

Nirat Muang Klaeng



NIRAT MUANG KLAENG

SUNTHORN PHU
NIRAT MUANG KLAENG

An English Translation By
H.H. Prince Prem Purachatra

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GENERAL PREFACE

Classical Thai literature can vie with the best literature in any language as a product of genius. However, the task of making it available to the world is beset with problems and difficulties. First of all, the Thai language, even though fully developed and capable of transmitting a great variety of human experiences, is understood only by a limited number of people. Besides, classical Thai literature might strike the uninitiated reader as fantastic and removed from real life, showing a world in which supernatural power, magic, and lofty passion predominate. But indeed these strange things are the necessary elements of the classical world — a world built entirely by its own rules and finished by its own laws. At this world's core, however, the reader finds the condition of universality. Once arrived there, the reader may look back to the strange, winding path he has travelled with much understanding and satisfaction. Coleridge has similarly described the function of art as going either from the strange to the familiar or from the familiar to the strange. If classical Thai literature seems to begin with the strange, the careful reader will always find in it things with which he has been familiar.

A belief in the relevance of classical Thai literature alone would not be enough. There is a great need to translate Thai literature into other languages which are more widely used. In this programme, H.H. the late Prince Prem Purachatra who wrote under the pseudonym of Prem Chaya has been the anchor man. Not only his whole life was devoted to the task of translating Thai classics into English, but he also encouraged other people and published their translations of Thai literature in his *Standard Magazine*. Towards the end of his life, he set up the Thai Literature Salon as a meeting place of writers and translators to carry out this very purpose.

A brief mention can be made of Prince Prem Purachatra's career as a translator. His first translation was done when he was only 19 and still a student at Oxford. This was an adaptation of the fifteenth-century Thai romance entitled

Phra Law into an English play. He renamed it *Magic Lotus*. Immediate success of the play both in England and at home spurred him on to take up two great works of the Rattanakosin period : *Phra Abhai Mani* and *Khun Chang Khun Phan*. The method used to translate these two works was one of retelling, after Charles Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. In retelling these classics, Prince Prem Purachatra retained the original quality of keeping the reader spellbound. At times, the translator became so engaged with certain details or scenes that he gave us beautiful exact prose renderings of them. This may be called the first period of Prince Prem Purachatra's translation.

Afterward, he became convinced that he had to translate Thai poetry into English verse. Then came a period of almost ten years in which he ceaselessly experimented with English verse forms such as end rhyme, blank verse, free verse, etc. He first tried his hands at translating excerpts from some great authors, mostly from Sri Praj and Sunthorn Phu. Some of these translations were highly polished. He usually incorporated them into his lectures and articles. Among the best known is the following quatrain from Sri Praj :

*Let not thy arrow-eyes my fate foretell,
 Cornering thy prey like a hunter fell.
 If thou must shoot, then shoot right in my heart!
 'Twould be more cruel to threaten, then depart.*

But Prince Prem Purachatra was determined to translate Thai classics in full, not merely excerpts. In the last ten years of his life, this project materialised. He produced a number of translations as well as made plans to do many more. Among the completed works were Sunthorn Phu's narrative poem entitled *Nirat Muang Klaeng*, King Rama II's dance-drama entitled *Krait'ong*, King Vajiravudh's play in verse and poem entitled *P'ra Ruang* and *Dharmā-Dharma Songkram*,

respectively. These translations are nearly perfect. Some of them have borne out meanings of these classics hitherto unnoticed by Thai readers.

The National Identity Board considers it a great honour and privilege to continue the series "Thai Classics in Translation by Prem Chaya" with the present volume in preparation for the Sunthorn Phu Bicentennial in 1986.

Sunthorn Phu's Nirat Muang Klaeng

NIRAT Muang Klaeng was Sunthorn Phu's first *Nirat* or travel poem. It was written in 1807, when the poet was only a young man of 21. It was based on a trip he actually made to Muang Klaeng, now an *amphoe* or county in Rayong, supposedly to visit his father who had been ordained a monk there for 20 years. Incidentally, Sunthorn Phu's father and mother were separated from each other shortly after he was born. His father went back to his native town in Rayong and took the holy order. His mother soon married again. Thus it was the poet's filial duty to get to know his father. However, there was another cause for his immediate departure from Bangkok. He had incurred the wrath of the Prince of the Rear Palace by having an affair with the latter's court lady named Chan. The lovers were, of course, put into prison for a time. Upon release, Sunthorn Phu

thought it best to be gone from the city for a while. So he immediately set off for Muang Klaeng with two young disciples, Noi and Phum, and a drug addict of a guide named Saeng. He hardly had time to say goodbye to Chan, and had only her black scarf for a keepsake.

Though the distance from Bangkok to Muang Klaeng is only a little over 250 kilometres by modern roadway, it took Sunthorn Phu nearly one month to get there. Travel then meant much hard work, as suggested by its original name: travail. The journey was divided into two parts. The first part was made by water in a small boat going down the Chao Phya River and along a main canal called Klong Samrong as far as the Gulf at Bang Pakong, then by sea a little way to Bang Pla Sroi, now Chon Buri. In the second part of the journey, he went on foot, sometimes along the beaches and sometimes through thick forests. When he reached Rayong, however, the guide, Saeng, left him in a lurch. The rest of the journey was, therefore, made at random, relying on information from people he met on the way. But he finally made it safely to Ban Kram in Amphoe Klaeng where his father was an abbot in a monastery. He fell ill and had to spend over a month there. After that, he made the same long journey back to Bangkok.

In *Nirat Muang Klaeng*, Sunthorn Phu recorded the things he saw, but they were mixed with his young man's sensations. While making a journey in a centrifugal direction, his mind often coiled back on himself and the thought of his beloved in a centripetal direction. However, he could not think of his woman unless the things he saw, or at least the place-names, evoked her. It is an alternation between the forward and the backward movements that makes the charm of the *Nirat* genre unique in Thai poetry. In spite of being a young man's apprenticeship piece, H.H. Prince Prem Purachatra, the translator of *Nirat Muang Klaeng* believed it to be "an excellent, first-rate poem, equal to any poem in any language."

Sunthorn Phu

By Prince Prem Purachatra

One hundred and ninety-eight years ago, on June 26, 1786, the wife of a humble Rayong divine then living in Bangkok gave birth to a baby boy. In due course, the little boy was given the name of Phu. When he grew up, his genius as a poet was quickly recognised, and he won the esteem of kings and commoners alike. Finally, after many vicissitudes in the course of a colourful career, he attained the distinction of Poet Laureate and was created Phra Sunthorn Vohan. Today, 129 years after his death, Sunthorn Phu is accepted as one of the greatest poets Thailand ever produced, and he holds his place among the leading poets of the world.

Sunthorn Phu was born in the fifth year of the reign of King Rama I. His father was a native of Muang Klaeng, a township in the province of Rayong, but his married life was spent in Bangkok. Soon after young Phu was born, his parents divorced. His father went back to Muang Klaeng and took holy orders there. His mother married again and later became the wet-nurse of a princess in the royal palace. Young Phu stayed with his mother and thus spent his early years in the palace.

Like the youths of his time, the future poet received standard education in a monastery now known as Wat Sri Sudaram, situated at Klong Bangkok Noi. Leaving school, he obtained the post of a clerk in the government service. But the only work that was congenial to him was the writing of verse. In this he was adept even as a mere boy. Before he came of age, he wrote a long poem based on the story of *Khobutra* which, however, was left unfinished. Nevertheless, the work showed promise of a genius that was later to attain full development.

It was about this time that the youthful poet fell in love with one of the ladies of the palace whose name was Chan, a woman who had a considerable

influence on his work. But in those days it was a heinous offence to love one of the palace ladies, and as a consequence of his romantic folly, both he and his mistress were put in palace prison. On their release in 1806, Sunthorn Phu left the Capital, accompanied by two disciples, to pay a visit to his father whom he had not seen since he was little boy. On his way, he wrote his first great poem *Nirat Muang Klaeng*, in which he described the journey and addressed many tender lines to his lady love.

Sunthorn Phu's original intention was to join his father and enter the priesthood for a term. But soon after he arrived at Muang Klaeng, he fell seriously ill with fever, and had to return to Bangkok as soon as he recovered. He was with his father for only two months, and had been away from the Capital for three. His return saw a happy ending to his love affair. He married his Chan, and a son was duly born to them.

The course of true love, however, did not run smooth. The young poet became too fond of the bottle, and this caused frequent quarrels between him and his wife. It ended with her finally leaving him for another man, but not before he had immortalised her name in many of his works.

