

# The Eulogy of King Narai

translated and introduced by  
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**ABSTRACT**—The *Eulogy of King Narai*, here presented in an annotated English translation, was probably written in the early 1680s by the head of the Brahmin department. It celebrates the king by listing the submission of rulers in all directions; describing the splendour of his palace at Lopburi; and recounting an elephant hunt.

This poem is one of the most important literary works of the Ayutthaya era. Authorship is sometimes attributed to the court poet, Luang Si Mahosot, and sometimes to the poet and head of the Brahmin department, Phra Maharatchakhru, although Winai Pongsripijan favours Phra Maharatchakhru. The date of composition is probably in the early 1680s, as the poem mentions events up to 1680, but no later “key” events, such as the arrival of the Persian and French embassies in 1685. The original is written in four-line verses in the metre, *khlóng si supháp*.

Influenced by Sanskrit *prasasti* verses in praise of great rulers, eulogies of kings form a category of Siamese literature.<sup>2</sup> An early example was the 15th century *Yuan Phai* in praise of King Trailokanat (reigned 1448–1488).<sup>3</sup> During the 17th century, possibly in King Narai’s reign, a eulogy (*khamchan sansoen phra kiat*) was composed for King Prasat Thong (reigned 1629–1656), Narai’s father.<sup>4</sup>

The *Eulogy of King Narai* begins and ends with invocations of deities, and includes passages depicting the plant and animal world flourishing in the realm of the righteous king. Subject matter, which is specific to this eulogy, concerns King Narai’s military victories, tribute rendered him by vassals, his use of Lopburi (Lawo) as a royal residence, and his expertise in elephant lore, dramatised through a detailed description of a royal elephant hunt.

The eulogist lists the victories and achievements, which have made the king renowned. The examples are chosen not just on merit, but also to emphasise the king’s fame and power having spread in all directions. To the north, the king himself led an army

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this translation appeared in Winai and Trongjai, *Moradok khwam songjam haeng noppahaburi*, pp. 61–140. I am grateful to Dr Winai for permission to republish this translation in the *Journal of the Siam Society*. Many thanks to Chris Baker for help on the annotation as well as for valuable advice on text, translation and introduction

<sup>2</sup> Fine Arts Department, *Somsuangsirathirang*.

<sup>3</sup> Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*.

<sup>4</sup> “Khamchan sansoen phrakiat somdet phraphutthajao luang prasat thong.”

to conquer Chiang Mai, while to the south the recalcitrant Sultan of Kedah (“Sai”) and governor of Songkhla both ended up submitting to him. Tribute was sent to Ayutthaya by the King of Cambodia to the east, while a Burmese prince came from the west to seek his protection. Such was his renown that the Cham king’s nephew and the Macassarese prince both fled their troubled lands to render him homage, seeking refuge in Siam.

The poem is also notable for its vivid description of King Narai’s palace at Lopburi, where the king had new city walls and bastions erected. The revival of Lopburi as a royal city was deemed to be worthy of special praise. Apart from the grandeur of the buildings, pipes carrying fresh clean water for use in the palace reflected the era’s technological knowhow.

Several verses depict, by convention, the natural world flourishing in adoration of the king, but the places where they did so are also specified. Apart from in the gardens of the Lopburi Palace, nature also prospered in the forests near the shrine of the Buddha’s Footprint at Phra Phutthabat in Saraburi and at Than Kasem, a stream where the king and his court would relax during sojourns to Phra Phutthabat. With this mention of Than Kasem and its site near Satchaphan (Saccabandha) Hill, the poem alludes to the monarch’s pious observance of a royal tradition, namely the annual pilgrimage to Phra Phutthabat.

A considerable part of this eulogy describes one of the king’s elephant hunts near Lopburi. Narai, even more than most other “Kings of the White Elephant”, was much preoccupied with elephants. The *Khamchan klom chang khrang krung kao* (Ayutthaya-era verse-lullabies for elephants) are ascribed to Narai’s reign.<sup>5</sup> Early in his reign, a white elephant was discovered and presented to the king. According to the eulogist, this auspicious event led “all the princes and rulers” to praise the king’s “great merit and power.” The *Eulogy* also mentions another white elephant presented to Narai by the Cambodian king. Indeed, one main reason why the king chose to stay in Lopburi for long periods of every year was to occupy himself with hunting elephants and tigers. An elephant kraal was built just outside the walls of the city, while one of the functions of the small royal residence at Thale Chupson was as a hunting lodge. On a more prosaic level, it is probable that many of the elephants caught by the king, once tamed, were sold to rulers or merchants in the Coromandel and Bengal.<sup>6</sup>

