

The Eulogy of King Prasat Thong

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ABSTRACT—*The Eulogy of King Prasat Thong* is a remarkable, but lesser known, example of the Thai tradition of royal panegyrics. Only one *samut thai* accordion book survives, probably a fragment of a longer original. This text records that the poem was written during the king's reign by Phra Maharatchakhru Mahethon, a leading court Brahmin, and that this copy was made in 1737/8. The poem was discovered and published for the first time only in 1988. It states that King Prasat Thong was a bodhisatta, reincarnated from the Palelai elephant, and destined to become the tenth in a line of future Buddhas following Gotama. This claim appears in no other source. Prasat Thong may have been inspired by the religious experience of Phya Lithai (Mahathammaratcha) as recorded in the Sukhothai inscriptions. The main events in the eulogy are: the building and renaming of the Jakkawat Phaichaiyon audience hall; erasing the era at CS 1000; a large almsgiving; and a military parade and festival. The claim about Prasat Thong's spiritual status, his projects of religious construction, his ritual practice, and the composition of this eulogy were all building blocks of a new royal absolutism.

The *Eulogy of King Prasat Thong* by Phra Maharatchakhru¹ came to light in the 1980s—the most important Thai literary “find” of the past century. It appears to be the first surviving example in Siam of a poem conceived specifically as a royal panegyric—a genre which subsequently flourished. It adds to the picture of King Prasat Thong (r. 1629–1656) as an innovator in Siamese kingship. The chronicles already tell how he revived linkages from Ayutthaya back to Angkor, massively expanded the Ayutthaya royal palace, and introduced new royal rituals and ceremonies. This text, composed within his reign, sheds light on the thinking that lay behind these innovations.

King Prasat Thong was born around 1599. After King Songtham died in 1628, he captured the throne in a long and bloody succession battle, described in great detail by the Dutch merchant, Jeremias van Vliet.² He was not an immediate member of Songtham's family, but was probably related to the royal line in some way by blood or marriage,³ and had been a royal page and then a ranking noble. His long reign was

¹ คำฉันท์สรรเสริญพระเกียรติสมเด็จพระพุทธเจ้าหลวงปราชญ์ของพระมหาราชครู, *Khamchan sansoen phrakiat somdet phra phuttha jao luang prasat thong khong phra maharatchakhru*.

² Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, 245–322.

³ According to van Vliet, he was a son of the elder brother of Songtham's mother; in addition, Manijan, a

marked by many construction projects and ritual activities, underwritten by the rising revenues from royal monopolies on Ayutthaya's expanding trade. He may have had Khmer lineage,⁴ and was intent on reshaping Ayutthaya kingship by drawing on Khmer traditions, real or imagined. According to the chronicles, he "sent artisans to copy and bring back plans" from Angkor, and seems to have used elements of Angkor style at Wat Chai Watthanaram and elsewhere in Ayutthaya.⁵ His many construction projects, ritual innovations, and this poem were parts of a project to elevate the monarchy into a new form of royal absolutism.

The text

The royal panegyric is a prominent genre in Thai literary tradition, and this poem is a landmark in its development. There is only one surviving text, a single *samut thai dam*, a black folding book, kept in the National Library of Thailand, provenance unknown. This may be a fragment of a larger work, as the ending is abrupt. The cover states:⁶

This Eulogy of King Prasat Thong was composed in the reign of King Prasat Thong as *khamchan* by Phra Maharatchakhru Mahethon, who was Phra Maharatchakhru Phraborohit when King Narai was king of Lopburi.

The first fold states:⁷

Composed in the reign of King Prasat Thong by Phra Maharatchakhru Phraborohit, the person who composed *Tiger and Cow*,⁸ with the same skill. It seems this eulogy was composed before *Tiger and Cow*.

On the 6th day of the week [Friday], 7th day of the waxing moon, 5th month, CS⁹ 1109 [1747/8 CE], year of the rabbit, ninth of the decade, this copy was

queen of the late King Naresuan, twice interceded on his behalf when he faced punishment for youthful indiscretions, suggesting he was her relative. The *Tamnan bang pa-in* [History of Bang Pa-In] relates that King Ekathotsarot sired Prasat Thong with a Bang Pa-in commoner. In some versions of the chronicles, Prasat Thong was adopted by Songtham while Songtham was in the monkhood before ascending the throne. See Boonsomying, "Somdet phrajao prasat thong," 54–55; Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, 274–279; and McGill, "Art and Architecture."

⁴ Siamese envoys sent to Portugal in 1684 were briefed to inform questioners that Prasat Thong's son, Narai, was descended from the kings of Angkor. Smithies and Dhiravat, "Instructions Given to the Siamese Envoys," 127.

⁵ Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 216; Pitchaya, *Somdet phrajao prasat thong*; McGill, "Art and Architecture," 128–132.

⁶ Buntuean, *Khamchan sansoen phrakiat*, 19.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ เสือโค[คำฉันท์], *suea kho* [khamchan]. *Khamchan* is a literary form that uses the ฉันท์ (*chan*) family of meters, which were adapted from Indian originals for use in Thai language, but still required usage of Pali-Sanskrit loan words to meet the metrical constraints. *Suea kho* is a fairy tale about animals who become human.

⁹ จุลศักราช, *chula sakarat*, the Little or Lesser Era, starting from March 638 CE, the era most used in middle and late Ayutthaya.

made from the text that Prince¹⁰ Thep Phiphit brought from a chest in the *phra sastrakhom*.¹¹

The two heads of the Brahmin division within the department of the palace had titles beginning with “Maharatchakhru.”¹² Buntuean Siworaphot, who edited this text for the Fine Arts Department, interpreted these statements to mean that the author held the slightly junior post of Maharatchakhru Mahethon in the reign of Prasat Thong, and became Maharatchakhru Phraborohit under Narai. Buntuean suggests he may have composed *Anirut khamchan* prior to this work, as there are many similarities between the two, and *Suea kho khamchan* (Tiger and Cow) and part of *Samutthakhhot khamchan* before dying fairly early in the Narai reign (1656–1688).

Prince Thep Phiphit, who oversaw the copying in 1747/8, is surely the son of King Borommakot, known as Khaek in the chronicles, who had a prominent role in politics before and after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.¹³

The *samut thai* of the *Eulogy* came to light only in the 1980s. A transcription was immediately printed in the Fine Arts Department’s journal, *Silpakorn*, in 1988,¹⁴ and reproduced in the Department’s three-volume collection of Ayutthaya literature the same year,¹⁵ followed in 2000 by an edition prepared by Buntuean Siwaraphot with an introduction and glossary.¹⁶

Future Buddhas

Perhaps the most remarkable part of the *Eulogy* is the claim that Prasat Thong was a bodhisatta, destined to become the tenth in a line of future Buddhas following after Gotama.

Boonsomying Polamuangdee suggests that Prasat Thong was influenced by the religious experience of Phya Lithai (Mahathammaratcha) of Sukhothai.¹⁷ Lithai recounted this experience in a series of inscriptions, mostly made at Wat Pa Mamuang (Monastery of the Mango Grove) in Sukhothai around 1360.¹⁸ The stele of Inscription 5 from

¹⁰ เจ้ากรม, *jao krom*, a title given to royal progeny in the Borommakot reign.

