinkles from the sky.
The smell is carried along with the wind, diffusing softly.
The darker it gets, the brighter that smell, enveloping us in a stupor.
As it gets late, the smell of the herbs gets stronger and everyone gets intoxicated by it.

But Phu had already learned the way to defend against it from Thong and Nak, two sages that he has known.
หากครูรู้แก่วัน
คำจนหนักกินจิตสอน
เที่ยงมาเหล่าสุกด้น
แม่ส่งต้วงกราบไหว้
ท่านสอน
นั้นได้
ให้짐ึน กินแส
ว่าชิมึนกินหาย ๆ

สามยามตามเตรียงออก
มองทาง
เดือนแหว่งแสงรางรัง
เรี่ยไม่
เกรียงราวป้ายหลอดพลัง
เพลิงชุด ชุดแส
ออกจากปากคงได้
แต่สั่งว้าป้ายสูง ๆ
But my teacher knew a way to remedy the herb,

Cast a spell on turmeric, eat it until you fall asleep.

The Karen was drunk and my children gave him turmeric to eat.

The stupor abated for each of us. He thanked me and said, “It was the turmeric that made it go.’

_The Karens tell them not to linger in this place until morning as the smell would grow more malignant. Phu agrees with them and they head out._

(331)

At three at night, we follow the Karen slow, as he guides us along the path.

The orb of the crescent moon, vague its rays, skimming the trees.

That Karen of ours, he plays his pipe as he walks, holding a flame and flint.

And we got out of the jungle – entering the den of the Lawa in the jungle high up.
Kwang, the Karen, blows his pipe and listens to a reply which soon comes. This means that the Lawa village will welcome them. They come to the Lawa village and, seeing that their party are so cold they are shivering, the Lawa light a fire for them to sit around.
ลว้าเถือเนื้อสดให้ไส่กระบุง
หนุ่มแต่งแกงเผ็ดปรุงแพร่พร้อม
กินแกงเหล่าเครื่องมุ่นมองปากอยากชิมแกงฯ
เสิร์ฟกับกับเครื่องล้อมกะทะลี้ชิมแกงฯ
ร้องอร่อยพวกชอดกลุ่มหนุ่มสาว
แม่ลูกถูกพุ่มชาวยืดหยัด
เมล็ดเนื้อเหลือใหม่พวกชาวพร้อมชาญน้อยๆ
กอดหนุ่มอุ้มหนูน้อยน่าได้ไว้ผัวฯ
วันแรกแต่งพริกพร้อมล้อมดูครกใหญ่ไส่โอครูกวางป่าฮ่ากระทะหูห้อมซดหมดยาย
อิ่มอกยกมือไหว้แวดล้อมพร้อมเพรียงฯ
The Lawa gave us fresh meat, put in a basket
My boys mixed up a spicy curry, just right.
Eating rice, the Karen watched on - look at their mouths, full of want.
Done, and with all the Karen around,
Nibbled, tasted and devoured the curry.

Cry “Delicious!” shoulder-to-shoulder slurp and finger-lick, boys and girls.
Children and mothers, noses gushing, snot stretching and dangling.
Done, in a sweat all together sparkling, saying time and time again, “So tasty!”
They give my lads a squeeze, still holding on to their little ones.
Oh, I’d bet you’d like a husband like that!

437 Water pours from their noses and sweat comes because the food is spicy and they are not used to it.
They ask us to show how to make a curry, get the chillies ready, in a circle see.

In a big mortar put and pulverise, put on the lid.

Forest deer – ho! – five handle pots, smell and sip

Full to the chest, lift their hands in a wai.

All around the area, altogether and gay.

_Sunthorn Phu admires the beauty of the Lawa women, but he does not appreciate their hips or their pierced long ears. The Lawa children play with Phu’s children. Soon, the party heads out. A man who says he has seen a chedi where mercury is hidden guides them. They only take bananas as food because their guide tells them that the chedi it is not far off. On the way, again Phu admires the nature surrounding him._

---

438 Phu is saying that the Lawa women surely would want husbands like his children who can cook so well.
สำนักข่าวมณี เมืองแสลง คุกเถย
สารภิพ่อเคย ซัดเนื้อ
บุญนาภากิจ ไร่เซย เช่นกลิ่น ขมิ้นแฮ
ถึงไม้เหลืองเรืองหรือ วั้งใจขอทานผู้ ๆ
No turmeric (*kamin*), no mother to look after him, my son

Only Salapee flour have I to anoint his skin.\(^\text{439}\)

Indian Rose Chestnut in hard times have I used instead, its smell close to turmeric.

But it is not yellow like your turmeric, that now I beseech, I beg of you ladies.

---

\(^{439}\) Paste derived from *Salapee* (*Mammea Siamensis*), an evergreen tree with fragrant yellow or white flowers, is easier to prepare and apply than turmeric, which was used as an ointment for women and children so that they would have golden, fragrant skin. The idea is that Phu is not as skilled as women such as the boy’s now deceased mother, and does not have the skill to apply turmeric to his son’s skin to make it golden. He uses *Salapee* or Indian Rose Chestnut (*Mesua Ferrea*) which is white instead. Phu is reminded of this because the smell of the Indian Rose Chestnut reminds him of the smell of applied turmeric of his former lovers.
สงสารท่านที่มีวัย ถวายบุญ
กระดูกยังบังสกุน เก็บฝา
อ่ำบาดาลขัดแปรงผู้จุ้น จุดใส่ไฟเยย
ลายเปล่าเจ้าภูมิ บ่อถังครูสอน
เหล็กไหลได้แต่ภูมิ หาแสง
ถูกแล้วแม่สารแสง เหล็กคล้าย
سلوكอุ่งหูเมืองพลิ้งแพร่ง วางทศกรดเยย
ควันพิศฤทธสารร้าย ร้าวใจให้สร้างยุทธ
Pitiful it is, he that has perished, end of his merit.

His bones still in his sacred robes, I collect the cloth.

Satchel and bowl, broken into bits, we put in the fire.

He is dead without a master, never knowing a teacher to show him the proper way.

The fluid metal led him only to madness, that which he so sought.

Mercury can disseminate its rancour, a poisonous reaction.

Smelted and melted in fires fierce, to the touch like acid.

Poisoned smoke, empowered smoke - it infects with its evil.

You cry and shout, finally falling apart to nothing at all.

They climb a high mountain, then go down it. The mountain is filled with many animals – tigers, deer. They come to a tunnel that goes through the mountain, going into the an
area encircles by mountains. They come to a waterfall. Behind the waterfall is a cave.

They find near the waterfall an ancient chedi with sparkling plaster walls.
พระเจดีที่ค่างถ้า บูร์บูราน
สูงสักทดสอบประมาษ ล้มยอมบ้อม
ปูมีที่ช่องตาม ดันบิด สนิสเส
ปูนเพชรเจาะหลอม แล่งไวปีบลาน ๆ

หยุมยุ่มรุ่มเข้าเล็ก ปีกถุง
ปิดห้องของท่านอยู่ กิ่งเศ่ยว
ต่างมองช่องตามดี แคว่บับ สับเส
สวมมาปรากฏกรมกว่า หวังผึ้งจึ่งมา ๆ

จัดแจงแต่งตั้งธูป เพียงรถาย
เข้าดอกดอกไม้เราย รอบด้อม
สงครามประยุกต์ปาย ปรุงรส สดเอย
arpaพระประยุกต์น้อม นั่งได้ที่ทอง ๆ
We found the chedi by the cave, ancient.

About as high as six hok, like a fortress.

The wood-barricaded door, shut tight.

It’s covered in diamond mortar.

Something is written there, on palm leaves covering the door.\footnote{Diamond mortar is not actually made with diamonds, but mixed with sugar. It is a kind of mortar that is hard and is used to seal something that should not be re-opened. The palm-leaf covering is likely a written text warning visitors not to open the chedi.}

My boys mobbed to push it open, to strike open the door

To the room that the maker of the chedi made

They peer through the gap between the doors, lights sparkling and vanishing.

I beg forgiveness for our wrongdoing, bowing, hoping that it will be all right.
Illuminate, decorate, put sandalwood, with candles offer.

We line up flowers, all around the chedi.

We bathe that reverent chedi with redolent perfumes, fresh scents.

Bowing, palms-together, bending forward, sitting beneath a golden Banyan tree.
จุดเทียรเวียรสว่างวัง
น้ำภูทศิลา ล้นครั้น
ห้วยทองปล้องคงกลาง จังเปื่อน เปรียบแย
ชนชุมภูมิภาคพิษภิลั่นครื้น
กิ่งหน้าอ่าไวยากรจ

หาดคำเมดไนมัน
สงค์เยียบเยือกเยน
ภูทสินแพ้นร้อป ปุนผงง่า&lt;สระจอย
ทิ่มยุ่ยภิเภฬไซัว ฉวากเวิ้นเพิงเฃา ฯ

อาไสในเงื้อมโลก
ที่เทินแพ่นิลานะ เลื่อนแก้ว
เทียญปุบพุชหา เขียวช่าข์ ด้วายเออย
ภูฏฑำริทอนแล้ว ลูกน้อยพลอยบอน ๆ

เภี้ยงกว้หำลวงสว่า กล้วยแขก
ฟืนใสโฟทังแสง สว่างหน้า
หูง่าต่ำสีม่ยง กินแสงส่ำรแจง
นั่งเล่นเย็นแออกท้า ฟ้าร่าฟร้ยร่องทาน ๆ
We put candles all around the cave’s enclosure, irradiating the whole wide space.

The waterfall goes through the stones, bursting and crackling.

This cave is a vast room, the waters constrained flooding it, brim-full.

A cool place of the earth – a most unusual paradise.

We search about the cave in darkness, no one can see.

Quiet, serene, breezy, a place without trees.

We find a place to sit cliff, made also of diamond mortar,

A dais carved consummately by a craftsman, curving around the walls of the cave.

Staying in the rock shelter,

From upon this dais, the rocks sparkle like jewels.
Candles and incense, aid us in our worship and help guide the way.

We bow and beg for permission, all my children lying down.

(378)

The Karen Kwang and Lawa called Luat, hardy and brave,

Put fags on the fire, vivid, illuminating faces.

Cook rice, boil curry, eat and done.

Sit and chat beneath, the air cold.

Again and again, spots and splashes of rain.

In the middle of the night, they begin to hear the cries of the elephants that the Kwang the Karen had told them about. Everybody wakes up to listen.
เกือบรุ่งสุ่งช้างแซ่ แปร์แปร์ัน
กรวดปี่มาเกรินแกร่น เกรินหย้าน
สุยสมูย่อังแสน สนนรอบ ขอบแสง
กั๋กีกทิปแหวทอนพักนัน ถิ่นไม่ให้พนม ๆ

ต่างตนฟรินสิติ้ง พิงโขลง
ถิ่นครั่นลั่นพิง.floor แพรสร้อง
เกรียงงามป่าทดลองโหวง ไหวงไว้ ไว้แสง
ช้างสงัดบัดเดี๋ยวช้อง แซ่เข้าสะหนัน ๆ
Nearly dawn and a herd of elephants cries out – *Praem! Praem!*

A caterwaul through the woods comes – *Kraem, kraem!* Resounding, thunderous.

*Hoom! Hoom! Oum! Oung!* – ten thousand blasts surround.

A throng of commotion, all swaying and shaking throughout land, leaves, forest, hills.

Everyone woke, nerves poised, listening to the herd.

Snapping and rustling, shouting and trumpeting.

The Karen blew his pipe, billow-mouthed, huge and open.

The elephants hush in a moment, their cries echo-entering the rocks and pillars.