Sunthorn Phu soon made his name as a court poet of exceptional merit. At the age of twenty-one, he accompanied one of the young princes to the shrine of Phra Buddha Bat, and wrote a beautiful poem called *Nirat Phra Bat*, in which he described his experiences and referred to the differences that had arisen between him and his wife.

In 1809, King Rama I died and King Rama II succeeded to the throne. King Rama II was himself a poet of genius, and he saw in Sunthorn Phu a kindred spirit. Soon after his accession, therefore, His Majesty gave the young poet a position at court. Sunthorn Phu quickly proved his worth. When the King was writing his *Ramakien*, he often consulted the poet on different points connected with versification and always found him with a ready answer. His

Majesty was therefore very pleased with him and created him Khun Sunthorn Voharn and kept him near his person whenever he was writing.

Unfortunately, however, Sunthorn Phu could not leave off drinking, and this soon got him into trouble. One day, when he was drunk, he had a quarrel with his mother. One of his uncles tried to intervene, and the poet turned on him and severely injured him. This came to the ears of the King. His Majesty was strongly displeased and ordered the unruly young man to be put in prison.

This term of imprisonment actually proved to be a blessing in disguise, for it was while he was in prison that he conceived the idea of writing a long imaginative romance, with two princely brothers as heroes living lives of adventure in a world full of magic charms and enchantments and strange beings. This was the beginning of the famous *Phra Abhai Mani*, one of the greatest imaginative works ever written. It was not completed until the poet was middle-aged, but he was able to sell many cantos of it in manuscript form to a delighted reading public while he was in prison, and thus earned a handsome income for himself.

As might have been expected, he did not remain in prison long. He was far too useful to the King. One day, His Majesty had urgent need of his services and so granted him a full pardon. Once again, Sunthorn Phu became the royal favourite, the instructor of royal sons and a general literary adviser. He was one of the famous literary circle, headed by King Rama II, that composed one of the finest works in the language, *The Story of Khun Chang and Khun Phan*. He is accredited with having written the chapter about the birth of Phlai Ngarm, son of Khun Phan and the heroine Wan Thong.

It was in his capacity as literary adviser that he incurred the wrath of the King's eldest son, Prince Jesdabodindra, also a poet. Sunthorn Phu ventured to make public criticism of some lines written by the Prince, sometimes going to the

extent of improving the lines by rewriting them *extempore*, a kind of work at which he was particularly adept. The Prince took this as a personal slight, and unfortunately for the poet, never forgot it and never forgave him for it.

In 1824, Sunthorn Phu's great patron, King Rama II, passed away, and Sunthorn Phu's enemy, Prince Jesdabodindra, ascended the throne as King Rama III. The poet was at once deprived of his title and position, and he had to take to the kindly shelter of the yellow robe. He remained in the priesthood for some six or seven years. During this period, he wrote several poems, the most notable being *Nirat Phu Khao Thong*, one of the finest poems in the Thai language, *Nirat Suphan* and *Nirat Wat Chao Fa*, all written on his various journeys to different places.

Around 1832, Prince Lakhananukhun, a young son of King Rama III took a liking to the wandering poet, and took him under his patronage. Sunthorn Phu then left the priesthood and lived as a retainer of this prince, for whom he wrote several more cantos of *Phra Abhai Mani* and some other poems. But adversity dogged the poet, for in 1835, his princely patron died and he was again thrown out upon the world. During this unhappy period, he led a sorry existence, wandering from place to place in a boat which was his only home and selling his poems wherever he could.

A great poet like Sunthorn Phu could not remain long in obscurity, however. Not very long afterwards, Prince Isaresrangsang, another son of King Rama II, received him into his service. This prince was the favourite younger brother of Prince Mongkut, and when the latter became King Rama IV, he was raised to the rank of His Majesty Phra Pin Klao and invested with regal powers. The prince thereupon bestowed on his Poet Laureate the dignity of Phra Sunthorn Vohan, a position which the latter retained to the end of his days. During this last period, when he was under the patronage of his Majesty Phra Pin Klao, he wrote *Nirat Phra Prathom* and many other poems including lullabies for the royal children. He lived and wrote to a ripe old age. He did, a

man of rank, position and fame, at the age of seventy, in 1856.

The greatness of Sunthorn Phu lies not so much in correct and ornate style, which is the aim of most Thai poets, as in the very simplicity and sincerity of his expression. Unlike so many other poets, he wrote from his heart and not from his head. Not being a learned man, he confined himself to simple forms of verse and simple language. But in his own field, in what we call *Glou* poetry, he was past master and his works are unsurpassed and probably can never be surpassed, although no other Thai poet has had so many imitators. But Sunthorn Phu reigns supreme, because in all his poetry, in *Phra Abhai Mani*, in his *Nirats* with their mixture of romance, pathos and humour, he touched the heartstrings of the common people. That is why he is so deservedly called the People's Poet.

NIRAT MUANG KLAENG

O SORROWFUL FATE

To have a mate and not stay to enjoy her,
 Must leave her far from my sight!¹
 Whoever in the world so sad
 As I, a bee² seeking solace,
 Plucked away from each other with no leave-taking,
 Only our eyes in place of words.
 O, forced to be far from my dearest one!
 So I write this Nirat of love,
 In witness of my broken heart on parting.
 Heading for the fields and forests, 10
 With two young male disciples,
 Noi and P'um, as companions in the wilderness,
 And Nai Saeng to guide us —
 All journeying together to other places.
 At midnight our boat moved downstream,
 As the yellow moon pierced the clouds.
 Wat Chaeng³ glowed in the moonlight.
 I glanced back with tears in my eyes,
 With longing thoughts of my father
 Who longingly awaits me, 20
 And leaving behind my beloved.
 O my weary, worried heart!
 At Sam Pleum,⁴ I only thought of my sorrow.
 In vain I tried to forget the past.
 I prayed to the spirits of city and palace,

And all the angels of heaven,
 To guard my sisters and their mother
 And grant them happiness.
 I myself must journey to the wilds,
 To escape perils threatening me. 30
 At Sampeng's⁵ riverside landing,
 Where houseboats are permanently moored,
 With innumerable alleyways
 Awake with joyous song.
 O City of Ayutthaya⁶
 With desire of enjoyment fulfilled!
 Now to the hardships of the wilderness
 To seek a home by the mountainside.
 In the district of Dao Khanong,⁷
 The lateness of the hour brought incomparable grief. 40
 The breeze made the heart quiver,
 As the moon slowly sank.
 O, you are like the moon
 And I, like the longing hare,
 Greet the bright moonlight with joy
 And its absence with sadness.
 At the temple named Wat Dok Mai,⁸
 I thought of your embrace
 With the fragrance of your body.
 O the bitterness of bedtime away from you! 50
 At Bang P'ueng,⁹ the beehives are empty,
 And I was empty of the love I yearned for.
 Journeying with male friends,
 I die without your loving care.
 At Paklat,¹⁰ the banks were not steep;
 We passed easily through the slippery mud.

They paddled happily downstream.
 But my sorrow grew at Bang Rachao,¹¹
 As, leaning on my pillow, I thought back
 Until it was almost daybreak. 60
 The moon sank into the forest
 Where banyans skirted Sala Phra Pradaeng.¹²
 May the powerful spirits of the Sala
 Bear witness to your hardiness!
 I shall go as far as Muang Klaeng —
 They shall tell my beloved so.
 I must leave you because my heart burns.
 I think not of shameful flight.
 I pray you to keep our love for a year.
 Be content that I beg leave to go. 70
 As dawn broke, the silvery rays
 Of the moon and stars faded before the sun's fiery ball.
 At the mouth of Klong Samrong¹³ I rejoiced,
 With the morning tide we entered the canal.
 But seeing all the boat folk, men and women,
 Made my heart ache with pus-water.
 It was not like when we were together.
 So we floated on our way without regret.
 The strong current swung our boat to and fro,
 As we kept an eye on the windy channel. 80
 The very water swirled around in circles;
 Shall the heart go straight? Doubt it not!
 At the canal's middle toll-gate on the left bank,
 The late-morning sun shone on flowers.
 The last houses gave way to the gate of the forest,
 Covered with a profusion of wild grass.
 The breeze played upon the grass