The *Eulogy* is not only a literary work of merit invoking divine blessings on King Narai, but also a vivid evocation of the beauty and luxuriance of his palace and gardens at Lopburi. The poem also reveals his court’s self-perception in the author’s choice of events to illustrate the monarch’s worldly glory and achievements. What the eulogist wished to convey was that, during King Narai’s reign:

The fields are more bountiful, bringing contentment to all who live together happily throughout the whole kingdom. Junks come filled with various precious goods, people’s property and possessions are secure and all prosper through His Majesty’s accumulated merit. (v. 26)

<sup>5</sup> Fine Arts Department, *Khamchan klom chang khrang krung kao*, 9–24, 65–74.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Rabi, *Ship of Sulaiman*, 150–51; Farrington and Dhiravat, *English Factory*, vol. I, doc. 294, 509.

## The translation

### *Invocation of the gods (1)*<sup>7</sup>

- 1 Homage to the three-eyed Shiva who carries a trident, whose prowess is famed far and wide. Homage to the great four-faced Brahma, creator of the heavens. Let me invite the One who sleeps on the naga king Ananta,<sup>8</sup> to descend and assuage our sorrows, so that heaven and earth may equally be radiant with light.

### *Important events in the reign (2–15)*

- 2 His honour is known far and wide from the time when news was brought that a white cow elephant, with glowing unblemished skin, had been captured in Kanchanaburi's forests.<sup>9</sup> Now that this unsurpassed city has a sacred elephant, all the princes and rulers praise [the king's] great merit and power.
- 3 His glory is known far and wide after he, at the head of hundreds of thousands of troops, besieged the city [Chiang Mai], waiting to behead his enemies. The Lao<sup>10</sup> were decimated, their blood staining the earth, all the [recalcitrant] city lords were thus in awe of his royal might.<sup>11</sup>
- 4 He brought the [image of] the omniscient One who has left the cycle of death and rebirth, the most perfect Phra Buddha Sihing, transporting it to Ayutthaya,<sup>12</sup> bringing the royal city peace, and its people contentment. *Devas* and throngs of people alike coming to worship in happy reverence.
- 5 His renown is spread far and wide in all lands. Rulers from all directions come and seek audience, wishing daily to be at his feet, each offering him homage with bowed heads, filling the audience hall.
- 6 Mang Nanthamit, of the royal line of the lord of Ratnapura,<sup>13</sup> who rules over the city of jewels, being uncle of the monarch of that realm, came to attend on

<sup>7</sup> These headings do not appear in the Thai original.

<sup>8</sup> Vishnu.

<sup>9</sup> Discovered in 1657 at Si Sawat; see Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 245–6.

<sup>10</sup> Meaning the people of Lan Na.

<sup>11</sup> King Narai mounted expeditions to Chiang Mai in 1661 and again in 1662, hoping to benefit from China's attack on Burma. It is difficult to ascertain which campaign succeeded in taking Chiang Mai, though most recensions of the *Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya* recount the story of Chaophraya Kosathibodi's bloody conquest and plunder of Chiang Mai around 1661–62 (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 260-3, 286–9, 291-9; Wyatt and Aroonrut, *Chiang Mai Chronicle*, 127; Dhiravat, "Political History," 286–90).

<sup>12</sup> This famous image was supposedly brought to Ayutthaya in 1662 and installed in Wat Phra Si Sanphet (see *Khamhaikan*, 58-59).

<sup>13</sup> The "jewelled city," meaning Ava.

- him daily with glad and willing heart.<sup>14</sup>
- 7 The nephew of the king of the Chams, ruler of Champa, Posang by name,<sup>15</sup> one truly born of the lineage of the lotus, came to lift the royal golden shoes above his head, rendering homage under the dust of the king's feet [as a servant].
- 8 A prince from the frontiers, of Malay royal descent, called Da-ing Ma-nga, son of the king of Makassar, whose royal title is San,<sup>16</sup> came to render humble homage.<sup>17</sup>
- 9 In Cambodia rules a supreme king, sitting on the royal throne in the great city Intharaprasathan,<sup>18</sup> who has asked for His royal favour, as an umbrella to give him secure protection.<sup>19</sup>
- 10 He begs to present exquisite gold and silver flowers, sending envoys with them to his court every year, to show loyalty in the customary manner, hoping to rely on his glory until the end of time [lit. "the age"].
- 11 He also presented him with a very beautiful male white elephant, as well as other captured bull elephants of good lineage, worthy of a supreme monarch, causing kings of every country to show their reverence.
- 12 The uncle of the king of Cambodia, whose title and rank was *uparaja*, travelled here with Nak Ubon, to declare their allegiance under the dust of his royal feet.
- 13 In the south, a king blinded by pride, [ruler] of Sai,<sup>20</sup> changed his mind, fearing his majesty, sending proper tribute prepared in the most exquisite manner, being gold and silver trees and flowers of beauty.
- 14 His grandeur was apparent, when a tributary lord in his territories, an evil man

<sup>14</sup> A paternal uncle of the King of Ava, ruling at Mottama/Martaban, fled into Siam after Mons attacked and burned Martaban in 1663 (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 256–8).