*The elephants continue making a racket, clearly knowing that someone is inside the mountain. The elephants stand outside the tunnel, unable to enter. The Lawa and Karen take Sunthorn Phu up to a high spot so that they can look down. They can see the elephants lifting up their trunks and breathing heavily through them, making ‘foot-faat’ noises (kamlang choo gwang chagno foot-faat). The elephants are grabbing onto trees and pulling themselves up. Phu’s children see this and think it’s funny. They throw rocks*
down on the elephants. The elephants get angrier and make more ‘praem praem’
sounds. At one side of the hill, some elephants are now picking up stones and throwing
them with their tusks. One elephant seemed to be their leader. He looks crazy, full of oil.
He is doing damage to a stone pillar, piercing it with his tusks until his tusk breaks.
ช้างบ้างใหญ่เฟื้อย เปลือยเปล่า
หลวงหลังถึงแห่งท่า สายง้าง
งากระเด่นเผ่นท้าวเทา แห่งอีก ฉลีกเอย
ป่าเสียดเสิดคูนซัง อินเร้องซ้องเสียง ๆ

เหลิบดูหมู่ช้างกล้า ตাপสูง
เดียค้อมปลุ่มแปลกผุ่ง เฟ้าแง่
ชูคล้งจั่งยางจูง ยับทับ สะบัด
จนเที้ยงเสียจงเสื้ด แสนท้องด้ลองดอย ๆ
That mad elephant, huge tusks, long and unadorned.

Boring and passaging, piercing the pillar of the cave, bumping his tusk bounding up from his grey foot, piercing again and - his tusk is cracked!

Mad-blooded, furious elephant! Again and again - how he roars and cries.

*Phu notices that the elephants have many types, perhaps indicating that these are not wild elephants after all, but elephants associated with a king:*

Pleasing to see that ground of elephants, from high above.

Dwarfed type, hump-backed type, a peculiar and unlikely herd coming up towards us.

Digging up and pulling trees, felling them and piling up on top of each other.

Till midday, that bellowed and screeched, then they got hungry and beat a retreat.
The elephants having left for now, the group eat their rations. After that, they look around the cliff. Phu spots an invitingly cool tree which he describes at length. They go again to the chedi which is near the entrance to the cave and can now see the way to enter the cave further. It is behind a thick waterfall and they must accept that they shall get wet to enter. But the waterfall is too thick and it is too dark to proceed. They are forced to give up. Having retreated back into the cave where they were before, they light a fire to dry their clothes. Once this is done, they get the Karen and the Lawa to make offerings to ask for the mercury and amulets (kaaysit) that they have come for. They then try to force open the door of the chedi.
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</tbody>
</table>
Flowers of many types, sweet smell diffusing.

We give up offerings, all around wai-ing

Push the door, push with pressure, move

Inched open, two fingers, my children also help to push.

In the room, it looks: dark, misty, smoke-filled.

It smells fresh, of aster flowers and daisies.

Push again and krik of the latch, force it push, this damn heavy –

Door... slams shut, echoing, re-joined thick and fast to its frame.
โยกคลอนห่อนได้ ไหวสเทือน
รู้เท่าแจ้งบิดเบือน บ่อให้
เย็นย่าคำคิดเพื่อน ไฟใส่ไว้เสอ
ใกล้ถิ่นเสรีนี้เธอดี ต่างคึงกองเพลิง ๆ

เหมือนรู้ถูกล้มล่า เรานะ
ถ้าที่เจลคีน ป้าซ้ง
เบิกสลักหลักกระตนเองะคน กระตลาดลับ ทับแสง
หมดเลื่อนเพียรน้ำฝั่ง ผักส้าปลายาย ๆ
Lifting the latch again is impossible, it only shakes.

I know that the spirit-lord is manipulating the situation, not allowing us to enter.

It’s cold and dark – we forgot to light the fire.

At the earth’s end, no candles or torches – only piles of wood to make a fire.

It was just like what the old Master had told me – we saw

A cave where we saw a chedi and a forest profound.

Open the latch, pushed and it rebounded, dumbfounded us, slammed fast shut.

All our provisions useless – candles, honey, vegetables, baskets of fish and food.

From this incident, Phu loses his motivation. His is so disappointed that he thinks he will just go back. At that moment, everything goes quiet. Then an omen occurs within the cave.
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<td>เทพผัวคล่ำกวาย ๆ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Thinking over and over, asleep, then sobbing, my forces enfeebled.

*Krit-krit, ring-re-re*, the crickets cry.

Gladdening, a clear and pleasing sound, a *soh*-style song with someone singing.\(^{441}\)

On and on, steady and sustained in unison, a harmonious lament.

A sudden sting of pain – a flash of light wide across the rocks.

As if a royal hall, the walls – an audience with a king!

Four ladies close by his majesty, most illustrious ladies.

And top-knotted boys, with lustrous faces superb.

\(^{441}\) The sound of someone singing presages the unusual omen that is about to occur.
The king challenges me to play my lute and I begin to sing.\textsuperscript{442}

Altogether they sat down straight in a line – just so.

That sovereign, his royal hands in a wai, asked me to sing a song for him to hear.

He has heard my name, my words widely-known – so did the spirit-king praise me.

\textsuperscript{442} This instrument was not really used in the middle country where Phu came from. Rather, he seems to be trying to create an imaginative picture of an ancient, northern-style kingdom.
จำรับขับกล่อมหัว กล่าวกลอน
ขนพระศรีครั้น ถ่องฟ้า
ดำประดิบกั้นบรรจง แจ่มชม วิวออกแบบ
เพียงราชนายกฉันหน้า นอกน้อมล้อมสลอน ๆ
ท่านชอบตอบเหล้าเรื่อง เบ่งบุราณ
ปราสาทราชวังสถาน ท่านส้าง
เจรจากับปราสาท ก็คิดหน้า มาแยก
เป็นเลื่อนเกลื่อนใจงช้าง ช่วยเค้าเข้าของ ๆ
เจดีย์อยู่ท้อง ทองพนม
ประติมาช่างพระภูน￡สม ใส่ไว้
สำหรับกับบ้านมเนื่องแต่ เหล่าแพลตแพลต
ของสุกจุ้งใจได้ เทิดสร้างทรงทอง ๆ
I must sing a lulling song for the king, I sung verses.

I praise the Rabbit Lord, the moon beautiful in the sky.

The stars that decorate with the moon, a shining cloud, alone -

Like a king with his white-faced ladies, bowing down in multitudes.\textsuperscript{443}

The Lord replied with a story, a tale of ancient times.

That this ancient place was once a palace, that he himself had built.

Mountains surrounded like fortresses that glorious palace, but a plague came.\textsuperscript{444}

It is now in a forest abounding in wild elephant herds which protect our possessions.

\textsuperscript{443} The moon with the stars about it is often compared to a king surrounded by his courtesans.
\textsuperscript{444} This image of a perfect, well-defended city really appears to come from Indian literature. There are many such cities in the midst of mountains in India but very few such areas in central Thailand. It is an ideal of a city which may have come from jātaka tales. The word \textit{rok ha} now means cholera but, at this time, simply meant ‘epidemic.’ It would more likely have been smallpox, or the black plague.
In the chedi’s cloister hidden, gold sleeps.

With mercury and diamond mortar mixed, it is sealed.

All there is food, beans, milk, cured meat.

All this for our top-knotted children,

Who shall, when born again, build pagodas of gold.
ใช้ยาอายุร์วิทยา แสนปี
ทั่วไปหายหวั่นมี แม่นแล้ว
โปรดห่อแล้วเสร็จ เสมอเม็จเพชเอย
ใช้พระปรอกรั่ว พระไหว้ใช้การฯ

หนึ่งคว่างช้างเจ้าป่า งากระเดน
โป่งป่ามาคอยเขน เคียดแค้น
สมเคราะเพราะเหตุเหน ให้สวัสดิภัยเตรียม
donหลับหัวทับที่แล้ว ท่านอ้างทางบุญฯ
(418)

No, there is none of that elixir of one-hundred-hundred-thousand years.

In this entire world, you can look but you’ll never find it.

That mercury with its effervescent aureole, like a seed of diamond

That glittering mercury, for you a monk to worship is improper.

(419)

You threw rocks at the Lord Elephant, breaking his tusk

And so the spirits of the forest wished harm upon you.

It was your fate to have this happen, for they protect the sovereign.

But that you fell asleep upon the throne-seat – that came from your merit.
ห้ามอย่าหาประกอบเที่ยว แซ่เชื่อง
สืบทร่างทางบุญบือ แบ่งบ้าง
ย่านเหมินปีเพื่อน ฝ่ายว่า บ้าแส
อย่าอยู่ผู้หนีช้าง ช่วยให้ไปได้ ๆ
ปลาตกลายฝากบุตรไว้ ให้เรียน
ก่อนกล่าท่านลักตี้น แต่ด้น
ลูกหวานอ่านำเกียร เกิดสุกสนุกแส
ช้างไม่ได้พาพ้น ฟุดย้อนกว่านาน ๆ
(420)

Please do not look for this alchemical stuff – stop wasting time.

Turn yourself to the path of merit – and share some with me.

Don’t try to live for a million years – like a crazy person!

And do not run from those elephants – I shall assist you.

(421)

A most strange thing it was, for he entrusted me with teaching his children

The poems about Lord Las-sa-tien.

The children asked to read the Ramakien – a fun tale.

“The hunting elephants you can escape,” they told me, “If we speak to them nice and softly.”
สว่างตื่นขึ้นก้าวข้าม
ลำน้ำ
จาดกีเรืองเมืองสุพรรณ
ผูกไว้
เคลิ้มเหนเช่นไฝ่ฝัน
ฟังเจ้าเล่าเอย
ลูกเล็กเต็งใจได้
สดับห้ามสามฐาน ๆ
Bright and wake – important to remember, this the 9\textsuperscript{th} waning moon day.

I set down this story of Suphan, I record it.

I dozed and saw like this a dream, the Lord’s story I heard,

I write it down so o that little children may know – do not chase after these three things.\textsuperscript{445}

They go back and leave via the tunnel. Just as Phu had expected from his dream, they saw a herd of wild elephants blocking the way near a stone pillar. They shout out and the forest spirits (the elephants) follow them through the tunnel. They light a torch, because elephants are normally afraid of fire. The elephants run out of the tunnel.

Everyone then leaves the tunnel, expecting to go on into the forest. But now the herd with the Lord Elephant with the broken tusk is there. They keep trying to scare off the elephants with fire, but it does not work.

Talawad uses a crossbow which breaks one elephant’s trunk and causes it to fall, but it gets back up. The Lawa and Talawad call on the lord of the land Khao Plong to help.

\textsuperscript{445} I.e. the elixir, alchemical mercury and riches.
them. The spirit enters and possesses Sangbure. They know this because the Sangbure starts shaking – so-se-san-sathan - all over his body. The spirit then bellows that, if he kills the elephant, the spirit will have to use Talawad in his stead. Sangbure then passes out. Sunthorn Phu then calls upon the power of the Almighty Buddha.
หวังยุดพุทธิเจ้าพระ
โปรดปราบราพรางวาน
ไข่ล้อม
เสรวลัยหลายหน ๆ
เกรียงงามเสมอเดชะ
ยืนหัน
หวั้ระง่องจัน
แจ้งถ้ำ
ลงท่ากำยงผม
พินซิลก่อแส
พอกนว่าแม่เข้า
ขับน้อยออกฟึง ๆ
สังบุเรเซเน็นคน
ยังหา
ถามว่าตามนัว
วิ่งคว้าง
หวั้จุลูกเอกมาก
เขาข่าย ด้วยแส
วั่งพ่อยอบอุ้ยเจ้า
จึงให้ไปตาม ๆ
I hope I can stop them like how the Buddha won over demons. I please subdue my enemies who surround me. And, by the power of your goods deeds help, I beg you. I feel dozy and it is as if I see about me many monks, multitudes of them in every direction.

Then the Karen, hit three times, came to and stood up. His head bowled over in laughter grogged, a-gog. The two elders asked him of his dream and turned around giggling – tee-hee. Nodding as he recalled, he asked that we listen to his song.