¹¹ พระสาสตราคคม, *phra sastrakhom*, usually หอศาสตราคม, หอ (*ho*, hall) + ศาสตร (*sat*, sastra, knowledge) + อาคม (*akom*, āgama, text). In the Bangkok Palace, this is the name of a small preaching hall. Perhaps in the late Ayutthaya Palace, it was a library.

¹² *Kotmai tra sam duang*, I, 265–266; Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, 108–110. The titles of these and other officials varied from reign to reign.

¹³ He was exiled to Sri Lanka after the succession dispute that brought King Ekkathat to power in 1758, returned during the siege of Ayutthaya, established a base in Korat after the city’s fall, but was defeated and executed by King Taksin (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 471, 509; Nidhi, *Kanmueang thai samai phrajao krung thonburi*, 178–181).

¹⁴ In two issues of vol. 32 (Phimphan, “Kan lop sakarat”).

¹⁵ In *Wannakam samai ayutthaya*, vol. 3.

¹⁶ Buntuean, *Khamchan sansoen phrakiat*.

¹⁷ Boonsomying, “Somdetphrajao prasat thong,” and “Itthiphon khong silajaruek wat pa mamuang.”

¹⁸ Griswold and Prasert, “Epigraphy of Mahādharmarāja of Sukhodaya,” Parts 1 and 2.

the Mango Grove¹⁹ was found in 1907 at Wat Mai Chumphon,²⁰ just outside Nakhon Luang, the palace that Prasat Thong built on the route from Ayutthaya to the Buddha Footprint in Saraburi. Perhaps Prasat Thong sent a mission to Sukhothai in the same way that he sent a mission to bring plans and materials from the monuments in Angkor,²¹ but there is no record.

There are several similarities between the account of Phya Lithai's experience in the inscriptions and the account of Prasat Thong in this poem. Both rulers are claimed to be bodhisattas, who are in the process of making merit by good works in order to be born as one of ten Buddhas of the future. Both swore oaths to this effect, provoking earthquakes and other wonders. Both undertook an unusually large programme of religious construction. Both carried out almsgiving on a large scale. Both were concerned about the predicted decline of Buddhism. Both changed the calendar: Lithai only made corrections for past miscalculations, but his claim that "he was able to take away, erase and remove [the miscalculations] by means of his authority"²² may have been the inspiration for Prasat Thong's intervention.

Of Lithai, it was claimed in the inscription found at Nakhon Luang: "he was ready with the perfections to be one of ten bodhisattas of the future, such as Phra Ariya Metteyya."²³ The claim for Prasat Thong adds that he is destined to be the tenth and last of a sequence begun with Metteyya, and that he is reincarnated from the Palelai elephant, which attended the Buddha when he retreated into the forest to escape quarrelling monks in Kosambi (see v. 90–99). This claim appears only in this *Eulogy*.

In the texts now considered canonical in the Theravada world, there is no mention of future Buddhas other than brief references to Metteyya in the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta*.²⁴ The claims of Lithai and Prasat Thong appear to derive from the *Anāgatavaṃsa*, "the lineage of the future," the title of several texts about Buddhas of the future. These texts are of two types. In the first type, after the Buddha had preached the *Buddhavaṃsa*, mentioning the future Buddha Metteyya, Sariputta asked him to preach a sequel on Metteyya, and the Buddha delivered on this request. Buddhaghosa referred to this text in the *Visuddhimagga*, dated to the 5th century CE. An elaborate version in Sinhala has survived since the 14th century, and refers to an older Pali version. Several descendants of this work exist.²⁵

Texts of the second type begin with the same framing device, but the Buddha tells

¹⁹ The inscription is now called: Wat Pa Mamuang, Thai language, no. 1. See Trongjai, *Pramuan jaruek*, 183–194.

²⁰ Griswold and Prasert, "Epigraphy of Mahādharṃarāja of Sukhodaya, Part I," 124.

²¹ Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 216.

²² Inscription 4, see "Epigraphy of Mahādharṃarāja of Sukhodaya, Part I," 138.

²³ Pali: "samppanno sampannapāramiḡaṃari(ya) -metteyyādinariṃ dasannambodhisattānam -nāgadho" in the Inscription No. 5 of Griswold and Prasert, known also as the Pali language inscription of Wat Pa Mamuang. See Trongjai, *Pramuan jaruek*, 229, 233. Griswold and Prasert ("Epigraphy of Mahādharṃarāja of Sukhodaya, Part I", 165) could not decipher the word "future" and had no awareness of the concept of ten future Buddhas/bodhisattas.

²⁴ Revire, "Buddhas of the Past and of the Future," 114.

²⁵ See Holt's introduction in Udaya and Holt, *Anāgatavaṃsa Desanā*, esp. 10–11.

Sariputta, “In the future ten Buddhas will be born,”²⁶ and proceeds to recount ten stories, beginning with Metteyya, followed by Rama, Dhammaraja, Dhammasami, Nārada, Raṇsimuni, Devadeva, Narasiha, Tissa and Sumaṅgala. These stories have very little detail on the lives of these future Buddhas, but more on their earlier incarnations, mostly prior to Gotama. These episodes have a theme of self-sacrifice. Four of the future Buddhas, including Metteyya, sacrifice their own lives during earlier incarnations by severing their own necks or being burnt, while two give their children to be eaten by demons.²⁷

There are sixteen Pali-language texts of this second type in the National Library of Thailand, all having the same content with minor variations, and none with details of date or authorship. Others have been found outside Thailand (see below). Pharn Wong-Uan, who wrote a thesis on these texts, argued that the original was probably composed in the Thai-speaking world as the Pali is infected by Thai syntax, and there are distinctive similarities to the Pali used in the Thai collection of the *Paññāsa Jātaka*.²⁸ As the *Anagatavaṃsa* appears in the list of source texts in the preface to the *Traiphum Phra Ruang* attributed to King Lithai,²⁹ and as the concept of the ten Buddhas/bodhisattas of the future appears in his inscription from the Mango Grove, this text may date back to Lithai’s time or beyond.

H. Saddhatissa found a similar text in Sri Lanka, and a close copy in the British Museum. François Martini found two others in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.³⁰ Saddhatissa’s texts have the same content as the Thai manuscripts, but the telling is abbreviated, the future figures are called bodhisattas rather than Buddhas, and the Pali is very different. The *Anagatavaṃsa* was listed among ninety-seven Buddhist texts sent by King Borommakot to Sri Lanka in 1756.³¹ Pharn suggests that the *Anagatavaṃsa* sent to Sri Lanka was the version now found in Thailand, but the monks in Sri Lanka recomposed the Pali to conform to local standards, hence the difference from the surviving texts in Thailand.³²

In these texts, the tenth of the future Buddhas, named Sumaṅgala, is said to be reincarnated from the Palelai elephant, but nothing is made of this association. The texts relate that, at the time of the Kakusandha Buddha, the twenty-second of the twenty-four Buddhas of the past and the first of the five Buddhas of the present Bhaddakappa, Sumaṅgala had been incarnated as a wheel-rolling emperor, Mahā Panāda,³³ who ruled

²⁶ Pharn, “Khamphi anakhotwong,” 43, 180; Martini, “Dasa-bodhisatta-uddesa,” 297, 337.