<sup>15</sup> Vietnamese forces expanded southward into the Cham domain, causing repeated flights into Cambodia and Siam (Kiernan, *Viet Nam*, 237–40). The Ayutthaya chronicles, written later, wrongly describe Posang as coming from Minangkabao (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 248).

<sup>16</sup> Shortened from Hasanuddin, Sultan of Gowa (reigned 1653–69).

<sup>17</sup> After the Dutch invaded Sulawesi in 1667, and the Bugis king Arung Palakka became paramount, many Macassarese fled to Siam and were settled in the Malay quarter in south-west Ayutthaya. Later, in 1686, they raised the Macassar Revolt, which was violently suppressed by a combination of Siamese forces and several Europeans in the king's service (Smithies, "Accounts of the Makassar Revolt, 1686").

<sup>18</sup> Indraprastha, Angkor Thom.

<sup>19</sup> In 1674, Ang So ascended the throne in Udong as Chey Chettha IV, but was challenged by his cousin, Ang Non, with Viet support. Chey Chettha appealed to Narai for support, with little success. The dispute continued until 1689 (Dhiravat, "Political History," 334–35).

<sup>20</sup> ไทศรี, Saiburi, Kedah.





Figure 1. Plan of Lopburi made by De La Mare, the “French engineer” in the Chevalier de Chaumont’s embassy of 1685; first published in Paris, 1751. This colored version appeared in *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande*, Leipzig, 1752 (from the collection of Thavatchai Tangsirivanich). The palace is at bottom centre, coloured pink and marked A. The elephant kraal is at centre top, outside the wall.

who had been conspiring since the time of his predecessor, the Governor of Wichaya Khiri,<sup>21</sup> dared to rebel and contest his royal power, even though he was but a hyena.<sup>22</sup>

- 15 When His Majesty was ready, having acceded to the throne, he sent troops to seize and subdue [Wichaya Khiri]. The traitorous rebels were not able to resist, much of their blood was shed – many enemies were captured and presented to the king.

#### Lopburi (16–26)

- 16 His fame was widespread, when he made ancient Lopburi once again a kingly residence, building streets, water tanks, city gates and a royal palace, with forts as well as walls built to form a fitting boundary.
- 17 Dusit Prasat hall,<sup>23</sup> beautiful befitting the Buddha’s abode, rising upwards in

<sup>21</sup> วิชชา คิริ, Wichiankhiri, Songkhla.

<sup>22</sup> Songkhla, ruled by a Muslim “Javanese” *raja* or governor, resisted the imposition of Ayutthaya’s overlordship from 1646 onwards. In 1677–78, Ayutthaya sent an expedition south to subdue Songkhla and Pattani. In 1680, the two cities agreed to submit (Dhiravat, “Political History,” 337–39).

<sup>23</sup> อุติตปราสาท, usually Dusit Sawan Thanya *Mahaprasat*, one of three audience halls in the Lopburi Palace.



Figure 2. The Dusit Mahaprasat (photo by author).

tiers to stand against forceful winds, the faces of Brahma, at the topmost part, are both auspicious and exquisite. The *naga* with spread hood uncoiled itself descending.

- 18 At Trimukh hall,<sup>24</sup> there is a Lion Throne decorated with a myriad of jewelled beads, each shining brilliantly. The audience hall, filled with those coming to pay reverence to the king, is as beautiful as if built by *deva*, tempting celestial beings to descend and admire.
- 19 The lofty royal palace buildings were lined proudly in a row, on the right Suthasawan hall<sup>25</sup> with its bright radiance, on the left Chantharaphisan hall,<sup>26</sup> covered with gold, shining in contest not only with the sun but also with the moon.
- 20 In the gardens are many beautiful varieties of plant, lovely of bloom and leaf alike, all loosely intertwining, like those in the Chitlada Garden of the God of Lightning,<sup>27</sup> the flowers casting their sweet smells all around, for the King.

<sup>24</sup> ตริมุข, a building with three wings or porticoes.

<sup>25</sup> สุทศวรรค, the innermost audience hall in the Lopburi Palace, where King Narai died on 11 July 1688.

<sup>26</sup> จันทราพิศาล, an audience hall in the middle enclosure of the Lopburi Palace.