The demon Mara had come riding in an elephant to confront the Buddha, which makes the situation seem similar to some extent to Sunthorn Phu’s.
Sangbure wobbled, toppled then sat up and yawned.

We ask him, but his eyes are watery, wandering.

“There was a boy with a top-knot and whitish skin who will aid you.

His father asks that you donate merit to him first before he will help.”
เหมือนฝันขันน้ำตรวจ  สวดสังกัด
พนธุ์ฤกษ์ฤกษ์ซ่ง  ตั้นเท้า
โคมโกลงโป่งป่าผี  ผาสุข สนุกเลย
อย่าหน่วงห่วงหิมช้า  ช่วยสร้างทางกุศลฯ

แก้วเสียงพิธีกรราศีทอง  หนอนหน่วง
จวนคำช้าวัลัง  หลวงใหม่
ฤๅเจ้าฟ้าฟังแหล่ง  พออย่าง สนุกเลย
แนะหนูมุ่นร้องใจหวัง  สวัสดีเจ้าเจ้าขันฯ

ขับข้อยอดเหล้า  กล่าวก่อน
สิ่งสู่อยู่สิงจร  ห่อนเสาร์
พร้อมกักอ้ายสมรส  เสมอคยั่ง  สวัสดีย์
ขับกล่อมน้อมแนบผ้า  พูบที่ย้มเสี่ยงงามฯ
Just like in my dream! I sing and sprinkle water and pray and bless.

I wish that these spirits may overcome suffering, be in happiness and alight to the sky.

The phantoms and spirits of this forest – may you come to comfort and well-being.

Do not delay or hinder us leaving but aid as we build the path of good deeds.

A faint sound, just like a xylophone and bell, that sound.

Almost dark now, all quiet between the trees.

Or perhaps the lord has come to hear that song that I donated,

I tell my boys to sing for the happiness and fortune of the lords of these hills.
(441)

I call for the force of that lord, sing verses.

You spirits who reside upon the highest summits, be you beyond all sadness,

To be with your celestial nymphs, equal to a king in bliss.

Sing songs to praise and bow before their lord, bent down, modest and well-comported.
สองข้อยอยศหญิง  สิงขร

เสวยศุขทุกภันตร  ท่อนร่วง

ไม้ถิ่นหลังบนอง  ตกสัดพรั่ง บังเออย

ชุมชื่นพันพฤกษลาง  สลับล้อมพร้อมใบวุ้น

สามข้อยอยศไม้  ไฟสดร

ชื่นชูภูมิอากาศสถาน  เกื้อนกว้าง

ผลผลออกหายท่าน  ถูกหล่ำ ตัวเออย

แขนงหน่อกอกสล้าง  เลิศลำจ้ำเจริญ

สี่ข้อยอยศสริ้น  ถิ่นถาน

เทพทุกรูกระงตา  ท่านส้าง

เชิญอยู่สู่ธรรมชาติ  วานช่วย ด้วยเออย

กั่นป้องดผ่าช้าง  ช่วยให้ไปสบาย ฯ
(442)

Second wish: I ask that you spirits who reside up until the uttermost of the summits

That all may consume only bliss in each Buddhist *kalpa*, never knowing cease.

That the tree branches slender may conceal us like an umbrella, all of us hidden.

Cool and moist, verdant flora over-lapping and covering.

(443)

Third wish: That there be trees gargantuan

Cool and refreshing, all of this land, this wide space

Offering up their fruits, in every direction, to each and every living thing.

Creepers and branches, many-levelled and towering, growing to the highest.

(444)
Fourth wish: that the base of this land,

That each tree angel and every angel of a sala, oh you,

I ask you that you may be live in bliss and beseech that you may aid us

Against those phantom-demon elephants, help us escape to safety.
อยูดขับครับเกรียบไม้ ไพรวาง
เยนเยียบเงียบสงัดวง ห้วางไม้
รอบรอคอยนั่งศัตรู แคดคับ พยัคฆ์
แล่งลานานหนึ่งได้ เงียบสรุนยืนสถัน

เดือนเลยเคยคู่แก้ว แววตา
เกื้อปัด กอกจ่าหัว ว่างแล้ว
โปรดด้วยช่วยรอรา รถสว่าง ทางเจ้า
อย่าเลื่อนเคลื่อนคลื่นเย็นแล้ว คลำดข้าทางไกล

674
Finished my prayer, the clapping of our wooden instruments. The elegant forest was
Cold, noiseless, soundless and hushed, between trees
Fading and fading, weak and squeezed in that forest, the sun’s glare fading, glistening.
This world of the forest, from north to south, silent in each and every place.

Phu and his followers now search for a way out of the cave and the forest. They find a
dried-up watercourse path. They walk by the light of the moon, which is beginning to
disappear behind the edge of the mountain. When Phu sees the rays of the moon, he
cannot stop himself from lamenting his former lover Mae Jan (Lady Moon).
The spheres, the moon, once coupled together to my shining eyes

About to fall, my heart melancholy, empty.

Please hold, stop – that shining vehicle on its path -

Do not slide glide far, leaving my disconsolate.\textsuperscript{447}

\textsuperscript{447} It is a common to think of the moon and sun as ‘chariots’ or vehicles of the gods in poetry. It is also common to compare one's lover to the moon. Here, Phu also laments the fact the sun will soon rise, blotting out the moon, because it will blow their cover of darkness.
โคลงแทนแผนที่ข้าง
ทางสุพรรณ
เที่ยวตามแผนลำดับ
เจดกู๋
ร้านปลาเผาในร้าน
ท่าประทัยทุรก้อย
เข้าท่าสารรุ้ง
บ้านว้าป่าโขลงฯ

หวังไว้ให้สุกดี
เหล่าหลาย
รู้เรื่องปลีกป้ายการ
เกิดร้อน
อาชีวนะขาน
นั่งพ้อ ข่อย
แปรครอบเจอกลย่อม
ที่ให้ไว้ที่จำฯ

โคลงไว้ใช้ชื่องอ้ว
ต่างนาม
นักปริพันตาม
กับเด่น
สระส่วนยักษ์สาม
สกัดแคร์ แม่น่า
ขอนดอกบุกบอยเว้น
ว่าไว้ให้พื่
The Karen then sees a top-knotted child who shows them the way out of the jungle.

Getting out of the jungle, they hear the screeching of the elephant and so they know that they had relied on the grace of the spirit-children who had blinded the elephants. They reach the Lawa village again and part ways with the Karen and Lawa villagers who had helped guide them. They then get in a boat and, as the dawn breaks, they reach the village of the Two Brothers. The poem ends with some melancholy thoughts about the futility of his journey.

(461)

These verses of the land are like a substitute map that goes to Suphanburi.

We went for fun, that was our purpose in that river-curved land.

Rice fields and forests, outside in the outer-regions, a difficult land.

The mountains and rivers, the land of the Lawa, and of herds of elephants.

(462)

I wish to give this as a lesson to all my beloved children and my grandchildren.
That they may know of this wasteful, needless, futile hardship.

The life-prolonging elixir, that particular specimen, I your father ask that you not search for it.

The alchemical ore, impossibly hard to come across - think on it and remember.

(463)

These verse forms that I used here have many and various names.

Naga-Bound followed by Dancing Frog\textsuperscript{448}

The Repeated-Consonant style, the Three-Time Consonant, the Blocked Palanquin,

Overlapping Flowers – without omissions, for you to listen to.

\textsuperscript{448} These are both names of verse forms. The first requires that the sound is replicated in various places within a single verse, as if a naga-serpent acting like a string bound together different parts of the poem. The Dancing Frog requires that a word is repeated within two lines, as if it had jumped over from one line to the next. The following names for verse-forms – which, for example, require heavy alliteration - appear, according to the research of Ajarn Cholada, to have been invented by Sunthorn Phu himself although they are close themselves to older verse forms.
Collected Translations from the study

Significant sections of translations which do not appear in the translated nirat of Sunthorn Phu above but which are cited in this study are noted here following their original Thai. They appear according to the chapter in which they are cited and are in the order in which they appear.
พระอภัยมณีเกี้ยวนางละเวง (จากตอนที่ 36)

ถึงแม้วัดเด็นพิมพามุทรไม่มีสันสุนทรภักดิ์สมมหัสถ์
ถึงอยู่ในเด็งที่กุศลแชไอจากพานพิศาลไม่กล้าคัดลา
แม่พิมพ์ยิ่งเป็นท่วงประหยัดพิชญ์เพื่อประเสริฐสัสดิศ์เป็นมัจฉา
แม่ปัตย์ที่เป็นกุฎีราชสีห์สมสู่เป็นคู่สอง
เจ้าเป็นบัวตัวพี่เป็นภูมิวัฒน์
จะติดตามงามงานนละจะเป็นผู้ย่อฟ้าที่ประทับ

รวมมีข้าทางต้องที่ผูกศอไผ่จะไม่ช็อกฯ
ตัวสั่นเพียงสิ้นชีวิตร้อนจิตดังหนึ่งเพลิงไหม้โลดโผน
ผูกศอพิจิก์จันต์ ผูกศอสุนทรเข้าทางผูกศอทอง

ๆก็ตกใจตัวสั่นเพียงสิ้นชีวิตร้อนจิตดังหนึ่งเพลิงไหม้โลดโผน
ผูกศอพิจิก์จันต์ผูกศอสุนทรเข้าทางผูกศอทอง

681
Sunthorn Phu, *Phra Aphaimani* “Phra Aphaimani courts Lady Laweng”:

Until the end of the sky and the seas,

There will be no end to this love, ever-enduring.

Even if you lie beneath the earth and rivers

I ask to meet again this harmonious love.

Even if your cold flesh were a vast ocean

I ask for the felicity of being a fish.

Even if you’re a lotus, then I’ll be a bee

Caressing your petals and blossoms.

Even if you were an incandescent cave,

I’d ask to be a lion so that we might yet be together.

I will follow and preserve this love, my dearest one,

To be partnered with you for each and every life to come.
She tied her neck, to his great shock.

Shaking, near the end of her life.

Heated panic, a fire increasing

Swinging, jumping straight on

Coming there in an instant.

Till he could untangle the cloths

That Laksami (Sita) had fixed to her neck.

Loosening them, throwing them to the floor.

Then that noble monkey, jumped down.

Then, at the end of the rope she tied to her neck

And threw her body for death and

That moment,

That Son-of-the-Wind came who could help her,

Just as he wished.
ถึงวัดแจ้งแสงจันทร์จารัสเรือง
แล้วเลื่อนหลีกหลังหลั่งน้ำตา
จึงกระดันร่ากวัดต่อถวาย
อันชายชาติ้นหนอนไม่ผ่าน
ม้างกันปลีนปลูกหลอดทั้งปัน
จะชิ่นข้าวิ่งให้สาใจ
ชะชะสัคยขึ้นฐานประลางแจ้ง
ให้เรียกแห่งทั้งตนคัดไอ
เหียรื่องชิตั้งหลังฟ้าเจิดย่านใจ
ด้วยน้ำใจหมื่นเมื่อมินหม้อทรง
ให้เคลื่อนเคลื่อนเห็นประสิ่งประหววง
อนิริยะสันศริษฐานของจัน
ท่านบิดาหาผู้รู้มนต์
มหาโลกแคนเท่าท่าองอรกย
หลางมะถือเพื้อพุดกับ承德
ที่เกียรจั่งคนผู่ไม่รู้จัก
เตรียมอีกเพื่อปิดชัดแนวนก
พังเส้นวันหลายวันค่อนบินเห
ให้บนทรงจับมือที่เจ็บ
ว่าเพราะเก็บดอกไม่มีที่ท้าย
ไม่กองแจ้งของสูท่าสุม
ท่านปู่เจ้าคุมแค้นจึงแทนเห
กรรณามือของโมก็โปรดให้
ที่จริงจีกเป็นหนูกันโปรด
แห่งบานท่านเลือกข้างท่าน
ก็สูดดนังไว้ในถวาย

684
Sunthorn Phu, *Nirat Mueang Klaeng (Nirat to the Middle-Country)*:

At Dawn Temple, rays of the moon (Chan) gleam, glimmer

Looking back, turning back - holding back not the tears.