²⁷ Similar stories of self-sacrifice are found in the *Paññāsa Jātaka*, the collections of birth stories of the Buddha composed in Southeast Asia; see Baker and Pasuk, *From the Fifty Jātaka*; Arthid, “Self-Sacrifice of the Bodhisatta.”

²⁸ Pharn, “Khamphi anakhotwong,” esp. 33–35. Pharn edited a version of the Pali, and made a translation into Thai. Another edition with the Pali and a slightly different Thai translation appeared as Praphat, *Phrakamphi anakhotwong*. The National Library of Thailand reference to the text is: หมวด ตำนาน-ประวัติ ๔๑๑๙/ก/๑.

²⁹ Reynolds and Reynolds, *Three Worlds*, 46.

³⁰ Saddhatissa, *Birth-Stories of the Ten Bodhisattas*; Martini, “Dasa-bodhisatta-uddesa.”

³¹ Buntuean, *Khamchan sansoen phrakiat*, 54.

³² Pharn, “Khamphi anakhotwong,” 1–5.

³³ This name may derive from the Mahā Panāda Jātaka, No. 247 in the classical collection (Cowell, *Jātaka*. II, 229–31). The *jātaka* tale has no relation to the story in the *Anāgataṃsa*.

all of Jambudipa. This emperor learnt of the Buddha's teachings, became a monk, and was brought into the presence of the Kakusandha Buddha, where he severed his own neck with his fingernails, while swearing an oath:

'I wish to be a Buddha in the future may I attain nibbana first. Through the giving of this head, may I attain nibbana, the realm of safety, thereafter.' At the end of this verse, he passed to be born in the Tusita level of heaven ... See, Sariputta, as the result of offering his life, this king will succeed in becoming a Buddha, one with enormous power, in the future.³⁴

The account of Sumaṅgala as a future Buddha is told in this *Anagatavaṃsa* as follows:

At the time when the religion of the Tissa Buddha had passed, the Palileyya elephant bodhisatta will be a Buddha with the name Sumaṅgala in the future. He will have a body 60 cubits tall, an aura the colour of gold in the daytime and the colour of silver at night, a lifespan of 100,000 years, and a *kakathing*³⁵ as his enlightenment tree. Through the power of the Buddha, one *kalapaphruek* tree will have arisen, hung with various things. The people will not have to farm or trade, but can depend on this tree and enjoy themselves eternally.³⁶

Associated sites

In its celebration of Prasat Thong's efforts in renovating Buddhist sites, the *Eulogy* mentions two places in particular: "the king built great fragrant quarters for a Buddha image with an aura of shimmering gold, and then built a great preaching hall in the *wat* for the great holy omniscient one" (v. 109–10).

Pitchaya Soomjinda suggests the first of these is the site now known as Wat Mongkhon Bophit. According to van Vliet, around 1638/9, Prasat Thong demolished Wat Chi Chiang, a "large and marvellous" but badly deteriorated temple, moved the image a short distance, and housed it in a new square building with a *mondop* roof. Pitchaya suggests that Prasat Thong renamed the image as Sumaṅgala, his name as a Buddha of the future. The Mongkhon Bophit³⁷ image matches the height of 60 cubits of the Sumaṅgala Buddha in the *Anagatavaṃsa*, and the *Eulogy* states that the image has "an aura of shimmering gold," also in keeping with the *Anagatavaṃsa*.³⁸

There are two problematic sources that confirm this. First, in the royal chronicles at

³⁴ Pharn, "Khamphi anakhotwong," 228; see also Saddhatissa, *Birth-Stories of the Ten Bodhisattas*, 88–92.

³⁵ กากะทิง often กระทิง, *krathing*, *Calophyllum inophyllum*, a large evergreen plant, commonly called tamanu, mastwood, beach calophyllum, or beautyleaf; *nāgarukkha* in the Pali, which the Pali Text Society dictionary translates as ironwood.

³⁶ The wording of this passage varies in different texts, but the content is essentially the same. Pharn, "Khamphi anakhotwong," 223; Praphat, *Phrakhamphi anakhotwong*, 132; Saddhatissa, *Birth-Stories of the Ten Bodhisattas*, 88; and Martini, "Dasa-bodhisatta-uddesa," 363–364.

³⁷ Si Mangala Pavitra "glorious auspicious pure one" (Woodward, "Buddha Images," 52).

³⁸ Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, 215, 243–244; Pitchaya, *Somdet phrajao prasat thong*, 35–37.

the start of King Songtham's reign (1610/1–1628), “the king had Phra Mongkhon Bophit moved from east to west and then had a *mondop* built to house it.”³⁹ Possibly this passage has been misplaced in the chronicles from the Prasat Thong reign to the Songtham reign. This passage is followed by the account of a Burmese attack on Tanaosri, which Prince Damrong found had been similarly misplaced.⁴⁰ The chronicles' account of the Songtham reign also includes the collapse of the stupa at Wat Mahathat, which is attested in the Prasat Thong reign in several sources. Secondly, in the *Northern Chronicles*, a collection of legends and fragments assembled in 1807, Phrachao Sainamphueang (King Honey), who appears to be Prasat Thong, “built Wat Mongkhon Bophit.”⁴¹

The poem's statement that “the king built great fragrant quarters for a Buddha image with an aura of shimmering gold” thus may refer to Wat Mongkhon Bophit. The term “fragrant quarters” (*khantha kuti*, *gandhakuṭī*) is used for a residence of the Buddha, particularly when he stayed at the Jetavana in Sāvātthi, mentioned in many *jātaka* tales. The new structure is thus a “fragrant quarters” for Prasat Thong himself in his future incarnation as a Buddha.

Pitchaya also suggests that “the great preaching hall in the *wat* for the great holy omniscient one” is the *wihan palelai* on the south side of Wat Phra Si Sanphet, where there is a triple plinth suitable for images of a Buddha flanked by an elephant and monkey. Both these renovations hence refer to Prasat Thong as a bodhisatta and future Buddha.

Events

The surviving text of the *Eulogy* focuses on six main events: renaming the building known as Jakkawat Phaichaiyon; changing the calendar at the year CS 1000; a grand military parade; two major almsgivings; and a visit by foreign embassies. The account of the reign in the royal chronicles is largely the same, with many close similarities in details and in wording, but also with some significant differences. The military parade does not appear in the chronicles. Several key events of the reign, including the building of Wat Chai Wattanaram and the king's patronage of the Buddha's Footprint at Saraburi, do not appear in the extant, clearly defective, text of the *Eulogy*, but may have appeared in the original.

Renaming the audience hall

King Prasat Thong expanded and embellished the Grand Palace in Ayutthaya, including the construction of a building on the eastern side overlooking the parade ground. The chronicles and the *Eulogy* recount that Indra visited the king in a dream, and gave him a “riddle”, which resulted in a decision to rename this building after Indra's own palace, Vejayaṇṭa, rendered in Thai as Phaichaiyon.

³⁹ *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 263; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 209; and McGill, “Art and Architecture,” 192–193.

⁴⁰ Damrong, *Our Wars*, 206–207.

⁴¹ *Phraratchaphongsawadan nuea*, 31; McGill, “Art and Architecture,” 192–193.