<sup>27</sup> จิตลดา, Cittalatā, a garden in Indra's Tavatimsa Heaven.





Figure 1. The Chantharaphisan hall, now housing the palace museum (photo by Chris Baker).

- 21 It is a wonder that the deity supreme above all others, who resides above the ocean of pure milk, Four-armed Lord Vishnu, has descended to be born on earth as the King [Narai], who has so much might and glory, more than any king since antiquity.
- 22 Pure refreshing clear water flows through the layers of hills, tumbling and rushing down noisily – finding its way through pipes into the pond of swirling water in the middle of the palace.
- 23 The water running through the precipices of the hills, shoots up high and rushes down the crevices to come out [through the pipes] at the lion’s mouth, into the great pond, for the king’s bathing pool.
- 24 Once [His Majesty] has finished bathing, the water rushes on quickly along pipes, which have been elaborately laid down, flowing swiftly past obstacles to the edge of the pond, where lotus petals with their pollen float visibly above the water.
- 25 The stream of glittering water, with its sizzling noises equalling a heavenly stream, flows and reflects [the sun] in multicoloured light, then scatters in different directions, swerving along the edge of the curved space before separating into tiny rivulets.

- 26 The fields are more bountiful, bringing contentment to all who live together happily throughout the whole kingdom. Junks come filled with various precious goods, people's property and possessions are secure and all prosper through His Majesty's accumulated merit.

*The forest (27–41)*

- 27 His Majesty, the Omniscient One,<sup>28</sup> goes into the forest, delighted as boughs of flowers and bunches of fruits bow to him in welcome, with all the flowers giving off their scent all round. The mountains there are endowed with caves and curving streams of water.
- 28 Troops of men all come to fill the open space in the forest, jostling with each other, making much noise, the resonant sound of rampant elephants in musth is heard, as is the noise of running horses' hooves beating the ground loudly.
- 29 There are various large trees in the great forest, their leaves spreading all over to give restful shade, keeping away the fierce sunshine, while the wind gently rustles, cooling the vast woods.
- 30 Mango, Marian plum,<sup>29</sup> *masang*,<sup>30</sup> santol<sup>31</sup> – each gives plentiful fruit to adorn the trees, blossoms and bunches of fruit hanging down in a riot, persimmon, *phluang*<sup>32</sup> and *chamuang*<sup>33</sup> trees crowd together, Indian mulberry,<sup>34</sup> longan<sup>35</sup> and *mafai*<sup>36</sup> each has sprigs and branches hanging down.
- 31 Various kinds of plants [in the forests] may be mentioned: *taew*<sup>37</sup> and *tumka*,<sup>38</sup> Persian lilac,<sup>39</sup> mangrove apple,<sup>40</sup> Indian licorice,<sup>41</sup> *phawa*,<sup>42</sup> *kum*<sup>43</sup> and box

<sup>28</sup> สรรพเพ็ชร์, *sanphet*, an epithet of the Buddha.

<sup>29</sup> [มะ]ปราง, [*ma*]prang, *Bouea macrophylla*, burmanica.

<sup>30</sup> [มะ]ซาง, [*ma*]sang, *Madhuca pierrei*, mahua.

<sup>31</sup> [มะ]ต๋อง, [*ma*]tong, *Sandoricum koetjape*.

<sup>32</sup> พลวง, *Dipterocarpus tuberculatus*, eng gurjin oil tree.

<sup>33</sup> ทรม่วง, *samuang*, usually *chamuang*, *Garcinia cowa*.

<sup>34</sup> ยอ, *yo*, *Morinda citrifolia*, noni.

<sup>35</sup> ลำไย, *lamyai*, *Dimocarpus longan*.

<sup>36</sup> [มะ]ไฟ, [*ma*]fai, *Baccaurea ramiflora*, *baccaurea*.

<sup>37</sup> เต่า, *Cratoxylum maingayi*, tree jasmine, cork tree.

<sup>38</sup> ตูมกา, *Strychnos nux-blanda*, *mino*, fruits are the source of strychnine.

<sup>39</sup> เลื่อน, properly เลี่ยน, *lian*, *Melia azedarach*, chinaberry tree, Pride of India, bead-tree, Cape lilac, syringa berrytree, etc.

<sup>40</sup> ลำพู, *lamphu*, *Sonneratia caseolaris*, Crabapple Mangrove, Mangrove Apple, Firefly Mangrove, etc.

<sup>41</sup> ไผ่, *phai*, *Adenantha pavonina*, red sandalwood, coral tree.

<sup>42</sup> พวา, *phawa*, *Garcinia speciosa*.