And so I poured water, praying to the temple that:

That man! In this life may I never set eyes again upon him,

He who misled and deluded us, hoaxed and deceived us.

I here bear witness to his wicked heart, such as he deserves.

By the powers of true revelation, I declare, I here accuse:

Let him be branded a Devadatta till his dying day.

As if his name on the back of the *vihara* were written in smoldering charcoal,

Like his heart, that black ash of a soot-smeared pot, the crook.

Dozing, half-conscious, I saw fearful, frightening things.
My senses shook, my head swelled, my hair raised.

My reverend father looked for one who knew mantras,

Many people came and went, saying I must be possessed.

Lost, sleep-talking, in delirium I garbled with ghosts,

While those at my side I did not know.

But an old spirit-doctor blew skillfully upon me

Offering and propitiating and, over many days, I did recover.

They had a spirit-medium come when I was in pain,

Who said it was because I had picked flowers on a hill

Without humbling or requesting, asking ‘May I?’ lightly

The spirit-lords of the land were vexed and made vindictive.

The old medicine man asked for their forgiveness please

And, to be honest, I knew that it was all just rot
But the villagers believed this man utterly,

So I endeavored to keep it to myself.
“เสียงชุ่ยหวน กลับมา หากใจใส่”

จงคิดให้เห็นความ ตามนี้หน่อย
ว่าใจหล้า ตั้งไว้ จากใจถึง
ทำการลูกล้อ เป่าได้ เป็นเสียงมา
เสียงที่หวน กลับมา หากใจใส่
เป่าเท่าไร กลับกัน เท่านั้นหน่อย
เหมือนใจนั้น จากทะเล เป็นเมฆ่า
กลายเป็นฝน กลับมา สู่ทะเล
เหมือนต้นหิมะ พ่าน ตั้งพิภพ
พอดันอุทัย กิ่งต้น หนาทางที่
วิ่งมาสู่ แคววิสุทธิ์ หยุดเกี่ยร
ไม่แล้ว ไหลไป ที่ไหนเลย
Buddhādasa in “Sound returns to the bamboo thicket” (extract):

Sound turns and returns to find the bamboo thicket.

No matter how much you blow it returns.

Like vapor from the sea a cloud

Changes to be rain returns to the sea.

Like craving (tanha) leads people to find this world

At the end of its thrall (rit) vanishes you turn off the road

And fly off to bright lands cease quarreling

Not maundering meandering here and there.\footnote{Cited from Sujitra Chongsatitwattana,} \textit{Buddhism in Modern Thai Poetry,} p.241. \textit{689}
โคลงชะลอพระพุทธไสยาสน์ สมเด็จพระเจ้าบรมโกศ

เชือกใหญ่ใส่รอกร้อย เรียงกระสัน
กว้านข้องชะลอศักนั้น ยิ่งยืด
ลานหนังรั้วพับวัน ผ่านเพิ่ม
ไหโง่ประจำโถงอื่อ จากเจ้าประจำไป

ถูกศูนย์เหล่าเดียว วงเวียน
รอบหารปราณิติตี้สถิตข้าม พลิกไม่มี
ที่สถานอ่านสง่าเดือน แล้วว่า
ไฟสลับระดับระเดือนให้ ชอบชั้นพรรณราย
Boromokot, Poem of the Lifting of the Saiyasana Buddha-image:

A huge rope makes a pulley, round tight.

Many winches, carefully moving, winding them, seized hard.

The bound leather wires entangle, the hawser rope too.

Ho-heum! Drums striking – eung-euh! – the Buddha moving, the drums hitting.

A ditch-canal well-dug and which winds round and around.

Around and about – firm, fixed – trunks of trees, down they go.

Be sure the level is clean and flat, near to far,

Bamboo vines intertwining – level them,

Each level right – looking good!450

450. Cited from Nattapon Jatyangton, Development of Thai Literature, p.160.
Translations from Chapter One

๒ อุษฐาฏยัสมั่นแล้ว ฉุยสารรัศ ลงยู
สิงหะสุนปวงก์สัตว์ถวรา เจิดหล้า
บุญพระพระกษัตริย์ ศาลประจัน เรืองแสง
บังบาลเบิกท้า ฝึกฟื้นใจเมืองฯ

พระพินทุพิสดัต พระgłoś
ขอมขาดสองหล้าวใส่ กลางซาย

สมุทรโยธิศรัช แรมพิน
ทุนมีตาสีน ให้เจ้า
ปางเจ็บขี้เรือฮิวิล อิวีโล
ยังพรานน้ำว้างหน้า ร่วมเรียงฯ
Narinthibet, *Nirat Narin*:

Ayutthaya, fallen, has floated back from heaven.

The throne, the palace towers, uppermost and awe-inspiring.

Merit, ancient, of kings constructs halls bright and glistening.

It obstructs the pathways to evil, it inaugurates the open sky.

And they flourish, the hearts of our countrymen.
Extracts from *Kamsuan khlong dan* and the *Tawatosama*

Before, Phintubadhi was sundered from Phra Kote

The log broke the two apart, cut, lost long.

Samutakote apart from Pin

Thumadi hold out, strives to search,

The sting and worried stab as far he departs,

Still he prays to return to her, to that budding flower, conjoined.\(^{451}\)

\(^{451}\) Quoted from Niyada, *Paññasa Jātaka*, pp.29-30.
๑๑ สายบวบบ่าวเกลี้ย จักมา
สาวส่งงอย่ามาวนน ้ ้ ้ ้
สายกรรแสงคลา สอง ้
สาวบ่าวอยู่ในห้อง รักคืนมาก ้

๑๘ จำกาที่ส่งโกฎ เการะยน
รยมร้าท้วนเว ้ ้ ้ ้
จำกามีตalue วงงอย
วงวังใหญ่ที่ช้าง ช้างี ๆ

๖๐ เยิยมาแอ้วใส้ย่อน บางฉนง
นงบ่อมาท่นสาย แสบท้อง
ขณะที่พยุงรัง ร่าย แม่ม
อินข้อใจหน่อง ้

๖๒ หลักหน้าหน้าไม้ ใบ้แม่
รยงต้นติงกา น่าดอง
อันสูใจแย่ง ปากจาก
จรจิตคือก้อง รักนางทานง ๆ
Sri Prat, *Kam Sruan Sri Prat (The Lamentations of Sri Prat)*:

(11)

The sun will fall, the young man said he would come.

She responded that he should not while it was still day.

The sun would fall and they each lamented as they each wished to find each other.

Each in their rooms, they reclaimed the night, they sought out the night.

(18)

As I arrived at Ko Rian, I asked the Island to deliver my message to you,

At Ko Khom I cried out for the Khom people to see for themselves,

That I was blind with passion, tottering and

Teetering, lamenting and reeling, tears flooding.

(60)
We arrive, in great hunger, at ‘Provision Water-village.’

Our ‘provisions’ did not arrive in time – my stomach aches!

I think of those rice cakes of yours - so tasty, so expertly-made, my love.

When I open that pot of yours, I am already satisfied.

(62)

When I look upon the waves, my eyes are wet with tears.

I cannot calm myself and wish to be able to die before you.

From the force of waves, we leave Palm-away Village.

I have left you and I cry, striking my chest, calling out, searching for you.
๑๐๑ เรือนมามาทั้ง สาโตกน
กร่นพิทิโตกนไข่ แพแฉ้
บทหน่อยไฟโรน รุ่นสวัด
อกที่ตาเรือนเร้า อิ่งรามไกรรม ๆ

๑๐๒ รามธิราชใช้ พานร
โกกนสมุทรโยธม อ่านฟ้า
จองถนนเปล่งศิลป์ คลายราพ (ณ์)
ใครอาจมาขวางฆ่า ก่ายกอง ๆ

๑๐๓ เพรงพรัดนรนารถสร้อย มีต้า
ยางขวบกีดส่อง เศกให้
The advancing ship finally reaches Sawathakon;

Feverish, I cry then to call you, my sweet one.

Not seeing you, I burn with love all the more.

My breast is devoured in flames, even more than was Rama’s.

The prince Rama used his army of monkeys

To fill the expanse of the ocean, immense.

Like an arrow piercing the air, he went to destroy Ravana.

Who could have got in the way to stop him from killing him?

And although for a long time he was separated from Sita,

They were no less, in the end, reunited again.
กษัตริย์ธรรมชัยรัตน์บัลลังก์พระยา
จากจุฬาลักษณ์ปราชญ์พร้อง
เฉพาะส่วน
ทำไมสมาสสาร
สมเหตุ ถวิลแหง
ยกทัดกลางเกศแก้ว เกียรติภพ떤ทงเรียน

๑๐๒
โพธิ์สลับโพธิ์เทพไท้ เทวุ พ่อธุก
เอาพระโพธิ์เผือก แสวงเห็น
อาราธน์พระเอยอา รักถึง ประทัศ
เชิญข้าวพาสมรุจ รสสุนัขอรรถาน
Narithibet, *Nirat Narin:*

That lamentation which in the past was composed by Sriprat,

When he was separated from Sichulalak, whom he loved.

The “Twelve Months” where the three learned-ones showed their distress,

Express a sadness which is but a half of mine.

I arrive at Bodhi tree village and I think of that forest god.

Who took Phra Khot leapt with him to his lovely one.

I ask also the god of this tree,

I implore to aid me, take me so that I may know the savor of my lady for a long night.
นั่งทนพามารถีที่เคาะขี้ยม
ยิ่งหมองหมามันใหม่ใจจง
ผู้หมื่นผ่ามวนหุ่นสุนันธ์
อุ่นแต่กายใจจงไม่คู่แล้ว

๑ ถึงสามเสนแจ้งความตามสำเนา
ประชุมอุดฟุ้งทรวิริย์
จึงสถาปนาสามเสนเป็นชื่อถึง
นี่หรือรักจะมิน่าเป็นราคิน

สงสารนางชาวในที่ไปด้วย
มิได้เริ่มเครื่องแต่งเป็งมัน

ทั่วกระแตกแตกกระจาชคิน
เจ้าของผืนหนึ่งหันหน้าตกโลก

I sit thoughtfully when we reach the Isle of Fay (cotton),

And I felt yet more sad and feverish, with a worried heart.

This cotton of which wadding is made is so tender to the body,

Yet it warms only the body and my heart remains frozen.

Sunthorn Phu, *Nirat Phraphuttabat* (*Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint)*:

I come to Sam Sen and I shall inform you of what I have heard.

At the beginning, it was called Sam Saen all throughout the Capital.

Folk gathered together to yank out a Buddha image from the waters,

But budge it would not from that earthy abyss of the river.

They cursed it with the name Sam Saen, the name of the river bend.

Yay, but the folk of the capital returned to call it Sam Sen in the end.

Like this, even love surely cannot burn steady
If even the names of the earth can so inexorably alter to be so many.

How piteous! A court lady who came along

All her lids and bowls, her white face-powders and turmeric,

Combs, mirrors all – slip, smash to smithereens in the dirt as

Their owner pivots her face to search, tears swelling.
ถึงสามเสน屏障การแล้ว เป็นเรื่องท่าแย่งความผังการ
ยังมีพุทธะพระเจ้าขององค์ ท่านล่องตามกระแสแม่น้ำมา
พระพิไชยจะบารุงศาสนา
ที่เกิดขึ้นสามแสนออกน้ำมา ผู้เกิดพุทธะจะให้พันช่อดี
เข้าปล้นทุ่มภูมิไม่หวั่นไหวว่า จนพวกไพร่หน้าเฝื่อนไม่เคลื่อนที่
พระที่สมัยอยู่ในท้องที่นั้นที่ ประตูเปิดอยู่ตรงกลางน้ำ
ขนานไว้ในนามเรียกสามแสน กลับมาแปลนเปลี่ยนความสามเสนสิ้น
ใช้ไหนในขณะที่นั้นที่ผ่านดิน จึงเรากินสองคำข้ามแปลงไป
Nai Jat, *The Sayings of Nai Jat:*

That place of Sam Sen has an ancient legend

An old story which I shall tell you of.