Which swayed to and fro, hither and thither,
 Like a wide expanse of wilderness
 Stretching to the edge of the forest. 90
 At T'ab Nang,¹⁴ a sense of loneliness filled my heart,
 There were only huts for peasants to dwell in.
 The peasant women had no cause to rejoice,
 Covered as they were with sweat and soiled soot.
 City women, even if they are slaves,
 Are twice or thrice as pretty as these.
 O, away from the city, all beauty is gone!
 To think of it makes one long for the city.
 At Bang Phli,¹⁵ there were dwellings and a temple,
 Reaching out into the fields 100
 Where the sticky mud came up to the waist.
 We had to hire buffaloes to pull our boat.
 The waterway was crowded with boats and rafts,
 Noisily vying for their right of way.
 Oars knocking against clumsily-handled poles.
 Some were angrily engaged in argument.
 O, our boat ran aground!
 Nai Saeng being elderly gave us qualms,
 Crouched as he was with glazed eyes,
 Trembling when he saw the confusion. 110
 Noi and P'um, being young, pushed their way through,
 Boldly and with furious sound.
 Nai Saeng shouted that it was no use,
 And with a stick tried fearfully to slow the pace.
 Poor Saeng resisted with all his strength,
 But P'um and Noi succeeded, with a crashing noise,
 All the plates and dishes fell clattering,
 The boat was entirely splattered with mud,

But reached deeper water which held until we reached
 Bang Chalong,¹⁶ a wide-open space with Khaem¹⁷ trees, 120
 Ngedak Pla Mor,¹⁸ Kok,¹⁹ and Kum Kaem.²⁰
 The water was clear but bitterly salt.
 At Hua Pa,²¹ we saw a flowering grove
 With creepers flowing down in shreds,
 Where branches scratched the roof of our boat,
 Very difficult to proceed along this canal.
 At Yom Yam,²² farm houses one sought in vain,
 A lonely place where no friends were found.
 We moved swiftly through the golden water,
 With nothing to indicate the name of the place. 130
 At the intersection where lay Bang Kratiem²³ I suffered,
 O to find myself alone along the way,
 To have only a soft pillow comforting me,
 Because my poverty drove me to this desperation.
 Left and right of us were only forests.
 I watched small crabs crawling everywhere.
 The song of the wild cicadas
 Stirred my heart like the voice of my beloved.
 At Chavaek,²⁴ the canal divided into two,
 On a bank where tamarinds grew 140
 They have built a spirit house
 With three planks set up for worship.
 I gazed at the baby crocodiles,
 Trying to guess their number, left and right,
 About two hundred of them chasing small fish,
 You saw only their eyes and snout, like tokay lizard!
 O, canal that winds through such desolate country!
 Look landwards and you see monkeys
 Running along the banks after the boats

And making mockery of the men. 150
 It was rightly said of old,
 That monkeys full of pride puff up their fur,
 Display all manner of antic ways.
 They curse you who speak of your monkey tricks.
 Where the canal flowed into two streams,
 There was little water, and the sun hid behind cloud.
 On our left lay Pak Tak'rong,²⁵
 On our right Bang Hia²⁶ canal.
 We moored our boat at the landing,
 Other boats alongside right to the rim of the forest 160
 All prepared their meals in the manner of the poor.
 O, my food was mixed with my tears!
 When the breast is full of sorrow, swallowing rice
 Is like biting gravel and husk to make the throat sore.
 One must use water to wash it down one's throat,
 Painfully one eats just enough to keep from fainting.
 When the sky darkened into eventide
 Mosquitoes came in to bite us, who could not prevent them.
 Our only defence was the smoke of our fire,
 But shamefully we could hardly breathe. 170
 O, in our haste from the city we forgot mosquito nets
 And must endure the torture of mosquitoes.
 I will pour water in prayer that, until I die
 I will not come again unless my Master bids me.
 When the rising tide reached our boat, we left quickly
 And entered the canal in high spirits,
 Slowed only by fear of colliding with stakes in the dark.
 The boats followed each other along the way.
 At Bang Bo,²⁷ when the moon shone bright,
 Everything turned into a wide expanse. 180

We saw stars stretched out across heaven,
 Gloriously illuminating our way past the paddies.
 We saw the tall grass stirring in the gentle breeze,
 Everywhere there was swaying to and fro.
 My thoughts turned to you with longing,
 If I had you with me, I would sway too.
 Alarming, over the huge expanse of paddies,
 The deafening sound of night birds,
 Add to that the spray of falling dew.
 When the breeze blows, you should be near me. 190
 O, when I think of you, my tears fall,
 Not having you I must embrace my pillow,
 The side pillow that has replaced you.
 When can I have you back to cheer me?
 At Ban Ragard,²⁸ we had to punt,
 Awaiting our turn to follow downstream,
 Until we entered a forest
 Which cast dark shadows over the water.
 We were cautious of obstructing Takien²⁹ branches,
 As our elders said of old, 200
 That the female spirit of the Takien is ferocious,
 Whoever touches it is wrecked and killed.
 Hardly had we told each other this
 Than we saw a boat misguidedly punted
 Collide head on with a log of Nang Takien,
 Capsize and sink in the water.
 All four of us were terrified,
 We steered clear to the right
 And out of the female spirit's reach.
 We all bore witness to her real power. 210
 May the female spirit and all the sylvan powers

Protect and guard my dearest one.
 If any man desires to take you away,
 Let him die like the boat pierced by the log.
 We proceeded downstream and reached a narrow channel,
 We could not near the banks for fear of tigers,
 Because of the thick bushes of Lada flowers,³⁰
 So we waited for other boats to catch up with ours.
 Fireflies settled on a row of Lampoo trees,³¹
 Setting them aflame with a shimmering yellow glare, 220
 Like a brilliant cluster of diamonds.
 It solaced my grief to watch them.
 At Bang Samak,³² I bethought me of my steadfast love
 In separation from my true beloved.
 At the time of sleep, sleeping alone in loneliness,
 To see others comforts not my heart.
 This was a deserted spot where no dwellings could be seen,
 Bitterly cold among the swaying grass and flowed,
 O desolate canal, my heart is also desolate,
 Not knowing to what end we shall come. 230
 Just as we arrived at Ban Map'rao³³
 The sky brightened the rim of the forest and a cock crowed.
 Like the intrepid Kumbhupal,³⁴
 We hastened down the canal with misgiving.
 At Bang Wua,³⁵ we saw only the lofty sala,
 With dewdrops dripping down like rain.
 The stars and moon had gone, the clouds were like mist
 When the sun rose to meet the sky.
 As the boat moved out of the canal
 And floated with the tide down the river, 240
 It seemed a wide, soul-stirring space
 Where birds flew over the wilderness.

Reaching Ban Bang Mangkong,³⁶
 We saw a row of buildings lining the bank,
 All with fish being dried at the water's edge
 And a rotten smell everywhere.
 We saw an old Chinese shrine standing there,
 With a Chinese sage equally old,³⁷
 O, you who came from across the ocean,
 Help protect us against the dangers of the Gulf! 250
 Past the buildings, we saw the Gulf
 And the open sea with trepidation.
 The waves lapped the sandy beaches.
 The other three adjusted the tail of their nether-garments.
 We followed the correct channel to the sea,
 Saw dark clouds and heard the deafening wind.
 In a moment, the boat was listing
 And water kept coming over the gunwale.
 The forest was now to be seen far, far away.
 Our hearts were growing faint. 260
 It was a long way back to the shore,
 And the big waves tossed the boat mercilessly.
 Pity poor Saeng so stiff with fear that his legs trembled.
 Seeing the boat turn he angrily moaned
 That the waves would carry us to Si Chang,³⁸
 And raged until his eyes turned red.
 He told P'um that it was the hand of fate,
 And urged him to paddle as hard as he could.
 Pity poor Noi, white-faced, preparing only
 To die, and not helping with the oar. 270
 I steeled myself and quietly prayed,
 Noting the shore was still far off.
 Bang Pla Sroi³⁹ was now behind us,

The foaming waves crashed against our boat.
 Sensing our end was nigh, I prayed to the spirit of
 Sannuk Hill,⁴⁰ Save us and I will make offerings!
 As soon as spoken, the waves abated,
 All the other three were relieved.
 We stopped at the landing in the centre of Bang Pla Sroi,
 P'um and Noi laughed with happiness. 280
 Nai Saeng recovered his composure
 And sat quietly smiling, smoking hashish.
 Contentedly we prepared our meal,
 And at midnight sought the shelter of a sala,
 Listening to the roar of the waves
 Now pitch-dark in the clouds.
 I carefully observed the currents of the ocean
 To the utter limit of the horizon.
 The crested waves came, row after row,
 And spewed foamy spray like gems. 290
 It was like fish swimming, threshing about,
 Then leaping backward as in a dance.
 A school of big fish chasing and leaping into the air,
 So the waves pranced in the middle of the sea.
 Looking at the sea, I longed for you;
 My sorrow did not abate
 Until the sun appeared, shining into my eyes.
 I saw a row of dwellings lining the beach,
 Houseboats, each one of them with fishing stakes.
 Chinamen seated at tables, eating, chatting noisily, 300
 Others paddled through the surf, washing crabs
 And putting them into baskets.
 The young, unmarried girls of the village
 Pushed planks and carried baskets, looking for shellfish.