<sup>43</sup> กุ่ม, *kum*, *Crateva religiosa*, *magna*, garlic pear, temple plant.



trees,<sup>44</sup> *daeng*,<sup>45</sup> *khan*<sup>46</sup> and fig<sup>47</sup> fitly stand next to each other, all fruitful, *hiang*,<sup>48</sup> *han*,<sup>49</sup> sandalwood<sup>50</sup> and *chaeng*<sup>51</sup> with bark as smooth as a maiden's soft skin.

- 32 These trees so lovely with boughs weighed down with fruit, flower and leaf interspersed as in a picture, blooming in full, attracting the carpenter bees. Bees from their hives approach in rows to taste the nectar.
- 33 The clear water flows slowly down, fragrant breezes waft the water along swiftly in wavelets. White lotus flowers rise up above the muddy pond, budding and blooming lotuses alike appear on the surface, sheltered by their leaves.
- 34 The green buds of the large white lotus compete to bloom above the water's surface, the large red lotus and *sai* lotus<sup>52</sup> both scentless, the *sattaban*<sup>53</sup> water lilies all intertwined lure the large bees to approach, while *phuean*<sup>54</sup> water lilies are lined up next to each other as if in homage to the *nilubon*<sup>55</sup> water lilies.
- 35 The crook-backed shrimp floats along dragging its claws, with mammary glands and a rostrum in its front part, crabs, snakehead fish,<sup>56</sup> and conch shells each seeking food. Fish hide themselves in grass, waiting for their prey to come nibble at the water moss.
- 36 The Kasem stream<sup>57</sup> brings happiness, being a blessed place built long ago, at the site of Satchaphan Hill<sup>58</sup> upon which the Lord, who is merciful to all the Three Worlds [Buddha], came to leave his auspicious footprint.

<sup>44</sup> แก้ว, *Murraya paniculata*, gem jasmine.

<sup>45</sup> แดง, *Xylia xylocarpa*.

<sup>46</sup> คั้น, possibly ชับ.

<sup>47</sup> [มะ]เดื่อ, [*ma*]duea, *Ficus lacor*, *hispida*.

<sup>48</sup> เขียว, *Dipterocarpus obtusifolius*.

<sup>49</sup> หัน, local name for เลือดแฉอด, *lueat raet*, *Knema globularia*.

<sup>50</sup> จันทน์, *jan*, *Myristica* (various).

<sup>51</sup> แฉง, *Maerua/Niebuhrria siamensis*.

<sup>52</sup> จงกล, *chongkon*, *Nelumbo lotus*.

<sup>53</sup> สดตบจรณ, a large, fragrant pink lotus.

<sup>54</sup> บัวเผื่อน, *bua phuean*, *Nelumbo nouchali*.

<sup>55</sup> นิลูบล, *Nymphaea cyanea*.

<sup>56</sup> กุ่มกิล, *kumphin*, usually ชอน, *Channa striata*.

<sup>57</sup> ธารเกษม, *than kasem*, stream of contentment; here the reference is to a stream near the shrine of the Buddha's Footprint at Saraburi, where a royal residence was constructed by King Prasat Thong (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 218).

<sup>58</sup> สัจพันธุ, Saccabandha, a hill near Savatthi where the Buddha left a footprint on hard stone, and hence the name given to other hills where Buddha Footprints are found.

- 37 At the landing [on Kasem stream] swans float along in the water; hornbills,<sup>59</sup> Oriental darters,<sup>60</sup> painted storks<sup>61</sup> fly to and fro noisily; pygmy geese<sup>62</sup> and partridges<sup>63</sup> cry out their mating calls; sarus cranes,<sup>64</sup> peacocks, night herons<sup>65</sup> and ibis<sup>66</sup> all call out hauntingly to their mates.
- 38 Magpies,<sup>67</sup> doves,<sup>68</sup> quails,<sup>69</sup> rollers,<sup>70</sup> seagulls<sup>71</sup> and lineated barbets<sup>72</sup> sing their plaints to attract mates. The stork<sup>73</sup> misses its companion and exchanges cries with it. Mynas<sup>74</sup> and swiftlets<sup>75</sup> gather close to each other, as do the starlings.<sup>76</sup>
- 39 The coel<sup>77</sup> cries out and swoops, while the parrot<sup>78</sup> flies up to alight on a treetop, sending out sounds as if serenading a king, like a lullaby sung melodiously nearby.
- 40 At that landing, surrounded by the loud noises of the elephants, the tiger growls, the leopard crouches furtively making a sharper sound. Deer keep out of the way [looking for] a place to hide themselves, in fear. Bears and porcupines each jump alertly aside avoiding the elephant in musth.
- 41 Banteng<sup>79</sup> in herds rush off next to one another. A lone water buffalo almost crashes into a tree. Mischievous monkeys and high-spirited rhinoceroses roam apart. Rabbits prance and run around playfully, then look up at the moon.