There was a golden Buddha image, of great merit and size,

Who floated down the flowing currents of the river

Known to all the commanders, the ruler of the city,

His royal heart aimed to support the religion and

Made all three-hundred thousand people in crowds enter

And pull that Buddha, to liberate it from the waters.

They were grappling, dragging, towing it

In the ebbing dirt that did not move.

Up until the peasants, their faces pale in fear, yet it would not budge.

The image was stuck in the abyss of the waters.

The earth became like a canal in the waters.
And so it was called by the name Sam Saen

Changed, altered, the name of Sam Sen at an end.

Oh why should the world be like this?

How strange that these two names should alter so.
กัชกรแก่งตัง  สิรสา
นบพะธรรมสังมา ผ่านแท้
สนรฐุปภักนักมา ขอบเรียก รักแท้
ไทยดำบดเมืองเป้า ปล้ำนไว้วิวรณ์ย่อ

ดวงคิยวุ้ยทองฟ้า อัปสรร
เป็นปั่นมากมาย จิมเจ้า
บุญบานแต่ป่างกอน ทักดำ นวยถ่า
แสนชาดิยังยังแท้ จิ้งจุ่นละนิม

ดวงคิยวาวาสาเสียง กัทธัปร
ทั้งสั่งสรรพชาญลับ ล้ำแจ่ม
อาใหญ่ทันรับ วรศาส นายน
จงจิ้นอูนี้งแก้ว ก่อนเจ้าคูสิคยา
Hand ornamented with flowers, raised upon my head,

I bow to the Dharma, Sangha and the dust at my lord’s feet.\textsuperscript{453}

This is the Year of the Ox, as the Khmers call it.

The Thais call it \textit{mueng pao} and I have written it, a message to be commemorated.

But one star in the sky shines bright than an \textit{apsara} angel,

Who is the utmost of the lustful heavens, my lady.\textsuperscript{454}

All that merit and sin of my lives past - has it pointed toward you?

Ten-thousand life-times missing, wishing that you would be mine.


\textsuperscript{453} Literally, the verse uses the term ‘earth/sheet’ and ‘dust’. This is perhaps an abbreviation of ‘I bow to the dust at the feet of the lord of our earth.’ It is a phrase of address to the king or the Buddha.

\textsuperscript{454} The ‘lustful heavens’ are the \textit{chakāmāvacar}, the name of the six-plane heavens where angels and gods who are still tied to the round of attachments reside. Winai translates this as being a poem referring to the poet’s jealousy of Indra and other gods courting his lover.
A single star yet before the dispensation shall end our auspicious aeon.

All four omniscient ones have gone all already and

Only Ari Maitreya has not yet come to take up his lead oh

I wish to touch, to attain you my gem of Tusita heaven, before that time has already come.
มหาอาวาสสร้อย ศรีสาน
ชินรูปองคุหาร์ เลิศหล้า
อมรกลคำควรปาน บุริมิยุทธ์
อาญาประณีตอมหน้า เพื่อนั่งครั้งย์
อัสดาระแรกสร้าง สูงประมาต
เทียมแยกตนทรงาน เมือนัน
เหมอนพระโพธิญาณยิ้มโลห์ นั่งถิ่น
ยอดนั่งถิ่นทิ่ม เพื่อนั่งมั่นสร้าง

อารมณ์เรืองรู้จั่น นางงาม
เป็นปั่นบุริมะนำ นั่งรั้ว
บ้านนาฎังงาม ราทิตวารด์ ขยับอี
ท่าชันชีฟิตก้าว โลกนั่งนั่งพาน
(Verse 16)

The Temple of Maha Avat (Chedi Luang) – blessed place.

An image of the Great Victor at the Northeast - stately, superb is

The Buddha Amarakata, deva-created, worth like that of a whole city.

I offer my homage, I bow my head for the happiness of my lady.

(Verse 17)

The Atthaśa, the eighteenth, first made stood just so tall

While he himself still struggled, that very time -

When the bodhiyān, that realizer of awakening, was still in this very world,

And I see his royal going forth right here, and now pay my respects.

(Verse 310)

An ashram resplendent, beautiful

A great temple, bejewelled hairpin of the city –Nangrua Temple.
But I see not my lady, my heart in love, is without strength

Imprisoning my life, entangling it to this world, far from nirvana.
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<td>เสพรั่งวิริยา</td>
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</table>
(Verse 22)

Along the path, a monastery near the gates

A jeweled hairpin of the city, called Fon Soy Temple (Garland Temple).

A single star in the night, so close - close like

A lookalike of your soft flesh – yet still you stand out from all counterfeits.

(Verse 48)

What was the cause to be far from her, what reason?

Perhaps a nest or a reliquary, I parted or left bereft?

I ask for the protection of Lord Mangrai -

Please divine for me the cause and heal my karma.

(Verse 65)

Monasteries, more than a hundred, lined up behind me

On both sides of the path (maggha), abandoned.
Perhaps before they were truly beautiful, loved,

A place where many reverends (*phra*) practiced the four positions.
เกสนานั้นแจ่มกัน กล้าพัก
ฝนขว่ายองค์ออนอัค นุชเน้อ
บุรีรมย์ผิวโมย้ก เซอร์ขัน งามเย่อ
ยอยลิ่งหวานที่เสี้ยว เจิดข้าวขวัญทรายวง
อ่ำเห็นหน้าน้องเท่า เห็นหัน
เปี่ยนเปล่าอารมณ์นัน หากแห่ง
พระพุทธเปี่ยนชมสัน เดียวที่นั่นแม่
โกดกลิ่นรสข้าวแล้ว เยาะแล้งออกเรียม
บุรีรมย์แล้ว เลิ่นขอบ
กีกั่ยบหวานกอ กิบดัง
สุสมบรมมุนทร แล้วลิ่น งามเย่
หัวเรื่อนจมITIZEชั้น ข่อมข้าวเสิบเสอง
(Verse 79)

Agarwood, sandalwood their cores bright and kalampak\textsuperscript{455}

I scrape and powder for my chief lady, my soft-skinned one.

Your eyes, so tenderly anointed, are as beautiful as diamonds,

Flashing like an axe in the sky ready – ready, to strike down my heart.

(Verse 150)

I see not your face but see as I turn, look to

A lonely ashram a place arid, dejected.

A Buddha none come to admire, only I my love.

Far from the scent of rice - empty - making empty my heart.

(Verse 101)

\textsuperscript{455} Both the first and last wood – Kritsana and Kalampok - are sources of agarwood or aloewood, used for perfume and make-up.
City of shade and refuge, a wall surrounding,

A continuous line, lotuses built above,

Upon the four mouths floating towers, towering beautifully.

The apertures of this dam-like defense strong, subduing invaders to terror.
มหาชนชาวเขา เจดีย์
เห็ดนอนแห่งทิพสิงค์ คู่เพียง
นัครคำคำคมนี ควรคำเมืองอ่ำ
เปียะปิงคินฟ้าเหลือง สร้างเท้าอัมพร

นัครรามยศ้อง สาลก
แห่งสิ่งดุยทัน แต่งตน
ถ้ำเลิฟทวทองสาร ชลทวิปราณี
เมืองมิ่งพระเจ้าจัง แจ่มเจ้าจามหา
(Verse 106)

Great relics of the great Victor, the *chedi*

Like ingots of gold, turmeric-colored, matched with

Tiers of gold, decorated with gems, worth like that of a whole city,

Fiery: firing the ground, the sky bright until the heavens.

(Verse 148)

A city of merriment, rousing all in every corner.

By the side of the river where the hermit himself established it,

Known by all ten regions, to all boundaries of the continent – ours,

This blessed land where that Lord stayed and was by Chamathewi ruled.
Translations from Chapter Two

จักกล่าวพิธีประพฤติฉัน—ทั่วตามอนุมา
แสดงโดยอดีตบุคคลาน—บุณโณวาทสูตร

เคยสดับรสธรรม์อันไพ
ละอองก็ล่วงลับตา

ขอจงโปรดปราณีรา
ประดิษฐสถิตในสถาน

หวังไว้อภิวาทน์สักการ
บกพร่องค่ำต่างค่ำ
Mahanak, *Bunnowat Kamchan*456:

I shall speak, compose in the manner of *chan*-style verse following my interpretation showing the past in the ancient chronicle of the *Bunnowat Sutra*.

I who once heard that sweet-sounding and perfect Dharma, radiant, who -

Shall then assist me – I shall hear it not.

I who have followed and worshiped you each day and night, bowed down before

Your sacred Feet, those Feet now soon to be vanished from my sight.

Please, I call on your Majesty’s benevolence,

To print a Buddha’s Footprint here,

To set it down, establish it here at this very station.

Then, though wishing that we may bow and worship you each day,

________________________

456 Source: *Prachum Wannakadi Reuang Phra Phutthabat* (Collected Literature On The Buddha’s Footprint), Silpakorn University, 2013. All other nirat poems from this chapter are also from this source.
Yet seeing not your Reverence, that we may that in your place.
ปางสมเด็จพุทธางกูร ทรงบุษบกยูร
ยายตร้องห้องหัวหงส์

๑ จากกุฏีสาคกับถังเจ้า
หัวร้อยหย่อนองค์
อดิเรกบริบิตร

๑ ล้านทรงบุษบกพิมาน
มาโดยคัตฉานด์
เป็นอนุกรมบวรว

๑ เพียงพญาเหมราชเจริญ
ประกับด้วยนิกร
หมู่หงส์ห้อมระเห็จมา

๑ กระบัตต์ด้วยนิกร
พระพิชิตมา-
รอบรวมระหงษ์

๑ ประเทาะไพชยันต์รัตน
พิมานอินทรเจริญ
ตั้งคาวิจิตร
สารวัตรสมบัติสมอภินัน

๑ ลั่มแกรมทิน-
กราลิมเลเจ็นทร์
ลั่มแกรมทิstrar
พิภัชณฑ์

๑ สุดสุดสุดเก่ง
 Nagaradeccol
เหิมพันธุ์นมชณ
อภิวันทนาการ ๆ
The Buddha, upon his jeweled throne,

Graciously ascended the firmament.

From the Capital Sawadi with his monks

Just below five hundred of them

In ornate patterns, gilding the lord,

All over – upon their thrones

Coming across the horizons,

A most exalted succession.

Like the lord of a flock of *hamsa* birds, ornamented by

His followers who surround him in flight.

Instantly they come, by those powers of the Mara-Conqueror,

His fortune and great merits.

Like the *Paichayon* Palace, bejeweled palace of Indra.
Like *Tavadeung* Heaven, like that heaven built just the same.

Forget seeing the sun, maker-of-light,

Forget seeing the moon.

Forget the treasures of lords,

Or the earth and the orbits of kings.

The height of happiness, an abundance of bliss.

The lord and sovereign is made

Overjoyed in his heart, as the people

Donate their tributes.
ปู่เจ้าทำห้อง
ปู่เจ้าธารพน-
ปู่เจ้าสวยหนองหน
มารับสัญญา
เทพาพฤกษชาติเรื้อง
อารักขทะยางสถาน
อากาศเทวาวาน
ภูมิเทวาชี้
ถับถึงบางโขมดโอ้
ถับถึงบางโขมดพาหลง
ยามย์ยิ่งเธอประเทศไทย ที่ช่วยให้
ยามย์ยิ่งเธอประเทศไทย ที่ช่วยให้
ยามย์ยิ่งเธอประเทศไทย ที่ช่วยให้
Prince Aphai, *Klong nirat jao fa aphai*:

Lords of this Mountains, piers, forests and jungles,

Lords of the caves, streams of this land,

Lords of bogs and mires in all directions,

Come to take here, these offerings (*sangwei*) that I show and present.