They seemed agile as they twisted and turned,
 Trailing one leg like a tail in the mud.
 Fisherfolk do not use their hands,
 But kick with their feet and bite with their mouths.
 They breakfast at mid-morning.
 They seem adept at working in the mud. 310
 They become rich property owners through sin,
 But their homes are thereby doomed.
 They build houses without decorated gables;
 Whoever does so will suffer through fire.
 O, these houses are like my lonely heart —
 Whoever views them sees nothing sweet.
 A sin of yore still follows me,
 So a beautiful woman shows me no mercy.
 The one I love returns not my affection.
 All I can do is to embrace my pillow. 320
 Loving her brings longing thoughts of her;
 O, my heart will ever be afflicted with that fate!
 Thus ruminating on my way through the wilderness,
 We moved our boat to shelter.
 A male friend in these parts has a Thai house
 In the compound of the governor.
 Whoever sees my face says that I am grown wasted,
 And I see myself as thin and pale.
 Unwillingly I forced myself to be gay.
 We gaped our way through the market place. 330
 Two rows of buildings flanked a crowded street.
 Some stood, others sat in shops
 Looking at the women vendors
 Who were of moderate comeliness.
 On sale were clams, mussels, horse-crabs,

Squids, beetles and pickled shellfish in dishes,
 Brought here by Chinese traders.
 Eggplants, taro, pickled cabbage.
 Merchants sold cloth in the open air,
 Many women as well as men, 340
 About twenty of them, packed up in bundles.
 I roamed and watched until evening.
 For countryfolk, they looked attractive,
 But not as polished as one in the heavenly place.
 We remained in Bang Pla Sroi three days,
 Then we took leave of the governor.
 When the sky lightened and the stars and moon set,
 The chariot of the sun rose in a flush of gold.
 We departed from my friend's house
 And went on our way with heavy heart. 350
 Leaving the houses behind, we saw just an empty plain.
 Our path was level until we reached the hills.
 The grains of sand shone like silver.
 The dews still lay heavy on the buffalo pools,
 White as palmyra sugar.
 In between the laterite cliffs,
 Along the rough path, were a few huts.
 We saw buffaloes left to graze in the open.
 At Nong Mon⁴¹ there's a place called Ban Rai,
 Where timber from all parts are assembled. 360
 We had to make a detour,
 Guided by Nai Saeng who took us into the jungle.
 The hot sun burnt our hide,
 There were no leafy trees to protect us.
 It was just a sparse woodland,
 Until we again reached the sea.

As the day waned a little, we came to Bang Phra⁴²
 Where there were many houses.
 We found the home of a friend called Nai Ma,
 Who was kind enough to provide a sleeping place. 370
 When the rays of the sun again appeared,
 We marched along the beach. Again I thought of you.
 We noted that the sand on the beach
 Was smooth and soft as the finest cotton wool.
 We saw shells, thrown up by the sea,
 Litter the sand with their fanciful colours;
 They were of many kinds, some round and smooth.
 O, if you came too, you would rejoice!
 You would bend down and pick them up all along the beach,
 Seeing strange ones you would ask what they were. 380
 If I knew not, I would ask you to proceed;
 Even if we were tired, it would be some consolation.
 O, now, I saw only the faces of friends,
 It was not as comforting as my dearest for whom I long.
 I held back my tears as best I could, on the beach,
 Until we saw an array of ships lined up side by side.
 This place is called Sri Maha Rajajati.⁴³
 We left the seashore and entered the forest,
 We skirted the slopes of the hills.
 The pervasive din of grasshoppers stirred our hearts. 390
 On both sides of the way the spirits of the trees were still,
 Not swaying their branches as a warning.
 It was refreshingly cool,
 But my heart was cold with all-embracing sorrow.
 The noise of birds in the forest was deafening.
 Listening to the language of wild life makes one lose heart.
 Leaving the forest, we walked more easily down the slope

And slowly proceeded as a group.
 We came to a broad, open plateau
 Which they call Tung Songkhla P'anasant,⁴⁴ 400
 High ground ringed by a forest,
 Where doves coo and call to each other —
 Some invite their mates to roll in the dust,
 But on seeing humans fly suddenly away;
 Others crane their necks and coo,
 Then dart to hide in the tall grass.
 O, even birds have their mates
 They can happily hide under their wings.
 I alone am ashamed by the birds for being far from my mate,
 Journeying through the sylvan wilderness. 410
 We hurriedly crossed the plateau
 And reached Bang Lamung⁴⁵ where there is a spring,
 A district popular with the people —
 There are many houses and temples.
 My tears fell. O, weariness
 Overcame me and both my legs.
 So we stopped and sat in a sala,
 Each of us tired out, both in body and in soul.
 We bathed in a stream and our weariness went,
 But our muscles were still stiff, 420
 Sad because we might never reach Muang Klaeng.
 Nai Saeng persuaded us to move on.
 I looked at the sun which was slowly sinking,
 Urged P'um and Noi to leave the sala.
 We left the houses of Bang Lamung behind,
 And felt happier as we walked by the sea.
 In the water we saw many fish traps
 And boats to drive the fish into them.

O, how I felt for the water bugs —
 The females lead their mates to feed on leaves, 430
 They catch the males and leave them in the water,
 They douse them so that they die.
 When the females die, the males die too.
 O, it is thus with me and my love for you!
 If you die, I will also lose my life
 And accompany you to the land of the dead.
 With this thought in mind, I crossed the waters
 To the sala of Ban Na Kleua.⁴⁶
 Arriving there, the sun set,
 But the heat in my heart was insupportable. 440
 Each mouthful of rice had to be drenched in water,
 But when the last was swallowed I felt better.
 Both tired and weary, I slept soundly
 Until the sun was shining brightly.
 With a sigh, I opened my eyes and still felt pangs,
 And with heavy heart left the sala.
 We walked into the silent forest,
 Bitterly cold with dew on the foliage,
 Then on to the plain of Pattaya.⁴⁷
 Nai Saeng led us astray. 450
 We pushed our way through brush and thicket
 And bushes as high as our heads.
 The rain had drenched the bullock-cart track.
 Painfully we climbed a steep knoll;
 Afraid of leech bites, we raised the hem of our garments.
 We plodded through mud and fell
 Up to the calf while we explored the ground with our feet.
 We waded until midday before finding the way.
 When we stepped up to walk on the dry path,

Our knees and limbs resisted. 460
 Bruised and scratched by the sharp lalang grass,
 We crept confused in the dust.
 We saw trees like tamarinds
 And banyans, bent and twisted
 Like the clipped trees beside the palace,
 With imperfect branches, a sorry sight.
 As we walked we studied, as if thinking of foolish treasure,
 Wishing to find trees to present to His Majesty.
 Tiring ourselves out almost to death.
 A hundred thousand pities that we walked and saw too much. 470
 At a wayside shrine by the hillside,
 There was a way down to the sea.
 We asked a Chinese employee about the route;
 He was a newcomer who was not sure,
 But pointed towards the hill.
 So exploratorily we followed the slope.
 The laterite appeared to be very jagged,
 In part with holes and broken layers.
 We had to step warily, our feet at all angles,
 And in narrow places it was slippery. 480
 We climbed slowly and clumsily
 Until we were short of breath and strength.
 Where there was a gap we had to jump on to a ledge,
 Cursing the mother of the Chinese newcomer
 Who said it was near, but we nearly died;
 And angry with Nai Saeng the guide who did not know the way,
 Stupidly assenting so that we hit the hill,
 His being so drunk with hashish that his eyes were blurred,
 And merely plucked at his ear and remained silent all the way.
 When we had descended we saw the beach. 490

Each of us was hungry, blue in the face, with both legs stiff,
 Throat parched, and panting heavily,
 Swallowing our own spit and saliva,
 Almost dead with heat and exhaustion.
 There was plenty of water in the sea,
 But to drink it was too bitterly salt to satisfy us.
 Like a bachelor standing beside the palace wall,
 Merely to flirt means a beating almost unto death.⁴⁸
 All this because of a misdeed previously committed.
 What we desire is therefore not fulfilled. 500
 I consoled my two young brothers.
 So we came, at the edge of the forest, to the fields of Chom Tien.⁴⁹
 We found a well so we drank thirstily.
 But when we opened our mouths a musty smell upset us.
 Our strength restored, we forced ourselves to follow the cart track,
 Without further hesitation or guessing.
 At Huey Kwang⁵⁰ we stopped to ask.
 And found Khun Ram who asked us to stay with him.
 A meal of rice and fish made us happy.
 He arranged for us to sleep and renew our energy. 510
 Pity poor Saeng, at journey's end,
 Just sat down and drew on his hashish together with Grandpa Sang.
 The sound of their chatter continued until the monks struck the bell.
 Exchanging heavy doses of affection.
 My heart sorely afflicted,
 I asked the way through the forest.
 The villagers said the distance was more than a thousand.
 And nudged each other terrifyingly.
 All the more disturbed, I thought of the grace of Phra Jinasih
 And my parents who gave me birth. 520
 I had made up my mind to seek my father.