In the chronicles, the building and renaming of a new hall in the palace took place in CS 994, and the revision of the calendar in CS 1000. In the *Eulogy*, these two events are merged: after the planning for the revision of the calendar, the king gives an order to build a new audience hall; following a dream in which Indra visits him at night, the king decides to change the name of this building; the king dispatches his courtiers to prepare a ceremony for this purpose, but the courtiers proceed to the ceremony to change the calendar. An inscribed gold sheet appears in the change of the calendar in the chronicles, but here appears in the changing of the name of the palace. This confusion of the two events seems deliberate. In both events, the king is visited by Indra, establishing a special intimacy with this powerful god.

In the chronicles, the courtiers interpret the king's dream to mean he must change the name of the new audience hall. In the *Eulogy*, the king makes this interpretation himself.

In the *Eulogy*, part of the ritual is a fire ceremony. This does not appear in the chronicles.

Erasing the era

There is a well-known prophecy, existing from at least the 5th century CE, that Buddhism will decline in stages over 5,000 years. In his Inscription 3 at the Mango Grove, Phraya Lithai set out this prophecy and presented his good works as an effort to counter this decline.⁴²

The prediction is phased in successive periods of 1,000 years from the death of the Buddha. Although the Chula Sakarat, or Lesser Era, is not keyed to the Buddha's life, the approach of year 1,000 in the Lesser Era may have sparked fears based on this prediction. The *Eulogy* alludes to the prediction by stating "this will be the end of those without craving," meaning arhat. A series of unfortunate events may have added to this fear. In 1632, part of Wat Mahathat collapsed "without a crosswind, thunder, or lightning," and in 1633, a white elephant died and an elephant was born with a round tail, an inauspicious sign. Van Vliet reported that "strange omens were seen but were kept secret by the soothsayers," hinting at the circulation of rumour.⁴³

In both the chronicles and the *Eulogy*, Prasat Thong states that the world has entered into a Kaliyuga, the fourth and last of the four ages that make up an era in Brahmanical cosmology, a time of decline that ends with the destruction and eventual regeneration of the world. The Buddhist and Brahminical systems of time had become interfused in Siam. Buddhas of the past are allocated to different ages of Brahminical time. The foreboding of some kind of ending implied by the figure of 1,000 could thus be associated with the ending of the Kaliyuga. Possibly the coincidence of 1,000 with the year of the tiger added to the unease. The tiger is a violent animal, difficult to match in horoscopy. As van Vliet reported, writing just a few years later,

at the end of a period of a thousand years, they say that the whole country, with

⁴² Griswold and Prasert, "The Epigraphy of Mahādharmarāja, Part 1," 98–101.

⁴³ Baker et al., *Van Vliet's Siam*, 242.

everything that is in it, is going to be reborn and renewed.... In the opinion of the Braman priests no king nor mandarins will remain, but everything will come to an end and must be renewed [the king] feared that he would have to lose the worldly crown.⁴⁴

Prasat Thong thus resolved to “erase the era” (ลบศักราช, *lop sakarat*).⁴⁵ The year was recorded in the Lesser Era (*chula sakkarat*, CS) and in a cycle of sixty years defined by combining a sequence of twelve animal years with the sequence of ten years in a decade. The year CS 1000 was due to be a tiger year, last in the decade. Prasat Thong changed the animal to a pig, three back in the sequence, but left everything else unchanged. According to Prasert na Nagara, the change was made on the “fifth month, first waxing, 2181 BE, Thai new year day, equivalent to Monday 15 March 1636 CE, 26 days before the start of CS 1000 on Saturday 2nd waning, fifth month, equivalent to 10 April.”⁴⁶ According to the records of the Dutch East India Company, the king held two “festivals” a year later, for three days at the Thai new year on 3 April 1639 and another three days at the start of CS 1001 on Sunday 10 April. Presumably these celebrations marked the fact that this dangerous year had been traversed without misfortune.⁴⁷

In 1992, during repairs to a stucco image in one of the flanking towers of Wat Chai Watthanaram, an inscription was found about the principle of impermanence. It ends with a date in 2192 BE, eleven years after Prasat Thong’s change.⁴⁸ This date gives the animal year as the dog, consistent with a shift of three back in the expected cycle.⁴⁹

By this shift, Prasat Thong ensured that year 1000 would not coincide with the tiger. Pitchaya Soomjinda suggests that the shift by three animal years meant that the new era began on the same animal year as the beginning of the Lesser Era, signalling a regeneration, “like going back before the Kaliyuga, that is, to Dvapara,” a happier age. This is explicit in the chronicle account where the message informing Ava of this change states that “the beginning of the new era is the Dvapara Yuga so that all cities and domains, big and small, shall be perfectly content.”⁵⁰

According to the chronicles, after Burma (Myanmar) declined to adopt the changed calendar, Prasat Thong abandoned the idea.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Baker et al., *Van Vliet’s Siam*, 156–157.

⁴⁵ *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 278.

⁴⁶ Prasert, “Phrajao prasat thong song lop sakarat,” 154. The CE dates use the Gregorian calendar.

⁴⁷ Dhiravat, “A Political History,” 196–200; Bhawan, *Dutch East India Company Merchants*, 88–89.

⁴⁸ ๒๑๙๒ มหาศักราช ๕๗๒ วันพุธ เดือน ๔ ขึ้น ๑๕ ค่ำ (ปี) จอโศก; 2192 *mahasakarat* 572 *wan phut duen 4 khuen 15 kham [pi] jo thosok*; 2192 [BE], in the Greater Era 572, Wednesday 15th waxing in the fourth month, year of the dog, second of the decade. The Greater Era is missing a digit, and should be 1572. The text of the inscription and the story of its discovery appear in the Sirindhorn Anthropology Center’s database of inscriptions; see db.sac.or.th/inscriptions/inscribe/detail/634; db.sac.or.th/inscriptions/inscribe/image_detail/635.

⁴⁹ Prasert, “Phrajao prasat thong song lop sakarat”; Nawaphan, “Jaruek phaen thongdaeng.”

⁵⁰ Pitchaya, *Somdet phrajao prasat thong*, 41–43; *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 280; and Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 224 (where Dvapara Yuga is translated as “Second Age”).

⁵¹ Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 225.

Chula Sakarat	animal year		BE	CE	Animal after adjustment
997	pig	ขุน	2178	1635	
998	rat	ชวด	2179	1636	
999	ox	ฉลู	2180	1637	
1000	tiger	ชาล	2181	1638	pig
1001	rabbit	เถาะ	2182	1639	rat
1002	dragon	มะโรง	2183	1640	ox
1003	snake	มะเส็ง	2184	1641	tiger
1011	ox	ฉลู	2192	1649	dog

Indrabhiseka

In the *Eulogy*, the amendment of the calendar takes place during a ceremony of Intharaphisek/Indrabhiseka. Indrabhiseka derives from an old Indian ceremony based on a legend of Indra flying down in his chariot to present the five insignia of kingship. It was performed at Angkor under Jayavarman VII (1181–1218 CE) and at Pagan (Bagan) under Kyanzittha (1084–1113 CE).⁵² According to the Ayutthaya chronicles, Indrabhiseka was performed in the Chakkaphat reign (1548–1569) after repairing damage to the palace by a great fire, and may also have been performed in 1496/7 when the chronicles state that Ramathibodi II “had the *duek damban* festivities performed.”⁵³ The ceremony, which is described in detail in the Ayutthaya Palace Law, where it lasts a month,⁵⁴ dramatises Indra’s presentation of the regalia in an elaborate stage-set of Mount Meru and its surroundings in Buddhist cosmography. The description of Prasat Thong’s ceremony to change the calendar in the chronicles clearly depicts such an event, but it is named as Indrabhiseka only in this *Eulogy*.⁵⁵

Following the Indrabhiseka, Prasat Thong performed the “seven hundred great donations,” meaning donation of seven items, each in the quantity of one hundred. This practice appears in the Vessantara Jātaka, the story of Gotama Buddha’s last incarnation as a bodhisatta. After being banished by the people of Sivi, Prince Vessantara announced: “Tomorrow I am to make the gift called the gift of the seven hundreds. You must get ready seven hundred elephants, with the same number of horses, chariots, girls, cows, men slaves and women slaves.”⁵⁶ In the life of the Buddha told in the *Nidānakathā*, he

⁵² McGill, “Art and Architecture,” 57–68.