Angels of the flora and trees, of shining birth-life who, if invaded,

Would guard and maintain this place – here.

And in the skies, you angels, I ask to show compassion to me.

Angels of the earth, show my lady, that she may see.

Mahanak, *Nirat Phraphuttabaat (Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint)*:
I come to Phantom Village, oh a sunset beyond the Path.

Might a phantom come to make me lose my way, deceived?

The cool evening time all alone, lost in the wilderness.

Lost on a line of marking stones, marking four hundred sen.
ข้างพวกเขาเสาะซางวาร
แต่ใครก็โยนด้วยพันพา
อุระเรียมเครื่องคุมอารมณ์ร้อน
ระอาออกมาไม่มีกร่าง
ผลกลิ่นน้ำนานย์ตาพระ
น้ำไหลดายศิ่งออกคลอดคว้า
ที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไม่เอาสะดวกใส่
ใครไม่ไปก็ยังจำคำแปล
ทั้งคนฟังคนอ่านสารแสดง
ฉันขอแบ่งส่วนกุศลทุกคนเลยฯ
ถ้ารักใครขอให้คนนั้นด้วย
บูชาช่วยปฏิบัติต่อข้ามสาง
อยู่ธุรกิจในสารพงค์
พังรุ่งรั่งขอให้ราวกับองค์อินทร์
เห็นหญิงชายว่ายคล่ำในลำธาร
เสียงประสานสรวลสันต์สนั่นวัง
เห็นชีต้นปนประสกสีกากลุ้ม
โถมกระทุ่มฟองฟุ้งอยู่ผลุงผึง
Sunthorn Phu, *Nirat Phraphuttabaat (Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint)*:

As for us with a-hey and a-ho we go down the waterways,

And with glad hearts too, beyond all danger.

Yet my chest is in agony, a burning mood.

My forces are frail, my heart unwilling,

The shore flies past my eyes in flashes.

And my shoulders are dying, agony piercing every limb.

That which was not, I did not set here down.

Those who cannot go can remember and recite these words.

For those who listen, those who read and read this out aloud -

I ask to share a portion of my meritorious deeds with them all.

Should I love someone, I ask that I may obtain them.

May this merit of my practice aid me, without obstacle;
May I know not of illness anywhere in my body,

And may my physical form be as handsome as Indra, king of angels.

I see ladies and men swim side-by-side in the river,

Noises pooled - gleeful, glad and gay, full-throated in fun.

I see monks a-mingling with pious lay ladies, grouped.

Whoop-down, splash-paddle! Bubbles a-brim where down they plunged - plop!
แต่หุ่นสาวคราวนั้นนับร้อย
ลงเล่นลอยกลางธารประสานเสียง
ส้วนจับคู่ขู่ชายชมม้าเมือง
พี่ๆใครใครเคียงประคองกัน

พอเทียนดับลับแล้วนิ่มนวล
ผู้หญิงปนเดินประประถมชาย
เสียงร้องกังวลหวิดก้องในห้องถ่า
ชายถ่ายทอดแย่งผู้หญิงชาย

ใครกอดแม่แปรกอกแตกตาย
ใครปาดป้ายด้วยมินหม้อเหมือนแมวคราว
ครั้นออกจากภูเขาที่แน่นหนาเพื่อน
มันมองเป็นแปลกหน้ากีกิดสาว

บ้างถูกเล็บเจ็บแขนเป็นริ้วยาว
ก็ไฟกราวกูเสียวไปเหี่ยวดง ๆ
Young men and women like us here, I’d count a hundred.

They go down to play floating in the stream, sounds in concert

Touching in twos, seducing boys with their shy eyes, their furtive glances.

When all the candles went out, you couldn’t see a soul.

Women as they walked interweaved, brushing up close with the men.

Sounds went out, shouts and eeks echoed about the chambers of the cave.

The boys poked and pinched the ladies who shrieked.

Someone hugged a dear old auntie and her heart near blew apart.

Others were smeared and daubed with black soot, looking like massive cats.

When I left the chamber, I looked about at the faces of my friends –

Blackened and smudged – like strangers! Ho-ha-ha, what a laugh!
Some had gotten fingernail scratches on their arms in long streaks.
สร่างโศกสบสุขสิ้น สรรพางค์
ประเทืองสะสวยراضยัง ยังล้ำ
ชวนชื่นมโนปาง ไตรเล่อม ทุรกับ
จิตประเทิงสุขซ้า สร่างเสรีสุดเกษมฯ

หากสมรจักมอดเมือ มรณ postpones
สูญสนิทสังขาร ขาดแล้ว
เอาชาติภพพงศึกษา อีน ก็ดี
ทุกทุกชาติยี่แคล้ว คลาดห้องห่างสมรฯ

ประทักษิณบรรจบครบสาม เข้ามหามรทุสภภัย
กระจาย
อภิวันท์บัญจางคประดิษฐ์ สำรวมจิตสำองสำอย
ประทีปพวงบุปผามาลาราย สองเนตรฟายชลคล้าอ่ำยาม

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His Reverence Thammatimon, *Nirat Wat Ruak*:

Sorrows assuaged, meeting with merriment – all over my body.

As if I had consumed the riches of heaven, yet more, more!

Refreshed it is, my heart at that moment when all sadness are subjugated, grief oh

Mind bolstered in bliss above all, impotent my sorrows, I at acme of all ecstasies.

Should my lovely be parted, life extinguished, expired

Ceased to be close to your mortal coil – broken.

I wish that in each life, lineage, language that should come,

That in each and every life-birth I shall not be taken far, gone

No nor never parted from my lovely one.

*Nai Jat, The Sayings of Nai Jat*: 
Right-side circling thrice,

Entering the *mondop*, body with reverence

Bowed in obeisance with my five parts (*Benjakapradit*: two hands, elbows, forehead)

I collect my mind, I intend to offer:

A lantern and garland of flowers.

Two eyes sided with tears blurred, I part.
จะตั้งหน้ากลับลับไปแล้ว ประทีปเก่าส่งสั่งสั่งให้สุขชา
ไม่เห็นพระองค์เห็นแต่รอยพระบาท จะไยมาบังคับอีกนาน
จะอาดูถิ่นพระพุทธะสมัยโคมโลก จะสร้างoksenเสริมเส้งสาร
ด้วยอาลัยในบาทพระทรงญาณ แผ่นธงบ้านเสี้ยวเมื่อไรจะกลาย
เดินเดินแล้วกั้นเหยียดสระท่อน ไม่ไหวร่วงจากพื้นจงแสดง
จนพระหน้าสุริวงศ์พงศ์นาราฏย์ ขึ้นทรงพระที่นั่งหลาอูไน
ขึ้นเชิดตามทางเส็งจง ทรงสะท้อนสะเท่ายาหลังตา
เห็นเสแยงเดิมใกล้พระบาท ดังถูราจะพองทังเป็น
โดยระนังคงดังไม่รู้ขาด เที่ยง shoutsเสียงสูญทุ่งพูนเจ็บ
ยิ่งฟังยิ่งเงียบยิ่งเบี่ยงเบน ยิ่งชมนกยั้งเหมือนเดิมให้ไกล
I shall force my face to turn and fade from view.

The Buddha, a glorious lantern, that gives all living beings joy.

Though I see not He himself, but see I yet his footprint.

I wish to be able to pay obeisance again, lingering long,

For I shall suffer, far from the print of He-Who-Realized.

As I return sadness, ten-thousand sufferings, my suffering heart shall ease.

Walking, walking – done, stopped in my tracks with suffering

Wishing not to go far, yet the morning light has come and

The prince-bud of the *Suriyawong*, the lineage of Narai$^{457}$

Ascends the seat of his elephant, resplendent.

I go up, riding the elephant, following His royal going.

My chest echoes in sadness, turning, looking back.

I see just, just over there - those blessings of the Teacher.

It’s as if my heart would break apart, yet I would still live.

$^{457}$ Every Thai king is a Phra Narai, an avatar of Vishnu. This is a prince, so he is a ‘bud’ of Vishnu’s lineage.
Oh that bell, once so loud, never ceasing,

Still I suffer as its sound vanishes, stores of sorrow.

The more I listen, the more silent - more soundless, struck dumb.

The more I strain to see, the more I am awakened to how far off we are.
เก็บเอาไปพอกลายมากลัดเข้า ต่างสานกลางเล่นเห็นว่าขัน
ที่ไหนน้ำไหลแรงไปแข่งกัน ชวนพนันขันต่อหัวร่อเกรียว

ถูกส่องบางmongoไปในสูง แสนสนุกนัดกันสำคัญหมาย
ตำหนี้ที่แน่นอบกลบปลาย ให้พวกชายเคยรู้ที่จัน
พรุ่งนี้รู้สุริยะเวลาสาย นายงามนำเรือไปเล่นไพ่สันธ์
ปลดแอกยิ่งที่ยิ่งถึงเห голวัลย์ ที่ขอบบ้านสลับรู้หันละมี

๑ กลางทางดักน้ำทำ อบรองค์
ขัดฆันแน่นเหลืองบรรจง ลุบนำ
หวีเกล้าเล่าทรัพย์ทอง ผสมปัก
ผัดหน้านางงามล้า ยั่วเอ้าใจชาย ๆ
They collect leaves of trees, weaving them together

Making toy boat, floating them, thinking what fun.

Where the rapids are heavy they compete

Inviting each other to place bets, uproars of laughter.

Seeing lovely ladies-in-waiting – a happiness to the heart.

Ten-thousand joys to meet up with motive of great import.

They speak sneakily, saying stealthily – all with great skill

To tell that boy they know where to meet them.

“Tomorrow, when the morning’s rays come

You should come to have some fun in the forest,

To go a-twisting and a-turning, taking up angel-hair jasmines

Of which on the ridges of the lake on the rock ledges, there are so many.”
Prince Thammathibet, *Kap and Klong Verses of Copper River*:

The ladies scoop the water at the pier, washing themselves

Break turmeric stalks, with yellow water delicately patting.

Combing, tying up hair into tiaras or short-crown styles.

Powdering their faces white, strikingly beautiful –

To allure and entice the hearts of men.
pusa jea jei puwu jea
pa rata raang nuai
pa rata haa khaa
pa rata haa khaa

coo choo ko choo ko ooyh
thuk gaa chu kha
oon nai oob tao on
lor buh buh hua
lor buh buh hua
lor buh buh hua
gou how saah
ghou how saah
gou how saah
ghou how saah
gou how saah
ghou how saah
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ghou how saah
ghou how saah
ghou how saah
ghou how saah

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Naratip Praphonphong, *Klong Lilit Dan Tamnan Phraphuttabat (Lilit and Klong Verses)*

*To Chronicle the Buddha’s Footprint:*

The Buddha is the Buddha because of the dharma that he taught.

No, not because His Reverence was luminous or radiant.

It in his Dharma because it leads us to correct behavior.

And if follow this behavior – what blessings.

Who believes this, will believe it, taking up each word told.

Seeing it they say, “This is the Footprint of the Buddha!

He floated here on his throne, he printed it for the world.

And, if you go seven times, you will have a place reserved for you in heaven.”

He who discredits will discredit, arguing and losing friends.