To escape evil that was perilous.
 I prayed, and I was deeply moved
 To hear the cries of the wild birds and crowing of cocks.
 The clouds cleared and the sun appeared,
 So we took leave of our host and departed.
 We entered the dark jungle,
 Where we could not see the sunshine.
 Thunder roared through the forest.
 The trees swayed. We looked up apprehensively. 530
 The cold stillness crept into our hearts.
 The dewdrops fell pit-a-pat.
 The leaves floated down from on high,
 Seemingly fresh and moist.
 At Pak Chong Nong Ja-aew⁵¹ we reached a clearing.
 Although we could have spent the night in the forest
 By a pool in the hollow,
 Our minds perturbed, we hurried past without looking.
 The way was smooth with soft sand.
 Payom flowers⁵² of the forest were fragrant. 540
 Comforted by the gentle breeze,
 We glanced up and around us all the way.
 At Bang P'ai⁵³ we saw no bamboos, only dense jungle —
 All was deadly silent.
 We crossed a stream and a wooded hillock,
 A sylvan spot in the deep forest.
 At P'ong K'aw⁵⁴ was a steep cliff;
 We climbed through a wooded crevice
 Until we reached the almost perpendicular crest.
 Descending we had to run like wild monkeys, 550
 Crossing gulleys and streams our legs became stiff,
 And we had to prance about like in a masked play.

With roots and creepers in our path,
 We jumped and stumbled our way through.
 At Budara Sak'orn⁵⁵ there was a spouting spring,
 The water poured down through a crevice
 In a clear, swift current, beautiful to behold.
 We dipped our scarves and pressed them to our breasts.
 Then we walked up a slope into a grove of sweet-smelling wood,
 Full of floral delights, 560
 Where soft breezes blew.
 The scent of flowers cheered our spirits,
 Like the fragrance of a perfumed woman.
 I thought of the nights we spent together.
 With a sigh, I plucked and sniffed a lamduan flower,⁵⁶
 It substituted for you in the forest.
 At Huey Ira⁵⁷ we saw garlands of Saiyud,⁵⁸
 There were endless blooms of that flower.
 There were also rows of Nom Maew,⁵⁹
 And all the fruits of the forest. 570
 Windfalls of Sat'orn⁶⁰ lay in heaps under the trees,
 Flocks of monkeys were eating them as if they were owners,
 Biting and throwing away the sour ones;
 But by process of elimination they were sated.
 At Huey P'ra Yoon⁶¹ we stopped on account of the heat.
 We were surprised to see rhinosceros lying in the forest.
 We called to each other, not knowing what animal it was,
 With a big face like a crocodile's.
 It saw us and blinked placidly.
 Then we saw its neck, flank and tail. 580
 We knew it was a rhinosceros, eating nettles, and were afraid;
 We ran away with all speed.
 Soon after, we reached a plain full of hay,

With leafy trees of great height.
 But there were leeches everywhere in the lampoo trees,
 Crawling down the leaves on to the ground.
 They jump on to you and hold fast,
 Even if you kick and stamp they do not let go.
 You shake them off your feet and they cling to your legs,
 Leaving a trail of blood behind. 590
 We escaped the leeches by marching fast to Chark K'am,
 A field where there was water for use.
 There were traces of people camping in the wilds,
 They had climbed the trees for firewood.
 The noise of monkeys and gibbons,
 Hanging from the trees, was frightful,
 Crying "Pua, Pua," ⁶² the female gibbons leapt from branch to branch,
 But seeing humans, shyly hid.
 O, poor gibbons, ever seeking their mates,
 Unhappy like me away from you. 600
 Gibbons call their mates from the branches.
 I call my beloved within the depths of my heart.
 I saw, in the deep forest, birds flying high.
 My thoughts turned to you, my tears fell.
 Grasshoppers sang sweetly in the wilds,
 And the wild cocks crew loud in the hills.
 Trees tightly packed together sounded like a flute,
 Resounding up to the mountain tops.
 We listened to the melodious music,
 And hastened on our way as evening fell. 610
 At Huey Pong ⁶³ was a flowing stream,
 The water was so clear one could almost see fish swimming.
 Shiny pebbles were strewn around,
 Some were the colour of topaz.

Delightedly we looked and then walked on.
 The steady breeze refreshed us.
 Both sides of the way were lined with Raḡam trees,⁶⁴
 Laden with fruit in bunches.
 The scent of Saroj flowers⁶⁵ regaled us.
 We stopped in our tracks and sighed. 620
 If we were in the capital city,
 We would cut them up and play at boats.
 Ripe fruit were plentiful —
 We used our swords to cut and taste them,
 But they were so sour that we looked at each other;
 Our teeth suffered for the trying.
 At Huey P'rao⁶⁶ our feet were dragging.
 The sky darkened and raindrops began to fall.
 The sun's rays had turned to the south-west.
 I felt as if an arrow pierced my heart. 630
 We hurried on at full speed,
 Afraid to spend the night in the forest.
 Due to the dark mass of trees,
 We could not see the sun set.
 Near the verge of collapse, we heard a dog bark;
 And there were traces of felled trees.
 Seeing signs of men and buffaloes we were relieved,
 Knowing we were near the end of the forest.
 But walking on dusty sand,
 Each sinking step made our legs weary. 640
 With the approach of dark, our limbs were dead stiff —
 It was as if we were swaying in mud.
 We crossed a field to reach the beach.
 Exhausted we sank down, dusty as we were,
 And weak with fatigue fell asleep,

Until the sun had cleared the trees by the sea.
 Then we took turns to stretch and stand;
 Our bones creaked with the exercise.
 We tried a few faltering steps,
 And walked unsteadily along wooden planks. 650
 There were paddies along the curve of a river,
 Interspersed with modest dwellings.
 There were orchards of coconut palms.
 We passed Ban T'ab Ma.⁶⁷
 Beyond the orchards was the bay.
 We arrived at Rayong⁶⁸ with its array of houses,
 It was a relief to reach the old home ground.
 They lit torches to welcome us and offered sleeping quarters.
 As for Nai Saeng, when he reached his brother's house,
 He smilingly greeted his crawling nephews. 660
 I felt utterly lonely,
 As I had to journey on for many nights.
 Next morning, both my feet were swollen —
 To walk was beyond my strength.
 I stayed in Rayong two days perforce,
 Then feeling better, invited the others to leave.
 Nai Saeng went into hiding and could not be found.
 O, what woe, worthy of tears,
 When a friend who has shared your life
 Deserts you at a moment of difficulty! 670
 So I poured water and declared to the assembly
 That a man like this might I never meet again!
 He deceived and betrayed us;
 I will show up his wickedness as he deserves.
 Coincidentally, may the power of truth reveal
 And call down punishment on Saeng.

Like writing his name in cinders,
 With the black heart of a traitor.
 Then I asked the two brothers who shared my life
 To change their minds and forget him. 680
 The three of us left Rayong
 By the road through the fields and forests.
 At Ban Na Ta Kwan,⁶⁹
 We saw an old woman of whom we asked the way.
 She pointed her finger in a certain direction —
 We were sure we could remember so we went our way.
 At Ban Laeng⁷⁰ the path was dry and we saw a wide paddy,
 My partners checked the route,
 Pushed their way through the grass
 Until the sun was high and we came to Ban Tap'ong.⁷¹ 690
 There was a beautiful monastic building,
 Constructed of forest timber,
 With perfect symmetry.
 I turned to the way across the paddy.
 I saw peasant girls busily ploughing,
 Some were chatting in country fashion,
 There were rings of dried sweat around their necks,
 Their clothes stained with areca spit.
 Ignoring them, we headed for a forest of tall trees.
 There were cries of wild peacocks calling to each other. 700
 I thought of you, regretting our separation.
 When you heard I had left the city,
 You must have grieved, waited, sorrowful.
 At bed time, meal time, you must have pined.
 I also came with trials and tribulations,
 Weary to death walking through the forest,
 Losing my way and going around in circles,