<sup>59</sup> เหยือก, *ngueak*, general term for hornbills.

<sup>60</sup> จ้าว, *ngua*, *Anhinga melanogaster*.

<sup>61</sup> [กาบ]บัว, [*kap*]bua, *Mycteria leucocephala*.

<sup>62</sup> คับแค, *khapkhae*, *Nettapus coromandelianus*, cottontail goose.

<sup>63</sup> กระทา, *kratha*, *Francolinus pintadeanus*.

<sup>64</sup> โกงจ, *kon*, usually นกกระเรียน, *krarian*, *Grus antigone*.

<sup>65</sup> แหวก, *khwaek*, *Nycticorax nycticorax*.

<sup>66</sup> ค้อนหอย, *khonhoi*, *Threskiornis melanocephala*.

<sup>67</sup> กางเขน, *kangkhen*, *Copsychus saularis*, oriental magpie robin.

<sup>68</sup> เขา, *khao*, general name for doves.

<sup>69</sup> ชู่ม, *Coturnix chinensis*, painted quail.

<sup>70</sup> [ตะ]ขาบ, [*ta*]khab, *Coracias benghalensis* or *Eurystomus orientalis*, roller or dollar bird.

<sup>71</sup> นางนวล, *nangnuan*, *Larus brunnicephalus*, etc., various gulls.

<sup>72</sup> ภูริโดก, *phuradok*, *Megalaima* (various), barbets.

<sup>73</sup> กระสา, *Ciconia* (various).

<sup>74</sup> เอี้ยง, *iyang*, *Acridothores tristis*, etc.

<sup>75</sup> แอน, *en*, *Collocalia* (various).

<sup>76</sup> คลี่โคลง, *khlueng khlong*, *Sturnus* (various).

<sup>77</sup> โกงกิล, *kokin*, *Eudynamis scolopacea*.

<sup>78</sup> นกหก, *nokhok*, *Psittinus* (various).

<sup>79</sup> โคแดง, *kho daeng*, “red cow,” a wild buffalo.



Figure 2. Remains of the hunting lodge at *thale chupson* (photo by Chris Baker).

### *The elephant hunt (42–64)*

- 42 We speak now of when he, upon whom the realm relies, the highest in the land, made his royal progress to these woods, performing a ceremony to enter the forest with a lasso of victory, according to the manuals on elephant hunt for good fortune.
- 43 The Brahmin masters of elephant lore<sup>80</sup> begin with an invocation to the gods. *Pruethibat* Brahmins<sup>81</sup> perform a complete worship of the celestial beings and spirits, all praying and chanting together, without any anxiety, but with pure and happy hearts.
- 44 The ceremony completed, with the bathing of the deities with crystal-clear lustral water, they present ceremonial clothes and auspicious seats [to the deities]. Garlands and a golden flag are hung from the tops of both umbrellas. Food is given as an offering, with reverence and praise.
- 45 After casting the rope, the door lock is lifted. Bright red lanterns are raised, lined in a row in wait. Food is offered in worship to the high celestial beings, not forgetting the spirits and guardians of the forests and of the mountains.
- 46 Homage to the God, who first prescribed rituals for the elephant hunt,<sup>82</sup> may

<sup>80</sup> หัตถดาจารย์, *hatsadajan*.

<sup>81</sup> พฤทธิบาท, a class of Brahmins specialising in ceremonies concerning elephants and purging evil influences.

<sup>82</sup> Meaning Ganesha.

- it be of good fortune and high prosperity. Having presented an offering of fragrant substances, together with auspicious recitations, His Majesty is invited to proceed to the elephant mounting platform decorated with the nine gems, to the sound of victory drums.
- 47 The king rides an elephant, which is more glorious than a lion king, accompanied by a great retinue in loud clamour. Trained elephants, many in number, crowd each other and move at speed; elephant masters follow, rushing in.
- 48 The ceremony to open the forest gate<sup>83</sup> completed, the procession goes into the jungle's depths: a herd of young wild elephants is milling about, all excited. Some grab up vetiver grass, causing the brimming water to spout up. Elephants of doubtful or bad nature protect the herd, in a row.
- 49 The elephant hunter conceals his rope, pushing his elephant on quickly, preparing to encircle, drawing out the cow elephant and her young, looking to approach and lasso some fine bull and cow elephants.
- 50 With royal merit born of wishing to be released from all Three Worlds, to go beyond the cycle of rebirth, which is like a large ocean, with merciful heart and citing loving-kindness, he orders that the cow elephant and her young be set free.
- 51 Having released the cow elephant, the king proceeds to an area of forested high ground to halt at Wutthason Lake,<sup>84</sup> where there were elephants, both male and female mixed in great number, each calling out to the other in contentment.
- 52 There is a royal order for all the brave men to surround the herd of elephants all crowded together, and light up a sparkling bonfire all around the elephant enclosure.
- 53 The commanders and their retainers together make a resounding noise. The sound of gunfire intermittently echoes in the forest. The shouts and commands of the men surrounding the elephants are confusingly deafening, while the sound of beating *jorakhab*<sup>85</sup> accompanies the men's morale-boosting cries upon approaching the herd.
- 54 The King of righteousness, who rules Ayutthaya, a world-conquering Ekathot-