⁵³ *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 57, 77; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 18, 31; Maneepin, “Chak nak duek damban.” ชักนาคตักดึกดำบรรพ์ (ชัก), *chak nak duek damban*, literally: pull the *naga* very deep until milk comes, is a re-enactment of a Puranic scene in which deities churn the sea of milk by using Meru as a pivot rotated by a *naga* wrapped round the mountain, creating many powerful substances, including the nectar of immortality.

⁵⁴ Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, 126–128; *Kotmai tra sam duang*, I, 148–150.

⁵⁵ Prince Damrong, George Coedès and Forrest McGill detected that the chronicle’s description was an Indrabhiseka (McGill, “Art and Architecture,” 57).

⁵⁶ Cowell, *Jātaka*, vol. VI, 256; Appleton and Shaw, *Ten Great Birth Stories*, 552.

recalled this donation just before calling the earth to witness during his contest with Mara: “let this great and solid earth, non-sentient as it is, be my witness to the seven hundredfold great alms I gave when I was born as Vessantara.”⁵⁷

Both Kyanzittha and King Chakkaphat performed this great sevenfold donation after Indrabhiseka.⁵⁸ All four rulers known to have performed an Indrabhiseka—Kyanzittha, Jayavarman VII, Chakkaphat and Prasat Thong—claimed to be bodhisattas. Prasat Thong may have been following a pattern.

A new absolutism

This *Eulogy* formed part of a major change in Ayutthaya kingship. Over the previous two centuries, the Ayutthaya ruler had been a warrior king regularly engaged in warfare, leading armies from the front, and vaunted for his strategic skills and bravery—as seen in the description of Boromma Trailokanat in the poem, *Yuan Phai*, and of Naresuan in the chronicles. In this era, the splendour of kingship was constrained because so much of society’s resources was expended on war. In around 1600, the scale of warfare around the region declined sharply, while maritime trade grew with the increased role of Europeans, especially the Dutch, and with exchange between flourishing Asian states to the East (Qing China, Tokugawa Japan) and the West (Mughal India, Safavid Persia, Ottoman Turkey). In Siam, royal revenues expanded, largely from monopolies on maritime trade, and much was invested in developing an absolute kingship with strong parallels to European kingship in the same era.⁵⁹

Absolutism is a claim to total authority, often based on some form of divine licence. The nature of early Ayutthaya kingship is hazy owing to limited sources, but seems to have been largely a warrior monarchy, based on might, especially in the early years and the Naresuan era. The idea that the powers of the gods are instilled in the body of the king appears after the coronation of Ekathotsarot in 1605.⁶⁰ Prasat Thong further elevated the superhuman quality of the monarch by his claim to be a bodhisatta and future Buddha, enjoying an intimate relationship with Indra, the god borrowed from Hinduism to serve as the agent of divine authority. He demonstrated the exceptional power of his kingship by altering the calendar. The increase in royal wealth from maritime trade allowed Prasat Thong to dramatise his claims to royal power by embellishing his capital, massively expanding the size of the palace, building a new audience hall, renovating the royal Wat Phra Si Sanphet, rehousing a massive Buddha image, and treating the populace to almsgiving and public entertainments, similar to the “bread and circuses” of Western

⁵⁷ Jayawickrama, *Story of Gotama Buddha*, 98. The *Nidānakathā* forms an introduction to the *jātaka* tales in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* collection from the 5th or 6th century CE and in the Khuddaka Nikāya (Appleton, *Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism*, 61–64).

⁵⁸ *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 77; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 31; and McGill, “Art and Architecture,” 66–67.

⁵⁹ Baker and Pasuk, *A History of Ayutthaya*, ch. 4.

⁶⁰ *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 251–252; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 199. The concept of instilling divine power in the king appears in *Yuan Phai*, but is not associated with the coronation (Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*, 16–17).

tradition. He mystified the new kingship by concealing the royal body, and glorified it through large-scale ceremonial, including the Indrabhiseka and the pilgrimage to the Buddha Footprint. Earlier kings had patronised the religion and people, but Prasat Thong appears to have been the first who made an explicit claim to superhuman qualities and used the swollen royal revenues to dramatise his claim to grandeur.

This *Eulogy* formed part of this momentous change in three ways. First, it was the first such poem composed as a royal eulogy. Earlier, there had been passages praising kings in Sukhothai inscriptions, and praise of Boromma Trailokanat (1448–1488) in *Yuan Phai*, a battle poem.⁶¹ This *Eulogy*, however, appears to have been the first poem which was conceived precisely as a royal panegyric and titled as such, at least from a century later, when this text was copied, and possibly from its origin. It was followed by the eulogy of King Narai, and several works from the Bangkok era.⁶² Second, this poem recorded the ideological claims underlying the new royal absolutism, especially the Buddha's prediction that the king would become a Buddha and the intimacy with Indra, thus establishing the superhuman qualities of the king. Third, the poem publicised the displays of royal power and glorification for the benefit of both contemporary and future audiences.

Notes on translation

In his 2000 edition, Buntuean updated the Thai spelling of the *Eulogy* for greater readability, and the Fine Arts Department used this revised spelling in the second edition of the collected literature of the Ayutthaya era published in 2002. Our footnotes are in this form: Thai from the original manuscript (modern Thai spelling if different and not obvious), *Romanised transcription*, Pali-Sanskrit where appropriate, “literal translation”; e.g., ราชวัติ (ราชวัติ), *ratchawat*, *rajāvati*, “royal fence.”

The headings do appear in the manuscript.

The verse numbers have been added.

The translation is verse by verse. Repetition within a verse may not appear in the translation. The original uses seven different meters, five of *chan* and two of *kap*.

Words [in square brackets] have been inserted for readability.

Footnotes based on Buntuean, *Khamchan sansoen phrakiat*, are indicated with (B).

Acknowledgments

This text is difficult because of obscure vocabulary and technical issues over the calendar. There are also shifts in the narrative voice (between the king, nobles, Brahmins) which would have been known by the reciter of the original but now have to be derived from the context. This translation is often tentative, and we indicate our uncertainties in the footnotes. We are grateful to Barend Terwiel, Chris Eade, Christian Lammerts, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Forrest McGill, Hiram Woodward, Justin McDaniel, Matthew Reeder, Nicolas Revire, Niyada Lausunthorn, Pitchaya Soomjinda and Trent Walker for their generous and expert help.

⁶¹ Baker and Pasuk, *Yuan Phai*.