With dirt, chasms, swamps as obstacles.
 Desultorily praying as I walked.
 When we found our way, we reached the sea. 710
 Strange and exciting is the sound of waves.
 Restful is the shade of casuarina trees.
 Weird the way Po trees⁷² spread their twisted branches.
 Eye-catching how the Salang trees⁷³ rear their heads.
 At the mouth of Klong Krun⁷⁴ one saw a wide canal
 A row of buildings lined with trees.
 There by the water's edge they handled fish.
 We did not stop but hastened on our way.
 We reached the sea bay shrine at the end of the beach.
 We rounded the point and followed the canal. 720
 At Ban Klaeng⁷⁵ we passed the houses to the central place
 And saw a group of women weaving mats:
 Mouth gripping, fingers quickly weaving
 Until their hands were bent and twisted.
 The home-woven mats are sent to the city.
 Children and adults can do it without exception.
 At dusk, we stopped at a friend's house.
 We noticed that all the houses of the neighbourhood
 Had a strange roof of plaited Som wicker.⁷⁶
 Uninhabited, the roof was rolled up and stored. 730
 When people came, the roof was taken up and unfurled.
 It was done quickly and smoothly.
 At night, many tigers and deer roamed,
 Even climbed up the side of the house where we slept.
 They were caught, by placing dogs inside:
 These struggled and howled.
 In the late hours the noise was horrible.
 Pitying them, we could hardly fall asleep.

By early morning, the tragedy was plain:
 They were all eaten as expected. 740
 From Ban Klaeng we went into the forest.
 The shade of Rang trees⁷⁷ made it pleasantly cool.
 We saw squirrels and lizards run;
 We threw earth at them, chased and caught them for fun.
 Mangoes fell down bouncing in great numbers;
 Pity it was in mid-forest, we could not make use of them —
 Had it been near the palace with many girls,
 We would gladly have bent the branches to pick them.
 With such thoughts, we went onward along the rough trail
 Until we reached the bridge Grandma Hem built in the forest. 750
 It was a paddy irrigated by water channels.
 We had to wade through the flowing water.
 Then happily crossed over the bridge.
 Then skirting the foot of the hill where we guessed lay our way:
 There was a thickly-wooded jungle
 Leading to the sea at Cape T'ong Lang.⁷⁸
 We marched merrily reciting Sebha.
 We laughed at Khun Chang entering the bridal house.⁷⁹
 Seeing a melon field, we slowed down and approached.
 As if asking the way and engaged in conversation. 760
 The owner of the water-melons was willing.
 So we ate our fill of melons as desired.
 Thanking him we took our leave.
 And walked happily along the beach
 Until we reached the mouth of an important canal.
 A place called Pak Lavon.⁸⁰
 Without stopping, we went on and entered a big forest.
 And proceeded along a hilly path.
 Listening to the strident noise of monkeys

Like humans snoring, while making eyes at us. 770
 We reached Ban Kram⁸¹ as evening fell,
 And met my relatives.
 I entered my father's dwelling,
 Holding back abundant tears of joy.
 My head bent low, I bowed at his feet;
 Not without pangs of grief
 That some past sin had separated us
 And kept me from my father and relatives.
 Meeting my father, I was sad at being far from my mother
 Whom I missed sorely. 780
 My mother is in Sri Ayutthaya,⁸²
 My father dwells in the midst of the wilds.
 Hills keep them apart,
 As well as fields and waters across the country.
 I had made an arduous, almost death-dealing journey,
 In order to see my father's face.
 He bestowed blessings on me, and made me happy,
 Like having a crystal canopy over my head.
 He kindly rubbed ointment on my body,
 Until the aches and weariness left my bones. 790
 Many of the villagers
 Came to give me their welcome affection,
 Told me about the theft of buffaloes
 And the tyranny of masters who beat them,
 Asked the price of knives and scythes I could buy for them.
 The conversation was lively and intimate.
 With many sweet words of endearment,
 I was bored to death with listening.
 Next morning I was invited out into the forest,
 With boastful promises of bountiful game. 800

By the end of the day,
 We came home with hares, alligators and deer to grill and curry.
 Also lizards, frogs and monkey meat to toast and roast,
 But when these came to the kitchen the cooks were reluctant.
 So we did without them and dined on rice, gourd and melon.
 So my strength ebbed away.
 In the city we ate heartily of sweet and sour,
 But since we came destitute to the forest,
 Not even sugar has passed through our stomachs,
 So the organs of my body weakened. 810
 Because the ninth month ushers in the rainy season,
 We lacked the things we needed.
 I took leave of my father's feet,
 And journeyed to Ban P'ong K'aw⁸³ by the canal.
 The sight of young men and girls in the village upset me;
 They were unworthy of being recorded in verse,
 Being people of poor breeding,
 Quite unlike you who make my tears fall.
 Then we visited the officials of Bandon,⁸⁴
 Who breed ducks, pigs and cattle in great numbers. 820
 The Yok Krabat sorts out spoons morning and evening.
 His wife sits and grills fish.⁸⁵
 Then we went along a rough road to Ban P'ong Aw.⁸⁶
 There were not many places we did not visit,
 In search of a man who makes eye medicine.
 Not meeting him made us sad.
 Although there were many people we felt lonely,
 Alone, because we were unaccustomed.
 Staying in the Ban Kram⁸⁷ area torments the heart;
 They invite you to see the sea all the time. 830
 Seeing a shady promontory, we went up and sat.

There was a cool breeze. we wanted to see the fishes.
 We gazed amazed at the view.
 We saw boats sailing past the islands.
 Some were making their way to the side of the hill,
 Others were crossing to and fro. like in a painting,
 Others cruised around and about.
 There were plenty of them scattered over the sea.
 Toward evening. we saw what looked like a rising cloud.
 It was like smoke from a fire far away. 840
 Now abating. now rising. incessantly.
 We asked an old man who said it was a fish spouting foam.
 It was a reality that we sat and pondered, marvelling,
 Until dusk brought darkness. and we shivered.
 It made me think all the more of my beloved.
 If only you could come and see it for yourself.
 You could cuddle up and imploringly ask
 The name and nature of these places and islands.
 I would embrace and kiss you,
 Then I would point out and let you enjoy the sea. 850
 I would see not only the wide sea,
 But also the eyes of my beloved.
 O. grief, that I have travelled far from you;
 I can hardly stop the flow of bitter tears.
 It is sorrowful, my dearest,
 That I have not yet had my fill of you,
 But have come in travail, seeing only black silk
 Which covers my body without end.
 At Ban Kram. I made merit with my father
 For more than a month, and became thin with grief. 860
 Each night I wept and wasted,
 Praying for the grace of Buddha's mercy.

I observed the silas,⁸⁸ ate mid-morning meals as if I were a monk.
 In the evening I recited holy stanzas,
 Tried to follow the rites with my father,
 Who was the aide of the senior monk of the region.
 The Monarch bestowed on him the title
 Of Abbot Aram Dharmarangsri.
 He has remained a monk
 Without break for twenty lenten seasons. 870
 Now I have met him and received his guidance.
 I poured water, thinking of my beloved:
 May you prosper with all blessings!
 May you never know the sickness or annoyance!
 If, in this life, we gain not what we desire,
 Because the Almighty One is severe,
 Let my beloved be true to her vow
 And we shall meet again in the future as we desire,
 So together we shall know true love,
 And I will have the joy of being near you and cherish you. 880
 And though now far away in the forests and hills,
 I may ride the wind to embrace you.
 Do not push me away or pinch me;
 My arm will bear the painful marks of your nails.
 Just smile and willingly surrender your soul,
 And be not insanelly jealous.
 I send you the shared merit of the silas:
 May it sink deep into your heart.
 Though I am far away in the wild forest,
 But my heart goes straight to you without ceasing. 890
 Going out, seeing flowers, my heart wished
 To send them to my dearest love,
 But could not, for the distance is great,

And my tears fell in torrents.
 At night, with bruised heart, I went to bed.
 O, alas, in the deep forest,
 I heard only the cries of monkeys,
 Eerily disturbing to my breast.
 The sound of cicadas was sharp and shrill,
 Like the echo of my love's flowing tears, 900
 The cold dew was falling on hills and forests.
 O, my heart was breaking, thinking of you.
 I cuddled the soft, warm pillow to cheer me,
 Savouring the scent of Lamduan flowers at night
 And the smell of the black silk brought back memories,
 Every night my body heaved with sighs.
 Now in the ninth month it rained morning and evening.
 Everywhere in Ban Kram water flowed.
 And in my lonely solitude and grief,
 I fell into a fever and thought I would die. 910
 In delirium I saw fearful ghosts.
 My body shook, my head was swollen, my skin was all gooseflesh.
 My father sought after experts in magic,
 Many came and said I needed treatment.
 I babbled and spoke with spirits.
 Persons around me I failed to recognise.
 But an old doctor skilfully blew charms upon me,
 And tied holy cords. After several days I felt better.
 A medium, who was consulted when I was ill,
 Said it was because I picked flowers behind the hill; 920
 I did not ask respectfully, and slighted
 The guardian spirit who, angered, took revenge.
 After the doctor asked forgiveness, it was granted.
 In my heart I knew it was a lie.