They shall see only tricks, delusions, evil imputations all;
A duplicitous tale told to hoodwink the word it is -

Each word he will twist and paint black.
กรรดึกเดือนตั้งแต่ง โคมถวาย
ทุกท่วยหญิงชายแสวง เพลงพาทย์
ขับซอปี่แคนหลาย ร่อนรำฯ
ตั่งที่นั่งน้ำวันดิน ร่อนรำฯ

โอ้ฤดูเดือนห้าหน้าคิมหันต์
พวกมนุษย์สุขสนุกครั้น
ทั้งผู้ดีเข็ญใจใส่อังคาส
อภิวาทพุทธรูปในวิหาร

ไทยเหมือนกันครั้นว่าขอเอาห้อง
ต้องขัดข้องแขงกระดิ่งเหมือนย่างเหล็ก
มีเงินจับคด้วยเหมือนอย่างแจ็ก
bึงวลเฉล็กหลอกร่อนย่อนและไม
The Poem of the twelve months:

On the twelfth month, we make lanterns to make offerings.

All of the boys, the girls enjoy themselves floating them...

In the golden lanterns, brilliant lights, is the fire that they contain.

My heart too, is a lantern that burns in its interior...

Nai Mi, The Nirat of the Months:

In the month of the fifth month, the hot season.

Those humans are as happy as can be

They can all see it, amazed, this time of Songkran.

As for me, with a heavy heart I go to present offerings,

To venerate the Buddha images in the vihara.

Sunthorn Phu, Nirat to Phetchaburi:
When Thai men asked for their hands in marriage,

They refused, their hearts as hard as iron.

Having money to tempt them, like the Chinese,

Their iron was heated up and gently softened.
ทั้งวังหลวงวังหลังก็รั้งรก
dูปราสาทราชวังเป็นรังกา
เรื่องบุราณการเก่าภูเขาทอง
ริมเขตคลองมหานาคฟากอารม
แต่ก่อนเป็นที่สาราญการกุศล
ประชุมชนชาวราชอาษามาประนีบอบน้อมจอมเจดีย์
ไม่ว่าใครผู้ดีและชีพราหมณ์
มารามน้อบน้อมจอมเจดีย์
ไปว่าผู้คิดและชีพราหมณ์
สับปะรดสุคตราวัชภักกัญมา
ดูหลากหลายเหนือใต้ในกรุงศรี
ทั้งบกน้ำเฮฮาเสียงพาที
เห็นมรกตชีดเชื้อนพดกษา
ดังป่าช้าฟ้าธงจัดต้น
ริมเขตคลองมหานาคฟากอารม
ประชุมชนชาวราชอาษามาประนีบอบน้อมจอมเจดีย์
มารามน้อบน้อมจอมเจดีย์
ไปว่าผู้คิดและชีพราหมณ์
สับปะรดสุคตราวัชภักกัญมา
ดูหลากหลายเหนือใต้ในกรุงศรี
ทั้งบกน้ำเฮฮาเสียงพาที
Sunthorn Phu, *Nirat to the Buddha’s Footprint:*

All palaces, of kings and of nobles, all idle and empty.

I see birds cheep and chatter upon flora and conifers.

I see palaces, royal residences, now nests for crows.

Like cemeteries - forests dense, coiled and voiceless.

Poem by Luang Pon Hom Prakart (Won), composed in 1890:

Old stories there are that tell of Golden Temple

At the side of the Great Naga canal, by the ashram,

Before was a place of diversions and of good deeds,

Meeting all us people, we folk of Siam.

May they be commoners, noblemen or Brahmins

They come to worship and respect the chedi.
Pious persons, in full faith, come in droves

They look various and variegated, from top to bottom of the Capital.

On land and water are sounds of ‘Hey’ and ‘Ha,’ sounds of a party.
จบเสร็จครัวควบคุมภาพอยู่ บทพิลาปถึงสาวศรี
แต่งตามประมวลนี้ ใช้มีขึ้นจากจริง
Prince Thammathibet, “Royal Procession rowing song to the River of Sadness”:

Finished and done, this lament in verse,

A complaint said towards a lady,

Written according to the convention.

For truly I have no lover.
Translations from Chapter Five

แต่ปีวอกออกขาดราชกิจ บรรพชิตพิศาลพระศาสนา
เหมือนลอยล่องท้องชะเลอยู่เอกา เท่นแท้ฟ้าฟี้เปลี่ยวสุดเหลือแล
ครั้งไปด่านกาญจนบุรีกระเหริง พิเชิญเสียงเสียงierz ชนีหน้า
นอนน้ำก็ไหลที่พนมพระพรมราช พระเจ้าข้าลำว่าแจ่มแปรเป็นทอง

ครั้งที่ฤดูร้อนเฉิดเฉิดแล้วลาย ล้อมรอบกายเกียวด้านผิวแม่
หนึ่งไม่พ้นจนใจได้สด สามารถขึ้นขั้นอุทัยเสี้ยบ
เสียงฟู่ฟู่ฟื้นกล้าคลอกคลีย แลบลับแล้่บแล้่ยแล้่ยเพื่อยาว
ดูใหญ่เท่าเสากระโดงผีโป่งสิง เป็นรุ่ปใหญ่เย็นหลอกผนังออกจาก
คิดจะหนีไปกลัวไม่เท่า ใช้เคราะห์คาร่าขึ้นไปเหนือเห็นมองเห็นตาย
Sunthorn Phu, Lamentations (*Ram Pam Pi Laap*)\(^{458}\):

In the monkey-year I’d left my post

Sought monk’s repose, turned devotee.

I felt afloat on open seas

With naught to see but open sky.

Off to Kan’s mountains, the Karen’s wild land.

I heard but gibbons and tiger’s loud roar,

Endured iced dews in search of an ore,

Fooled by Lao lore and by lure of pure gold.

At night a pair of snakes in darkness glinted

Enrapt, entwined, as man and wife.

No time to flee, I froze, then found

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\(^{458}\) Source: Sunthorn Phu, *Ram Pam Pi Laap (Lamentations)*. Silapakorn University, 1961.
A sounder peace, meditating that I must sacrifice here my life.

As the two snakes hissed, all the time gyrating

Tongues undulating in long delight.

They looked as large as the pillar or the mast of a house, a forest ghost possessing them

- 

There, the image of a woman standing, her haunting hair ivory white.

I thought I could use my potent staff to frighten her off.

Oh, a time of great misfortune in the North, near death I was.
แล้วมีหน้าช้างบุตรสุคทั่วถิ่น
ขโมยลักลายหนอนเพลงลาย
ต้องค้นทิ้งอยู่บัดปริมาณ
มาอยู่ยิ่งกว้างเสียบปั้งปีน
โหยCPFสันหยาดล่ำสิงเสือหมอกอน
สุขุ่นชื่นเสียดมิให้ใครใครเห็น
ราหูทับขับยับยั้งยืนเป็น
เปรียบเหมือนซ่านพระสมณ์ชัยณัจฉริย
แล้วกว้างมาในพระโตรักชัย
ประหารกันหนักหนังตั้งท่าทาง
หมอคล้านธุปปุประจับหลับสบาย
ฝันว่าชายสวางชะเอวอกา

ท้องพระทองสององค์ด้านทรงเครื่อง
แลเลื่อมเหลืองเรืองรัตสรัศมี
พอดีเจริญแห่งท้องนารี
ส่วนยอดศีรษะฉกน้อยครรภ์พัน

ส่วนใส่ซื่อป้องพวกดุสิ้นสิ้น
 нарушенนางสะสวยสมล้วนคมสัน
ที่เอกองค์ทรงศีลวัตร
ตั้งดวงจันทร์เฉาฟ้าไม่รู้ยุค
And furthermore, my children that I love

Endured thieves and so many times met with loss.

They humbled to low station – what inestimable shame!

Living in the viharn of Wat Liap in quiet and peace.

Oh such poverty, without clothes or even pillows!

I tried hard to not let anyone see my losses.

Rahu sealed my fate, foreordained it was –

Mine is like the story of the Brahmin Camanijan.

I recited, repeated the Three Characteristics

To execute that love that weighs down, to cut its fetters out.

I smelled the scents of incense, I drowsed, I fell asleep,

Dreaming that I swam on the currents of the sea alone.

Two golden images there were, well-ornamented,
Looking glittering and sparkling in halos

Then, with a loud sound, I looked to see: ladies,

In rich colours, ladies I’d count one-hundred thousand.

They all wear wigs half-covering their faces, all looking alike.

Beautiful courtly ladies, elegantly outfitted and utterly enchanting.

But there is a leader amongst them, exceeding them all, her skin

Like the orb of the moon, sparkling in the sky without blemish.
รุปวิรัติพิศโภคไปโภค
พ่อแม่สะอ้นสะแม่สะแม่สะแม่สะแม่สะ
ให้บรุกปุฏฐ์เทพดยุกจิต
จะได้หวีกระยะแปลกที่รัก
แม้นางอันมีแฝดแฝด
สุนิ้วจึงมีรังสีชันต์

เอนะโยมโฉมยงพระองค์เอก
มณีเมขลามาโปรดปราศรัย
จะให้แก้วแล้วอย่าลืมที่ปลื้มใจ
ขอให้ได้สั่งประโยชน์โพธิ์ฐาน
จะพ้นทุกข์สุขสันต์มีทัน
เพราะพระโปรดโปรดประโยบายสันตาน
ให้หน้าชื่นรื่นระงมสมน
เหมือนนิพพานพ้นทุกข์เป็นสุขสบาย
Her image, behavior, all – only superlative beauty -

Like a puppet doll, gleaming and pleasing.

As I look, my gaze she glimpses, evades sideways my glances.

A body nubile and perfect, ready to be courted.

Did she want me to waste way, pine, long in my thoughts?

To lose my reverent habits, with longing bedimmed, drowsy, debilitated?

Did she want to laugh, to mock, to taunt,

To tease me – is that why she entered my dreams like this?

As for all of the thousands of human women on this earth,

I consider them terrifying, ten-thousand-times scary, I take myself up and flee!

I sit, I meditate quietly, I practice mental endurance.

I stay in my monk’s hut, aiming for nirvana, as would Brahma.

Oh lovely most exalted one,

Mekkhala, come to me and speak.
As well as that jewel, do not forget that think that would so please me -

That which is equal to the attainment of Buddha-mind. (*prayot potiyaan*).

To escape suffering, happiness, imperfections and punishments

Because her words would be like scattering drops of joy on me,

She’d make my face all cheery, gay with her words,

Like nirvana, beyond suffering - in total bliss.
อันโลกีย์วิสัยที่ในโลก
ความสุขโค้ดสันภักดีหลายสูญ
เป็นมนุษย์สุดแต่ขอให้บริบูรณ์
ได้เพิ่มพูนผ่าสุคสมุกสบาย
ขอธุรกิจจะให้ผู้ช่วยบุญริบป
ช่วยชุบชีพชุดให้เดือดาย
ไม่ขันเหניתื่องเพื่อมนุษย์ถึงสุดอาจ
สู้ไปตายดินเจล้านนานินฯ

บวชตะบึงถึงตะบันน้ำฉันชื่น
บาทธนิป็องดินน้ำฉันชื่น
ยามคีดเสนได้สังหาราพระยา

เหมือนพระจันทร์กรุณาให้ตาย
หญิงฉันขอพรที่กรุณาให้ถิ่น
สุคสมุกผ่าสุคสมุกสบาย

เหมือนพระจันทร์กรุณาให้ตาย
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สุคสมุกผ่าสุคสมุกสบาย

Worldliness (*lokiyawisay*) is in the world's very nature;

Rapture and grief end with this body end.

To be a man is to seek fulfillment,

And with this one can increase one’s happiness and ease.

Should my merit mean that I remain on this plane (*chomphutawEEP*)

To give my life worth and make it better.

To lack the joys of my fellow men is shameful, bitter.

Better to die on a wooded hill.

I wish to remain a monk until I must eat betel with a *kabun*[^1]

Until the evening of my life, that I may make merit and I offer it up to you.

Like the moon, kindly letting the old man and woman

And the rabbit write their marks upon her shining orb.