⁶² Dhiravat, “Eulogy of King Narai.”

The Eulogy of King Prasat Thong by Phra Maharatchakhru⁶³

- 1 I beg to offer clasped hands to the Buddha, the great omniscient teacher, the most excellent sage, who has cut away the five demons,⁶⁴ who has the complete and incomparable signs⁶⁵ in order on the soles of the holy feet, who is head of the great three worlds.
- With joy I pay respect to the seven books⁶⁶ of the Abhidhamma which lead beings away from suffering,⁶⁷ and which the three worlds all salute;
- the holy suttas and holy commentaries of the highest insight which lead beings to the excellent realm, the path of release, the abode of peace.⁶⁸
- I pay respect to the holy ones without defilement⁶⁹ of such deep and supreme merit, who are beyond human sorrow, suffering, danger, wrath, and oppression.
- That done, I bow to his highness, lord of the city of gates,⁷⁰ whose fame spreads to appear in every land.
- As for the king, the supreme lord of self-born wisdom, gods, humans, and non-humans throughout the three worlds bow down in homage.
- His holy glory reduces enemies to defeat in all directions, upwards to the worlds inhabited by the Brahma, the cities of heaven,

⁶³ คำฉันท์สรรเสริญพระเกียรติสมเด็จพระพุทธเจ้าหลวงปราชญ์ของพระมหाराชครู, *Khamchan sansoen phrakiat somdet phra phuttha jao luang prasat thong khong phra maharatchakhru*.

⁶⁴ เบญจพิทพล, *benjaphitha phon*, pañcavidha bala, five types of forces: the demon of defilements; aggregates; karma formations, demon as deity; and death.

⁶⁵ ลายลักษณ์, *lai lak*, meaning the 108 symbols on the Buddha's footprint. According to the chronicles, a footprint was found at the site now called Phra Phutthabat in Saraburi during the reign of Prasat Thong's predecessor, King Songtham, who had a complex of buildings constructed at the site, and began a tradition of royal pilgrimages. Late in his reign, Prasat Thong greatly expanded the site, and visited with a large entourage in splendid style (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 209–210, 217–220).

⁶⁶ สัตตปกรณา, *satapakarana*, satta pakaraṇa, usually meaning the seven books of the Abhidhamma.

⁶⁷ นิยานิก, *niyanik*, nīyānika, out-leading (from saṃsāra).

⁶⁸ บอรัมถาน บทโมกขสิวลัย, *borommathan botthamokkha siwalai*, paramathān padamokkha sivālai, all three meaning nibbāna.

⁶⁹ ชินาสยป, *khina sayop*, khīṇa āsava, those without the four mental obsessions, meaning arahant (arhat).

⁷⁰ ทวา, *thawa(ra)*. A reference to Dvāravati, Krishna's capital, and to the official name of Ayutthaya, which appears in the chronicle of Prasat Thong's reign as “กรุงเทพทวารวดีศรีอยุธยา มหาดีลกษณพรัตน์ราชธานีบุรีรมย์อุดมพระราชนิเวศมหาสถาน” (*krungthep thawarawadi si ayutthaya mahadilokphop nopharat ratchathani buriram udomphraratchanivet mahasathan*, translated by Richard Cushman as “the Celestial Capital of Thawarawadi and Glorious Ayutthaya, Great Pre-Eminent Realm, Nine Jeweled Royal City and Beauteous Borough, Highest Holy Royal Residence and Great Station.” (*Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 271; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 215).

and downwards through the earth's surface to the realms of misfortune and death, 240,000 *yojana* to the bottom.

10 He governs the people, gods and humans in great numbers and enough elephants, horses, and troops to fill the oceans.

May well-being, peace and joy increase for the reigning king, the best of men, the supreme lord, enjoying bliss.

Rulers from all three worlds come to offer praise, pay respect, and bow heads in prayer for favour to the feet of the great ruler, lord over all three worlds.

The god's invitation

Let there be told the history of the renowned king, head of gates.⁷¹

From the past, humans have lived together for a long time, but now the whole world faces disaster and distress,

because, as a result of karma, all three worlds have entered the Age of Kali,⁷² of anger and oppression.

Through the great power of the religion of the Buddha, the throne of the thousand-eyed lord of the Tāvātīṃsa realm became hot,⁷³

and a noisy uproar arose, so he [Indra] went to the abode of a ten-powered lord,⁷⁴

bowed his head, prostrated at his two feet, and related the troubles in the Jambu⁷⁵ world:

“I invite you, lord, one-without-suffering,⁷⁶ to go down.

20 At this time, mankind is creating trouble for the great religion of the Buddha, which once gave rise to the dhamma.

I invite you, sire, to go down to relieve suffering and make the religion strong and stable for 5,000 years.”⁷⁷

⁷¹ See v.6.

⁷² กัลยยุค, *kaliyuk*, kali yuga, the fourth and last age in a Buddhist era, a time of decline ending with the destruction and regeneration of the universe (Reynolds and Reynolds, *Three Worlds*, ch. 10).

⁷³ In many *jātaka* stories, Indra's throne becomes hot when a bodhisatta needs assistance, which Indra duly provides. The adoption of the device here accords with the assertion that Prasat Thong is a bodhisatta.

⁷⁴ สมเด็จพระศาสดา, *somdet thotsaphon*, dasa bala. Sometimes this title refers to the Buddha, but is clearly used later in the poem (v.186) to mean one who has achieved the ten perfections and is waiting to be reborn in the world as a bodhisatta.

⁷⁵ ชมพู, *chomphu*, roseapple, meaning Jambudīpa, the site of human settlement in Buddhist cosmology.

⁷⁶ มาริสา, *marisa*, mārisa, a respectful form of address, explained by Buddhaghosa in *Samantapāsādikā* to mean niddukkha, without suffering.

⁷⁷ Probably a reference to the prediction that Buddhism will decline over the course of 5,000 years. Prasat Thong's amendment of the calendar was an attempt to return to the beginning of that time period (see Introduction).

The supreme one of self-realised knowledge⁷⁸ accepted Lord Indra's words, and proceeded

to leave the heavens and go down to govern Ayutthaya, a city as beautiful as that of Indra,

with walls of gold and gems, as if the gods and deities had come to build them,

reaching as high as the Brahma worlds, blocking the light of the sun, not opened day or night.⁷⁹

The gods and people joyfully sing the praises of this supreme crown of the three worlds.

Shining brightly above the jewelled city walls, with gable-roofs⁸⁰ that seem

higher than the sixteen Brahma realms, is the great king's heavenly palace, which sky and earth celebrate,

with its sheltered ladies' walkways,⁸¹ secure city gates,⁸² moats, forts, all places both outside and in, all around,

30 as if the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven⁸³ had come down, causing lurking enemies to flee in fear and confusion.

Golden towers affixed with gems, and earthen ramparts define the whole place securely.

There are rivers and waterways comparable to the Sīdantara,⁸⁴ the rivers that flow

among all the seven ranges of hills, with bright blooming lotuses and beautiful flowers.

See the roads, paths, and carriageways, made smooth and level, as if gods came to construct them well;

⁷⁸ วรสยัมภูญาณ, *wora sayamphuwayan*, *vara sayambhu jñāna*, "great self-originated knowledge." This phrase is sometimes applied to a Hindu god, particularly Siva, and sometimes to the Buddha or a bodhisatta.