<sup>83</sup> โขลนทวาร, *khlon thawan*, a ceremonial gateway used in rituals to begin a military campaign, hunt, or similar activity.

<sup>84</sup> วุทธอศร, a lake to the east of Lopburi where King Narai had a lodge for elephant hunting, and where he viewed a lunar eclipse in the company of Jesuits in 1685. The lake has dried up and the area is now known as *thale chupson*.

<sup>85</sup> จรخاب or ตะخاب, *takhab*, a section of bamboo beaten as a drum.



sarat<sup>86</sup> and an embodiment of Shiva, the creator, upholder and destroyer of all Three Worlds, rides his victorious elephant, like Indra's mount.<sup>87</sup>

- 55 An elephant of outstanding warlike capability, handsome and valiant in battle, this young royal mount, Khirirat<sup>88</sup> by name, has chased wild elephants in a royal hunt before.
- 56 This royal elephant has the courage of a *khochasi*<sup>89</sup> when in the jungle he chases after wild elephants. Many fine elephants are caught according to His Majesty's wishes. Hunters rush in to shut the kraal gates in order to begin selecting the elephants.
- 57 The royal mount approaches the wild prey with intent, catching up with the strong and fearless young wild elephant. Only elephants with the best characteristics are chosen. The elephant experts all hurry to the rear, preparing to catch [the animals].
- 58 The sharpshooters riding the cow elephants drive them alongside the wild elephants. Mahouts are urged by Chaichan to hide from the herd that is rushing in like a stream, cutting across and keeping watch to help the decoy elephants by firing their guns.
- 59 Muen Phachong<sup>90</sup> aims to catch the elephant with a lasso – the wild elephant is unable to move, its feet quickly caught by the rope. It cries out sharply, being tightly bound and separated from the herd. Retainers surround and tie it to a tree, only bringing the animal in when ready.
- 60 The drum-beater hurries the elephants to get out quickly, chasing the herd of cow and bull elephants, making them run forward rapidly as if hit by a storm, catching large fine elephants only, all with auspicious characteristics.
- 61 [The king] gives rewards to all the elephant hunters and officials who pursued and unfalteringly lassoed the animals, and the elephant experts who chased the wild elephants with noise, as well as the mahouts who rode in pursuit. All were pleased with the fine flavours of the plentiful food, laid out to be devoured with gusto.

<sup>86</sup> เอกทศรทศ, *ekadasaratha*, either a reference to Dasaratha, the father of Rama in the *Ramayana*, or to the theory that “eleven fearsome [gods]” (*ekādasa rudda*) combined to create a Siamese king—a theory found in the poem *Yuan Phai* and in the Ayutthaya chronicles at the coronation of King Ekathotsarot in 1605 (Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*, 16–17; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 109).

<sup>87</sup> The elephant called Erawan / Airavanta.

<sup>88</sup> กิรีราช, *Girirāja*, king of the mountains.

<sup>89</sup> กชสิทธิ์, *gajasītha*, a mythical animal with the head of an elephant and body of a lion.

<sup>90</sup> In the civil list, ๗๖๖ Phachong is part of the title of Nai Chamnan Khoch Phachong, a junior official in the Department of Elephants (*Kotmai tra sam duang*, I: 252)

- 62 [The king] gives money, gold, utensils such as *khrob*<sup>91</sup> and *khan*,<sup>92</sup> silks and velvet of various colours, cummerbunds, girdles – some hanging down and others tucked up, plain coloured cloth, cloth with floral borders, lowercloths and belts, mixed together exquisitely.
- 63 The king gives rewards with full generosity according to the recipient's just desserts. His royal benevolence was like that of the Buddha, those who served him well were raised to prosperity.
- 64 After he has enjoyed himself in the forest, the supreme lord of the land dismisses his troops and returns along the route from the forest to his residence in the royal city.