[^1]: A *kabun* is an instrument for consuming betel nut for those who are old and no longer have teeth to chew with. The *kabun* pulverizes the betel nut, making it into a powder.
Like that heavenly lady who rouses in her loveliness

That she be pure and perfect, I give to her the rewards of my merit.

That she be perfect, and have excellence, maintain

Precepts, maintaining them together, making a future Buddha.
วิสัยเราล่าที่ไม่สู้ใต้สูง
ให้เพื่อนจิตกิจกรมพรหมจรรย์
ถวิลหวังตั้งแต่นั้นจนวันนี้
เห็นโฉมยงองค์เอกเมขลา
ทรงปักษาการเวกแฝงเมฆเมียง
d้วยเดชะพระกุศลให้หล่นลอย

นางฟ้าฝูงไหนเล่ามาเข้าฝัน
บวชหงษ์ตั้งแต่นั้นจนวันนี้
ต้ายเกิดเป็นเซ่นบุญย์ผุรุราช
ขอมหารูญพระสุนทร
ทรงปักษาการเวกแฝงเมฆเมียง
d้วยเดชะพระกุศลให้หล่นลอย

ถวิลหวังตั้งแต่นั้นจนวันนี้
ขออย่ามีโทษโปรดยกโทษกรณ์
ต้ายเกิดเป็นเซ่นบุญย์ผุรุราช
ขอมหารูญพระสุนทร
ขออย่ามีโทษโปรดยกโทษกรณ์
ด้วยเดชะพระกุศลให้หล่นลอย

ขอพรภิญโญเดโชชัย ฯ
เห็นโฉมยงองค์เอกเมขลา
ชูจินดาดวงสว่างมากลางสวรรค์
ทรงปักษาการเวกแฝงเมฆเมียง
d้วยเดชะพระกุศลให้หล่นลอย

ขออย่ามีโทษโปรดยกโทษกรณ์
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d้วยเดชะพระกุศลให้หล่นลอย
Oh, I’m not by nature so ambitious.

Why did the precious one enter my reverie?

To dizzy my will, tempt me away from my brahmacariya vow of celibacy?

Or maybe this heavenly lady was just testing me?

I ask that I not be punished, that you acquit me of wrongdoing -

As I way born as a man of the royal service,

I came to desire for a lady of heaven to share her royal chambers-

Absolve me! I beg of you, I Sunthorn,

And let me have lasting wealth and progress and good fate.

I saw the beautiful figure, chief angel Mekhala,

Lifting her precious orb bright in the midst of heaven.

And you fade off, far drowsy and feint the sounds,
Of a *Karawek* bird, concealed peaking from the clouds\textsuperscript{460}

I aim, I offer up my fortune, my fate and my endeavours in hope.

Like a *Parikachat* flower, stretching to snatch it, but impossible even with a pole.\textsuperscript{461}

I ask with the powers of my good deeds that you let them drop down.

\textsuperscript{460} The *karawek* bird is believed to reside in the Himaphan forest. It can fly above the clouds and its flight causes all other birds to stop in their tracks.
\textsuperscript{461} This is called the *Pāricchatako* flower in Pāli, believed to grow in Indra’s heaven. It is said that if a human can smell this flower, they shall be able to remember their past lives.
ด้วยเราจนที่ทำละวดา
แดนภิกษุมีไปก็ลักราย
จะไปให้สรรพกองภูชตลาด
ขึ้นสิ่งเหล่านี้จะได้ไปสวรรค์
ไหว้เจดีย์ที่ทำเลเวฬุวัน
พระรากขวัญอันเป็นยิ่งเจ้าสิงคูตรฯ
An angel (*thewada*) rules this island country

And not even crows can circle too close.

I will take you to make merit

Ascend to Sri Lanka to see, that we may go to heaven.

Pay respects to the *chedi* Weluwan

The shoulder-bone relics, which reside on the summit of Singkutara.
หนึ่งขอฝากปากคำทำหนังสือ ให้ถึงชื่อจำนวนที่สุชาสนะ
สุนทรภู่ลักณ์เจ้าจักรวาล พระธรรมศาสตร์เสนาสน์ภูธนชาร

ฤดีเจ้าจอมหม่อมที่ใต้วิภัยนะ
ด่างปรีดาข้อถ่านเป็นท่านเอง
ประสานเสียงจังหวะดุสะอด
เป็นพ้อมพุทธ์ใคร่รีมตลอด
ฤดีพั้นหล่ำตามท่านเอง
ประดิษฐ์ร้ององค์สองคอยอดแปร
ฤดีองท่านสั่นพัดดับนับ
รับขอด่วนไว้ให้กระเศะ
ลงปากะบับไทยช่างอดแปร
เสียงหน่องแห่งอดอตะพัดกันไป
ฤดีบวเศะดับป้อมนองอยู่น้า
ปากบ่นว่าตาวะกระเพื่อมกระเรงไว้ว่า
ฤดีบางคนย้องอย้อยยี่เรียงรับไป
ฤดีพึ่งไว้ว่าร้องประคงควูย
ช่างพวกพึ่งมันสรวลสรวลว่า
ประสานพากยกะหน่องฟังโยทยวน
ฤดีเอ็มคนไม่ขัดตัดคำนวณ
เสียงท่านท่านควูยัวว่าร้องเลย
ช่างฤดีหม่อมหม่อมก็มองกล่อง
ห่วงหวางจ่วงไว้แล้วว่าแม่ฤดีเอ็ม

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กล่องหมากตกจากมือหยิบพลูเลย
เหมือนไม่เคยฟังเพลงบรรเลงล้าน
**Sunthorn Phu, *Nirat Phra Pathom* :**

I ask that the words of my mouth, that makes books

Be a name known for the time of all the skies, earth and lands –

Sunthorn – writer for the Lord of the Universe,

That king, sovereign of the White Elephant.\(^{462}\)

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**Poem by Khun Sawan :**

The concubines, princesses who stately come

All merry, singing songs in style

All in chorus, the rhythm is beautiful

The *Pin-phaat*, the lady’s orchestra festive.

Lady Honey sings her song following the melody.

Inventing, weaving *dok-soi* songs into the song.

Khun Yong, skilful in the insertion of songs,

Pick up the *Soh*, grasp it in your fingers, flowing loud.

Going with the singing of the song, blending well together

Sound of *nong-naeng* of the xylophone, *od-at* of the So blend together.

Lady Bua, her face acacia-gold, sits upright

Complaining and as she does she shakes and she sways.

Lady Nok and Lady Noi float out sounds, replies arranged

Lady Pueng sits at the front, continues to sing her songs.

Those who sit and listen laugh and smile, merry and gay, loud.

Prasanta speaks in the shadow-play – we listen to his sadness.

Lady Yaem from Nakhon speaks unclearly, her Southern sayings changed,

Her sounds stubby or chubby, singing so fast - we split our sides!

As for Lady Hem, she snatches up some betel, drag it from the box.

She laughs until she cries, saying 'Oh my dear girl!'

Her case of areca-nut spills out from her hands as she snatches the betel leaf
As if she’d never heard music like this before.
ต่างฝ่ายกษัตริย์ด้วยกลัวบารมี
พ่อโพลล์เพล่ำลาะสาอันตร์
ยุ่งชุ่มสุมาวด้วยเข่าที่
บรรทมเหนือเสื้อแผนแทนมัน
ภูมิขับขามากัญชา
พี่ทรงศักดัสกล่าหาญ
แค่ข้าสาวเต็มกระชุนยังบอกไหว
ปลาแห้งพี่เอาเข้าเผาไฟ
ประเด้าใจเคี่ยมส่วนออกเป็นจุน

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Phra Mahamontri, *Raden Landai*:

All submit, surrender themselves, fearful of his powerful (*barami*)

At that time of twilight, the evening hours,

Mosquitoes cluster in crowds like smoke, entering

As he regally sleeps upon his mat, spread-eagled on his jewelled altar,

The king (*phumi*) is subdued, intoxicated with marijuana.

He used immense powers and courage,

Full of milled rice was his back-basket that he bore,

With dried fish he put them in the burning fire,

And in a moment, a single moment they were powdered.⁴⁶³

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⁴⁶³ Cited from Jatyangton, *The Development of Thai Literature*, p.408.
ว่าทุกข์สุขขวัญหั้งลังลัง
กับชื่นชื่นดึงดิ่งเนื่องมา
ที่ตองใจน้อยมากฟ้าซั้น
ที่คราวหน้าฝ่ากลาง
เฝ้าไม่เห็นเป็นราบถิ่นตี้
ไม่เห็นผู้ประโยชน์ทำคุณ
เมื่อใดไม่เห็นหน้าทางระตก
ยังงังนั้นตาเห็นไม่
ยังงังตาบอดสอดตาเห็น
สืบกุศลผลแห่งปรีชาชาญ
ให้ชายหญิงยั้งคิดเป็นปริศนา
มีทุกษาปากอยู่กลืนทุกคน
อยู่อันอันแห่งแจ้งทุกแห่งหน
ถ้ามันก็ที่เห็นจะเป็นบุญ
มุทะลุโลโมโทหมุน
ย่อมหมกมุ่นเมามัวว่าตัวดี
จะช่วยยกCODEให้คองศรี
ไม่เห็นที่ทางสวรรค์เป็นสันดาน
ให้คิดเป็นทางธรรมพระกรรมฐาน
ตามโบราณรักษาสัจจาใจ ฯ
Sunthorn Phu, Phra Aphaimani:

It said that sadness and gladness, good and bad – these four things

Give to men and women something to stop on and think – a puzzle.

With one thing these are born and are maintained.

A nose, eyes, mouth and a nose to smell with – everyone

Has senses by which they follow that which pleases.

Look around you – it’s obvious in each direction,

On the brows of your eyes, your forehead and your own mouth.

If you can understand - it means merit.

If you don’t get, you’re dumb as a buffalo

Reckless, easily angered.

Someone who cannot tell what is useful and that which is punishing,

Interested in only one thing, bewitched and drunk - thinking they are good.

If you can’t see your own face, well then have a good look at the mirror!

It will lift you from the shadows and make you glow.
Oh those with *tanza* are without eyes.

They see not the way to heaven – that is their nature.

They are ‘blind but with the eye in’ - stupid but proud.

Oh, have a think, meditate on this dharma

You can get the results of these good deeds, you who are knowledgeable,

Those who follow the ancient truth.
ไทยพรั่งพร้อมนั่งเลือมคิด  ต่างแจ้งจิตใจความตามวิสัย
ทั้งเสรีพลหลกลโกร  ต่างเข้าใจตามประสาปัญญาณ
พวกลั่งวาดีหักดี้ชื่อ  พวกไทยถือว่าศิลพระชินศรี
พวกชุนนำง่วนว่ายนยปรากฏ  เจ้าผู้้มีความสุขสนุกสบาย
ต่างคิดเห็นชั่นประสงค์จำแนก  อิกติกุ่ยมเอียงจงเทยงสาย
ถึงต่างชาติวิวานได้พบ  ก็ควรคบเคียงชมประสมสอง
เจ้าโฉมงามทรามสงวนนวลละออง  เจริญแฉ่งเป็นกิตติหนังระชังใจ
ประเวณีมีทุ่ทุกตัวสัตว์  ไม่จำกัดหัวประคุมตามวิสัย
นายมนูย์ครูข้าราชการ  สุดเดี๋ยวทรงลงมือจะเครองกัน
Whites, Thais and whites sat down and thought it over,

Each expressing their mind according to their manner,

Each understanding it according to the manner of their wisdom.

Each birth-life should meet.

They should mix and mingle, commix and couple.

Adorable, beautiful, tender, graceful one –

Do not object or be upset.

Every form of existence has its own customs,

But do not limit or hinder what is only natural.

Be we nagas, humans, garudas or demons

In the end, it is only the heart’s harmonies that should guide us.  

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