⁷⁹ บ ไชยพาราตริ, *bo khai thipha ratri*; unclear, but probably meaning dark all the time.

⁸⁰ ป้านลม, *pan lom*, strictly speaking, the bargeboards at the end of the roof, but here probably used to mean a gable roof as a whole.

⁸¹ สนมสนวน, *sanom sanuan*, where *sanom* is a royal consort and *chanuan* is a walled walkway; a *chanuan* ran north-south across the Ayutthaya Grand Palace to allow royal ladies to go to Wat Phra Si Sanphet and the royal jetty without being seen.

⁸² ไชยทวาร (ไชยทวาร), *khlon thawan*, usually a temporary gate used in rituals, such as an army setting out for war, but ไชยทวาร *khlon* (from Khmer) also means a guard and may be used here to emphasise the protection of the gates.

⁸³ Perhaps here meaning Indra.

⁸⁴ สิทธธาร (สิทธาร), *sithathan (sithandon)*, Sīdantara, the seas between the seven mountain ranges surrounding Mount Meru.

images of lion and *garuda* adorning the three-portico hall on both sides, artfully festooned with gems;

the mass of people going along all the roads, chatting noisily, joyous and happy.

See the royal courtyard, shining with beautiful jewels everywhere, and glittering sand,

a place for contests of arts and many other things, with masses of elephants, horses, and elephant carriages all around,

displaying military skills so that enemies who see this sight will be overwhelmed with fear.

40 The jewelled audience halls are decorated outside and inside at all times with many and various accoutrements.

The many groups of courtiers and troops are like rivers in hundreds and thousands beyond count.

The divine palace bedchamber, lined with jewels, pearls, and gold, is as high as the sky.

The crown palace⁸⁵ has pillars of glittering gold, blocking out the lofty sky,

and many beautiful finials,⁸⁶ plated with gold and decorated with masses of jewels,

all the carving and latticework in various patterns, strewn with rows of gems,⁸⁷ ninefold *kanok* combined,⁸⁸

and porticos on the divine palace, shining with supreme grandeur.

See the wealth in floods, nine gems shining bright, the massive royal wealth,

the many young royal ladies, with faces like the moon in mid-sky,

so many young lady angels, beautiful maidens, giving attentive and loyal service.

50 The great and mighty king, ruler of the heavens, supreme master of the universe,

when seen, all 101⁸⁹ kings of vassal cities incline their heads and bow to the foot of the primary crown,

⁸⁵ มงกุฎพิมาน, *mongkut phiman*, “crown-palace”; this appears to mean the building where the king resides.

⁸⁶ นพสุร (นภสุร, นพสุล), *nophasun*, *nabha sūla*, either “sky spike” or “nine spike,” for having nine tines (see McGill, *Kingdom of Siam*, 127–128); the peak of a *prang*, usually in the shape of a lance blade.

⁸⁷ รายรัตนากีเยจณ (รายรัตนากีเยจณ), *rai rattanakian*, “row-jewel-strewn.”

⁸⁸ กนกเก้าสิ่งปสาน, *kanok kao sing pasan*; *kanok*, a classic Thai flame-like motif, combined in nine forms.

⁸⁹ A conventional number meaning “all” or “many.”

unable to utter words or compose verses to sing the praises
of something like heaven, and, when thinking of heaven, like
Tāvatiṃsa, the heaven of thirty-three gods;
they forget the sun and the moon, forget the wealth of the realm of
Laksmi.⁹⁰

Whoever sees him craves to sing the praises of the crown of Ayutthaya,
equipped with troops of many kinds, commanders of the left and right,
of the outside and inside, all around;

with units of sword, shield, and buckler troops following flags,
decorated with many moonstones;⁹¹

gold shields, gold screens,⁹² beautifully made, decorated with many
colours;

golden bows, golden bowstrings, arms poised splendidly, troops in
formations;

60 a great many elephants, various mounts,⁹³ with two fine shining white
tusks, gleaming and splendid;

units of cavalry, jingle-jangling, in various colours, in unknown
numbers beyond count.

See the horse chariots, very beautiful, with pretty wheels and horses
with full decorations;

so many officers, commanding officers, with so many diverse
decorations;

elephant chariots and elephants beyond count; and various brave
troops who fill the earth.

Trumpet and conch sound gloriously, gongs and drums play loud and
cheerfully,

the sound of an ensemble playing loudly, plink, plunk, plink, plunk,⁹⁴
shakes the earth.

His glory spreads to appear throughout the world. Praise to His
Majesty the King!

⁹⁰ ราชลักษมี (ราชลักษมี), *rachalaksami*, consort of Visnu, and goddess of wealth.

⁹¹ มุกดา (มุกดาหาร), *mukda*, moonstone.

⁹² แพน, *phaen*, is a large screen, often made of woven wood or bamboo, similar to a Roman *scutum*, carried by advancing soldiers to block missiles. The various “golden” weapons here may be names for units of troops.

⁹³ ชานี, *chamni*, a vehicle or mount, from Khmer.

⁹⁴ ครื้นครื้นเครื่องเครื่อง, *khruen khruen khreng khreng*, literally “loud,” but the Thai words also nicely convey the sound of an ensemble.

The king questions about erasing the era

At that time, His Majesty the Lord King entered the great splendid palace of the jewelled crown.

Courtiers, prostrating to pay respect, filled the audience hall to overflowing.

70 A great many ministers, teachers, and officials bowed their heads in respect to the dust beneath his feet.

The king posed questions as riddles,⁹⁵ like a bathing of nectar: “What will have enduring glory in this world?

What will provide a place for souls to reside? What will sustain the practice of the dhamma?⁹⁶

Before, during the Krita and Dvapara ages,⁹⁷ all beings strictly upheld the ten principles of the dhamma.⁹⁸

But now we are coming to the Kali age of the era, the end of those without craving,⁹⁹ who will sustain the dhamma?

Now at the completion of 1,000 years, I am thinking of erasing the era; how should it be done in accord with tradition?”

The ministers took this royal command and offered a response. “Such matters have happened eternally since ancient times.

At one time, the great and omniscient Buddha of supreme insight on an auspicious day composed brief verses.

When he composed this sacred *jātaka*,¹⁰⁰ countless followers assembled to recognise the practitioner of the dhamma.

The lord was a poser of great questions. He asked on matters as deep as anything there is.¹⁰¹

80 The lord was a great answerer, giving explanations in the verses of the Tri Pañcaka,¹⁰²

⁹⁵ ปฤศณา (ปฐิสฺสนา), *pṛitsana*, S:praśna, a query, problem, or riddle.

⁹⁶ การกถรรคม, *karakatham*, *kāraka dhamma*.

⁹⁷ กฤดาทวายุคค, *krūda thawaborayukkha*, *kṛta dvāpara yuga*, the first and third of the four ages in a Buddhist era.

⁹⁸ ทศพิธธรรมา, *thotsaphit thamma*, *dasa vidha dhamma*.

⁹⁹ ขิณาสายพ, *khina asayop*, *khīṇa āsava*, “cravings destroyed,” an arahant.

¹⁰⁰ พระชากฏ, *phra chakot*; an old spelling with the last two characters transposed. Here *jātaka* seems to mean simply a text.