*Invocations (65–78)*

- 65 Homage to Brahma the great creator-god, creator of the world from the earliest age. May the king of all righteous kings of the Great Select's<sup>93</sup> lineage be blessed with a prosperous reign.
- 66 Homage to Vishnu the protector, who with the *chakra*, destroys evil and lets all good people flourish. Let me pray for him to descend to the world of humans as *avatar* [to] destroy all wicked people and give security to that world.
- 67 Homage to Shiva the pure and highest lord, who has three eyes, is the destroyer and gives blessings. May the greatest of all kings enjoy long life, receiving all that he wishes for.
- 68 I pray to the Lord who dances lifting his left leg, originator of the lore of the elephant hunt and elephant training, for the great king who protects his realm to be blessed with Phra Kam's<sup>94</sup> success in his dealings with elephants.
- 69 May I ask for the blessing of Shiva's son Phikanet,<sup>95</sup> adorned with a venomous snake around his body, to protect he who is highest in the world, let him be free from dangers and obstacles, and enjoy a most happy reign.

<sup>91</sup> ครอบ, a lidded metal container for holding sacral water.

<sup>92</sup> ชัน, a bowl or water container.

<sup>93</sup> สมมุติเชื้อ, *sommuti chuea*, a reference to the theory that, after the creation of the world, when people fell into dispute, everyone came together in a meeting and appointed the best man to become the ruler (see Collins, "Discourse on What is Primary").

<sup>94</sup> พระ[เทว]กรรม, *phra [deva] kamma*, a six-armed deity who appears in Siamese manuals of elephant lore along with Ganesha. Early in his reign, King Narai had three images of this deity cast, one placed at the elephant kraal in Ayutthaya to be used in rituals (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 245, 247, where the image is called "Holy Divine Works"; *Phraratchaphongsawadan*, 302, 304).

<sup>95</sup> พิฆเนศ, a common Thai version of the name of Ganesha.

- 70 May the sun that gives out brightness and radiance shine his light all over the land, let he who rules the realm spread his glory to all corners of the world.
- 71 May I pray for blessings from he who is supreme, being surrounded by attendant stars [the moon] shining his refreshing light for eternity, to let he who is supreme in the land [the king] be himself happy and increase contentment in the kingdom through his royal protection.
- 72 May I ask for blessings from the thousand-eyes one,<sup>96</sup> who oppresses the demon Paichit,<sup>97</sup> carries a thunder-inducing *vajira* and is a brave warrior, to let this great king become even more powerful, subduing his enemies in every region.
- 73 I pray for blessings from Marut<sup>98</sup> god of the wind, riding a horse and holding a hook, that he who is an *avatar* of the great lord of the sea of pure milk be feared everywhere, his glory spread far and wide.
- 74 I pray for blessings from the great Pharun,<sup>99</sup> the powerful one, seated upon a spreading *naga* spouting venom, that he who is greatest and highest among rulers be like sacred water bringing all ever greater contentment.
- 75 I pray for blessings from the god of fire<sup>100</sup> who protects, seated above a special beast<sup>101</sup> which snorts threateningly, that he upon whom the realm depends increase his power, his wisdom resplendent like the bright light of Buddha's shining *dhamma*.
- 76 I pray to the four divine guardians who watch over all corners of the world, and protect communities in all four directions, that the supreme ruler of the world be the refuge of every lord in the land.
- 77 I pray for the blessings of mighty Yom<sup>102</sup> renowned far and wide, riding on a buffalo with curved horns, that all the lords and rulers quake in fear at the strength of the mighty king [King Narai], who rules the land and all his subjects according to the Law.

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<sup>96</sup> Indra.

<sup>97</sup> ไผจิตตร, also known as Vepacitti, one of two kings of the *asura* or demons, malevolent demigods who live deep in the earth (Reynolds and Reynolds, *Three Worlds*, 107–13).

<sup>98</sup> มารูต, Maruti, often called *phra phai*.

<sup>99</sup> พรุณ, Varuna, god of the sky and of rain.

<sup>100</sup> เพลิง, *phloeng*, meaning Agni.

<sup>101</sup> อีคค์, *ak*, which may mean “special,” or be a miscopying of อีคค์, *khak*, rhinoceros.

<sup>102</sup> รามเศร์, *ramet*, probably a miscopying of ยม, Yama, the god of death.

- 78 I pray to the all-knowing goddesses both Phakhawati<sup>103</sup> and Khongkha<sup>104</sup> that the king, who is great above all other monarchs, be blessed with happiness, having hundreds of tributary lords rendering him homage.

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<sup>103</sup> भगवती, Bhagavatī, the blessed one, probably meaning Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, the consort of Vishnu.

<sup>104</sup> गङ्गा, Gaṅgā, personification of the Ganges River and thus of rivers generally, consort of all three major Hindu gods, especially Shiva.