But the villagers believed the doctor,
 So I kept it quietly to myself.
 Every morning and evening my nephews at Ban Kram —
 Muang, Dam, Kloy and Chit —⁸⁹
 Helped to massage me and prepare my medicine,
 Fittingly faithful as relatives. 930
 When I recovered, they brought me flowers.
 But two of them quarrelled.
 I tried to remonstrate and mediate,
 But they never became friendly as before.
 In despair, I attributed it to fate.
 So I turned my thoughts exclusively to my beloved,
 Who must be pining in loneliness.
 Therefore I took leave of my father and relatives,
 And left Ban Kram with heavy heart,
 Thinking regretfully of the two nephews. 940
 When I was sorely sick they nursed me.
 It will be long before we meet again.
 Even had I not escaped, I would have had to take leave.
 You would have grieved to death.
 Thus I have tried to write this as a surety —
 Let my beloved keep it in place of me.
 Be not sad, wait for me until next year,
 I will come and marry you as you desire.
 I will not desert you and make you feel ashamed.
 Take care of yourself and worry not! 950
 O, it was sad to part from my nephews of Ban Kram,
 But it had to be, because I longed for my beloved.
 I set out despite the rain and thunder,
 And made my weary way back through the wilderness.
 I reached Sri Ayutthaya on the fifth of the waxing moon,

And wrote down these lines to express my feelings
 For my dearest one, with all my love.
 Please feel for me who always longed for you.
 I was ill but did not die, my love did not cease.
 My thoughts were constantly with you. 960
 Please keep smiling happily and be not angry.
 Abate your jealousy. Listen to my words.
 I carried my grief through the forests,
 And have now come to speak with you.
 Be not wayward or spiteful
 To one who has suffered these many months.
 Along the way, I saw other beautiful women,
 Ten thousand, even a hundred thousand, but none compared,
 There was not one to match you,
 Who are my life's mate, to the land's end. 970
 From my journey, I have nothing but love to give you,
 Yet more worth than a hundred thousand other things.
 In return for your scarf that I cherished in your place.
 Grieve not that I had no time to take leave,
 Because of the trouble that arose
 Through the jealousy of all the others.
 I had to escape, to seek my father's grace,
 And lived in the forest until I nearly lost my life.
 Are you well and happily content,
 Or angry and suffering, 980
 Or always tasting a hundred thousand joys,
 Having forgotten one who might be dead,
 Or surrounded by smiling friends
 Who joyfully see that nothing ails you?
 To suppress and keep at bay these Maprang people⁹⁰
 And make them fade away is a difficult thing.

*This Nirat of Muang Klaeng I write as a gift,
Like a betel bowl⁹¹ for my beloved.
Grieve not, nor angrily sever all ties.
Be happy and cheerful as before.*

NOTES

1. Sunthorn Phu wrote this **Nirat** in 1807, during the reign of King Rama I.
2. A pun on his name (Phu) which means "a bee."
3. Temple of the Dawn, usually called Wat Arun.
4. Literally, the "Triple Delight." The poet contrasts this name with his present state.
5. The new Chinese quarters then. The original Chinese quarters were at the actual site of the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.
6. Like many of his contemporaries, the poet thinks of Bangkok as the new Ayutthaya.
7. Across the Chao Phya River on Thon Buri side. The name suggests an irregular motion of the stars.
8. Literally, the "Temple of Flowers." Now called Wat Bupharam.
9. Literally, the "Districts of Bees." The poet at once puns on this name and his own name.
10. In 1814, seven years after Sunthorn Phu visited the place, King Rama II built a new town for the Mons and ordered a new canal dug to shorten the distance by 16 kilometres.
11. Now called Bang Krachao. However, the old name better suggests a parting from the beloved one.
12. The first shrine was built here by Ayutthaya's King Ramathibodi II in 1498 for two bronze statues of **devatas** found in Klong Samrong. Ever since this place has been associated with spirits.
13. An ancient canal, redug by King Ramathibodi II in 1498. Klong Samrong has remained a major canal to this day.
14. While continuing down Klong Samrong, the poet comes to a place which means "Women's Huts." This gives him a chance to bewail his separation from city women.

15. Probably, Bang Phli Yai in Samut Prakan Province, where there is a temple with a highly worshipped Sukhothai Buddha.
16. Next to Bang Phi Yai. Also the name of a canal about 20 metres wide which connects with Klong Samrong.
17. 18. 19. 20. Various kinds of plants which grow in swamps or muddy areas.
21. This is probably a gateway to the forest, as its name suggests.
22. According to the name, houses are few and far between.
23. Literally, the "District of Garlic." The Thai word for garlic (**kratiem**) suggests suffering.
24. A divergent point of the canal.
25. 26. The two canals one of which the poet has to choose. Because of their strong currents, watergates were later built in both canals.
27. The name of one part of Klong Samrong before it flows down into the Bang Pakong River.
28. In Amphoe Bang Bo, Samut Prakan. Probably, the water here is shallow.
29. A big tree often associated with spirits. The poet here witnesses the force of popular belief about the tree.
30. A creeper with a small white flower.
31. A big tree which is a haunt of fireflies.
32. The poet here enters a district in Amphoe Bang Pakong, Chachoengsao Province. The name means "steadfast."
33. Literally, the "District of Coconut."
34. Literally, a "crocodile." Another reading of this line is as follows: "This is the haunt of vicious crocodiles."
35. Literally, the "District of Cow." There is a canal which flows behind a temple, both by that name.
36. The old name of Bang Pakong.
37. A Chinese stone doll, used for ship ballast.
38. An isle off Si Racha coast, very far from the spot where the poet finds himself.
39. The old name of Chon Buri, now an **amphoe** in Chon Buri Province.

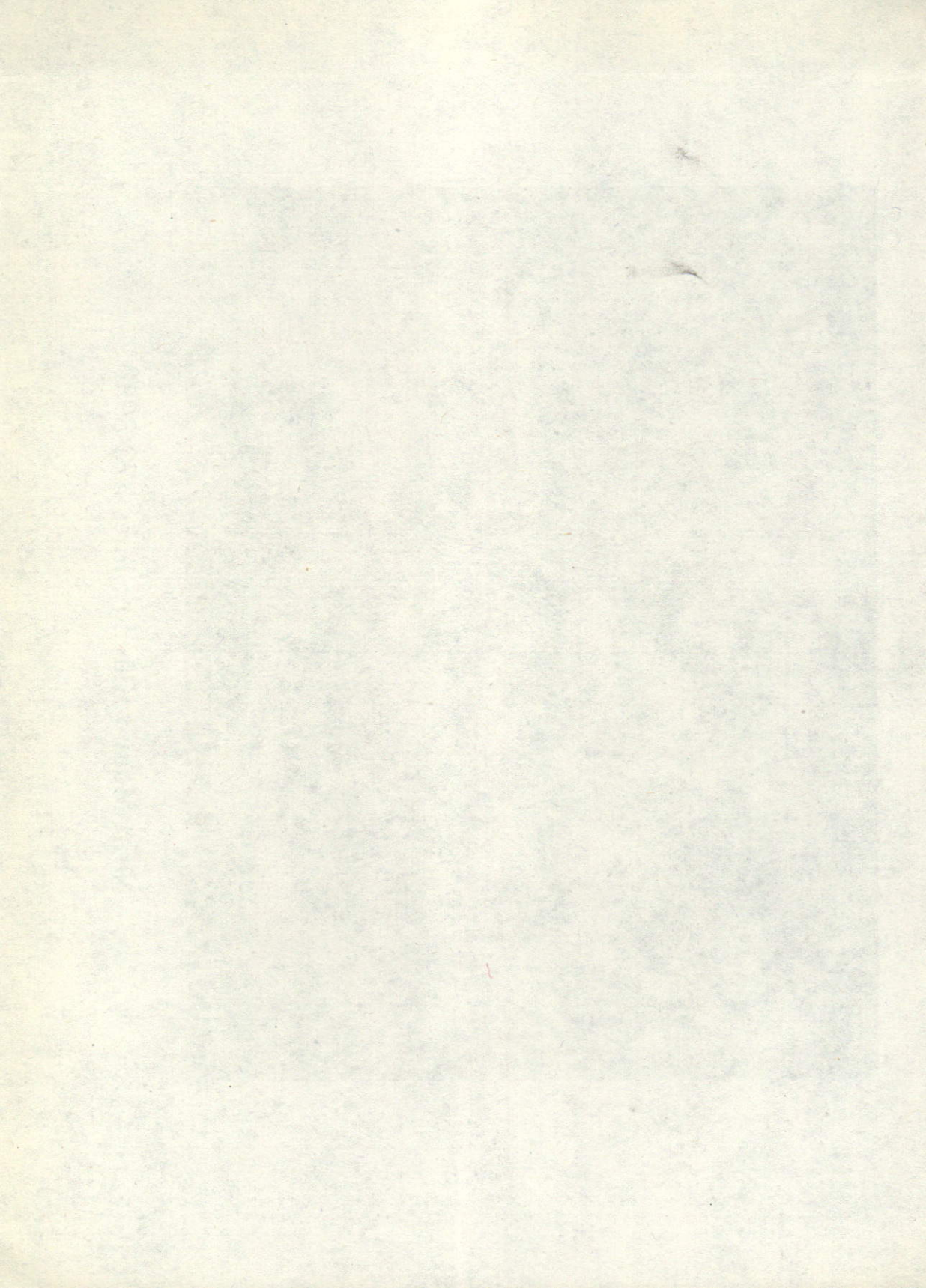
40. There is a goddess or female spirit at Sammuk Hill, who is highly respected by the people.
41. Halfway between Chon Buri and Si Racha. The poet travels by land at this point.
42. Now the site of a well-known golf course and an irrigation dam. Formerly known for a hot spring.
43. Now called Si Racha.
44. A little beyond Si Racha, also called Sukhla.
45. Literally, the "District of Tiger." **Lamung** in Khmer means "tiger."
46. Literally, the "Salt Plantation." A part of Bang Lamung and Na Kleua have been annexed to the City of Pattaya.
47. Now the City of Pattaya. The name stands for a bay, a hill, and a cape. The poet is here seen climbing the hill which is about 100 metres high.
48. Court women are aptly compared to sea water. The poet himself has a bitter taste of punishment and imprisonment due to his affair with a court lady.
49. Now also forming part of Pattaya City.
50. The poet is about to follow the path which Phraya Tak (later King Taksin) used to go to Chanthaburi.
51. There is a road which is believed to have been trodden by the elephant army of King Taksin.
52. The sweet smell of **Payom** is almost proverbial.
53. On the border of Chon Buri and Rayong. Literally, the "District of Bamboo."
54. Not certain if this is the name of a place. It could just simply mean "In the forest...."
55. This could just mean the "Hill with a Spring."
56. A flower whose name connotes separation from the beloved.
57. Sometimes called Huay Yaira, in Rayong.
58. 59. Two different kinds of flowers.
60. A fruit tree.
61. Sometimes called Huay Payoon.

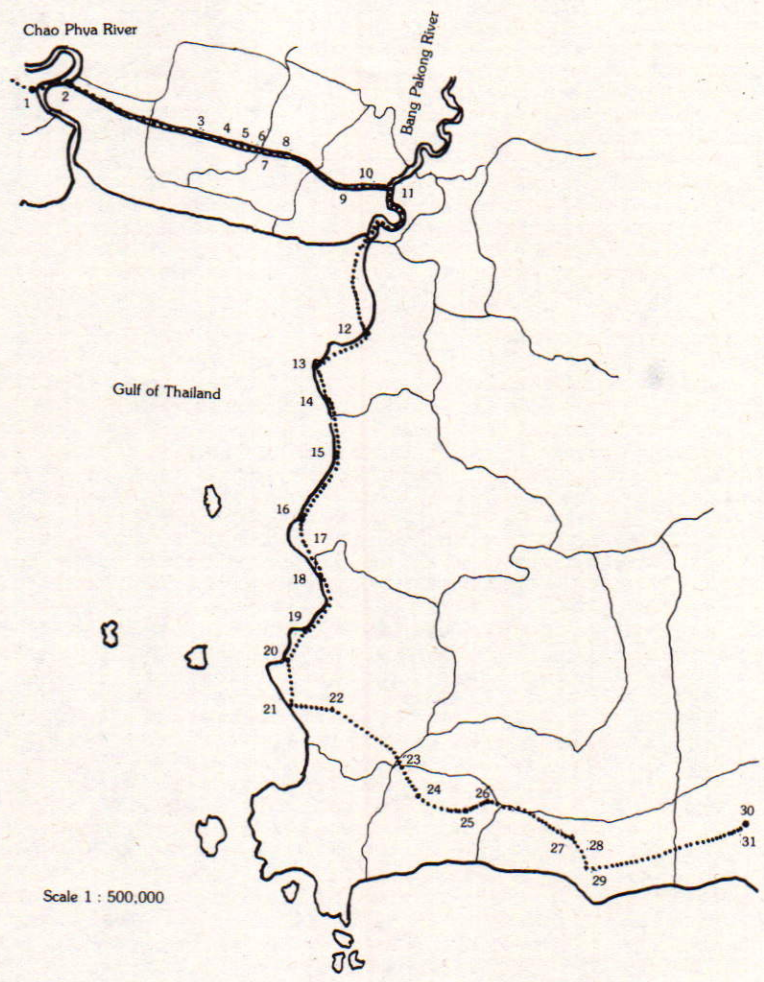
62. "Husband, husband." Gibbons are believed to have descended from Nang Mora who had betrayed her husband and been transformed into a gibbon by a curse.
63. A small stream whose source is in the mountain.
64. A thorny shrub whose fruits are sometimes sweet, sometimes sour. Its name suggests bitterness.
65. A wild flower.
66. A small village near Rayong.
67. Near the sea. Its name is probably associated with King Taksin's army.
68. The poet has so far journeyed about 176 kilometres, measured by modern roadway. He is still about 47 kilometres away from Muang Klang.
69. After Nai Saeng has left, the poet and his two disciples are bound to make their own way by asking people.
70. A district in Amphoe Muang, Rayong Province.
71. There is a big temple here.
72. Probably, the trees described here are Prong (*Ceriops* spp.) Kongkang (*Rhizophora* spp.) which grow in muddy areas.
73. This is not the name of a tree. Rather it means the trees are "full of leaves."
74. A canal which connects with the gulf.
75. A small village on the outskirts of Muang Klang.
76. An interesting aspect of makeshift house, more commonly found on some islands in the Philippines.
77. A big tree.
78. A cape in Amphoe Klaeng, 4 kilometres southwest of Pak Lavon
79. The **Sebha of Khun Chang Khun Phan** was first composed in early Ayutthaya. Its standard version was made by the royal command of King Rama II, to which Sunthorn Phu was to contribute the section on the birth of Phlai Ngarn.
80. See note 78.
81. A district in Amphoe Klaeng, The poet's father is believed to have been born here.

82. That is, in Bangkok.
83. A small village. The poet gets around to visit relatives.
84. 85. The poet's satirical sketch of country gentry.
86. The poet goes to a wild area just for curiosity.
87. The poet arrives during the Raings Retreat. He travels a little out of boredom because his monk-father has to stay in the temple for three months.
88. Probably, the eight precepts, or even the ten precepts.
89. These are nices, not nephews. Also, Kloy and Chit are not names, but a term (*kloychit*) which means "dear to my heart."
90. Probably, surrounding people who speak nice words and are not sincere.
91. A bridal offering from the bridegroom at the time of marriage. See front cover of this book.



Nirat Muang Klaeng : lines 373-393.





Scale 1 : 500,000

Names of Places Along Sunthorn Phu's Route

1. Phra Pradaeng
2. Beginning of Klong Samrong
3. Bang Phli
4. Bang Chalong
5. Bang Kratiem
6. Hua Takhe (Sisa Chorakhe Yai)
7. Bang Bo
8. Ban Regard
9. Bang Samak
10. Bang Wua
11. Ban Bang Mangkong (Bang Pakong)
12. Bang Pla Sroi
13. Sammuk Hill
14. Nong Mon
15. Bang Phra
16. Sri Maharajajati (Si Racha)
17. Tung Sakhla (Sukhla)
18. Bang Lamung
19. Ban Na Kleua
20. Tung Pattaya
21. Na Chom Thien
22. Nong Ja-aew
23. Bang Phai
24. Huey Ira (Yai Ra; Yai La)
25. Chak Luk Ya
26. Huey Pong
27. Yan Kao
28. Ban Laeng
29. Ban Tapong
30. Ban Klaeng
31. Ban Kram



श्री अर्जुन