¹⁰¹ อรรถคามภีร, *attha khamphira*, either deep matter or a treatise.

¹⁰² ตริปัญจก, *tripanjaka*, *tri pañcaka*, “three times five.” Below this is clearly described as a treatise. Buntuean (*Khamchan sansoen phrakiat*, 53) suggests this is a commentary on the *Anāgatavaṃsa* called อรรถกถาอนาคตวงศ์, *atthakatha anakhotwong*, *Atthakathā Anāgatavaṃsa*, which appears in the list of texts sent to Sri Lanka in 1756, however the *Eulogy* clearly claims that this text was composed by the Buddha. Today there

that there will be a great lineage, a king of brave kings, who can arrange the twelve months, twelve houses.¹⁰³

According to the Pañcaka, the year of the tiger, tenth of the decade, can be changed to a year of the pig.

This will bring about great and complete auspiciousness, changing tiger to pig, and establishing it as first of the decade;

establishing the First Caitra,¹⁰⁴ as indicated in the Pañcaka, the first waxing in the first year of the decade, the day as a Monday;

establishing the year, māśakeṇḍa,¹⁰⁵ avamāna,¹⁰⁶ haragaṇa,¹⁰⁷ karmacubala,¹⁰⁸ and uccabala¹⁰⁹—everything,

everything in the manual, the solar eclipse,¹¹⁰ the path of the moon,¹¹¹ the primary utility,¹¹² and the Vīraṅga Sutra Sārambha.¹¹³

Until the Second Caitra,¹¹⁴ the king will go forth to perform actions according to the Pañcaka treatise in full detail.”

In the holy city and great capital of Ayutthaya, a matter of great insight was thus commanded in a right and proper fashion.

The teachers' words

“The time when the Lesser Era will reach 1,000 has been closely scrutinised.

seems to be no trace of the Atthakathā Anāgatavaṃsa or Tri Pañcaka

¹⁰³ i.e., the calendar

¹⁰⁴ ปละมาเจตร, *pathama jet*; the first appearance of the lunar month of Caitra within a solar year. As the solar new year often falls within the Caitra lunar month, there is then a first Caitra immediately after the new year (*songkran*), and a second Caitra before the following new year (see v.87) (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 22–23).

¹⁰⁵ มาศเคน, *matsaken*, māśakeṇḍa, the number of total lunar months elapsed since the beginning of the era (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 48–49). All the terms in this verse are values used to compute the calendar.

¹⁰⁶ อวमानตรา, *awamantara*, avamāna; the ratio between solar days and lunar days; as 692 solar days is equivalent to 703 lunar days, this figures ranges from zero to 692 (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 48).

¹⁰⁷ หอระคุณ, *horakhun*, haragaṇa, ahargaṇa, the number of days elapsed since the beginning of the era, “the basis of the entire calendrical and planetary reckoning” (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 44).

¹⁰⁸ กรมจา, *kammaja*, karmacubala; as a year has 365.25875 days, the calculation of the year as an integer always leaves a remainder (representing the difference between new year in the calendar, and new year as a mathematical calculation); this remainder, known as karmacubala, diminishes year by year, and triggers a leap year when it crosses a lower boundary (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 47).

¹⁰⁹ อุจพน, *ujaphon*, uccabala, a number between 0 and 3232 that records the lunar apogee (when the moon is at the maximum distance from the Earth). This can be used as a check on other calculations of the calendar (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 47–48).

¹¹⁰ สุริยคราฬ (สุริยคราส), *suryakharat*, suriyaggāha “seizing the sun.”

¹¹¹ บาทจันท (บาทจันทร์), *bat jan*, pada canda (not a term used in Indian astrology).

¹¹² บุโรปกา, *buropaka*, pura upakāra, “primary/before benefit/help.”

¹¹³ พิจรังสูตรสารา, *phirang sutra saram*; พิจรังค์, *phirang*, perhaps from vīra aṅga “strong limb,” is a method for calculating the timing of a lunar eclipse in an astrology technique called สารัมภ์, *saram*, sārambha, meaning “beginning.” See Wisandarunakon, *Khamphi horasat*, 158–62.

¹¹⁴ ทุติยาเจตร, *thutiya jet*, see v.84.

90 At that time it was predicted that a great king¹¹⁵ of kings would come from the five pure abodes¹¹⁶ and the sphere of nothingness,¹¹⁷ the highest of the heavens.

The Buddha predicted thus, told in ancient time, as set down in sacred writings,

that his highness, lord of gates, omniscient, would become the tenth Buddha of the future,¹¹⁸

like Phra Metteya, but the very final one, [formerly born as] the Palelai elephant.¹¹⁹

The tenth of the Buddhas, like the great bodhisatta, Metteyya, left the palace of the gods

to be born in a royal lineage, to be a great king, whose glory spreads far and wide,

decreed to be a supreme emperor of famed power in the holy city of gates,

possessing the solar wealth, the royal authority, in great splendour,

to strengthen the religion of the Buddha beyond reckoning, beyond description of what is seen.

100 Seeing all the religious places in a dismal state, not worth viewing, old and decayed,

he revived and repaired them, and with a pure mind offered them to the children of the Buddha,¹²⁰ great sons of the dhamma,

all the monasteries and salas, and forest ashrams

with moon-like circles for walking meditation,¹²¹ where masterly ascetics may stay.

See the roads and ways, outside and inside, streams, canals, and waterways.

¹¹⁵ Here called พระนารายณ (นารายณ์), *phra narai*.

¹¹⁶ บัญจสุทธาวาส, *banja sutthawat*, *pañca suddhāvāsa*, five pure abodes, the highest levels of the realms with form.

¹¹⁷ อากิญจัญญานา, *akinjanyana*, *ākīñcaññātana*, second level of the realms “without form” or “without material factors,” where formless beings contemplate “that there is no thing.” Reynolds and Reynolds, *Three Worlds*, 259–262.

¹¹⁸ The *Anagatavamsa*, “lineage of the future,” predicts the appearance of ten Buddhas in the future, beginning with Metteyya and ending with Sumaṅgala. This passage of the *Eulogy* predicts that Prasat Thong will be reborn as this tenth Buddha of the future (see Introduction).

¹¹⁹ ปาลีโลย (ปาเลไลย์, ปาเลไลยก์), *palilai*; when the Buddha took refuge from quarrelling monks in Kosambi by retreating to the Pārileyya forest, an elephant (and also a monkey in later accounts) came to serve him.

¹²⁰ พุทธบุตร, *phutthabut*, meaning the monkhood or followers of the Buddha.

¹²¹ อาวาสแว่นจันทรงกรม, *awat waen jan jongkrom*.

All the people are joyful and content, more than under any of the ancient kings from the past.

The king knows the Veda, Vedāṅga,¹²² all the disciplines, a lord of virtue, replete with virtue, the taste of the dhamma.

The king had predictions made by an astrologer, who knew all the sacred Vedas and sacred texts,

one who resided permanently as a monk-ascetic of great power, favoured by the king.

When done, the king built great fragrant quarters¹²³ for a Buddha image with an aura of shimmering gold,¹²⁴

110 and then built a great preaching hall in the *wat* for the great holy omniscient one.¹²⁵

When this preaching hall was done, His Majesty, His Highness, Lord of the Land,

issued a command that all his officers, with a clear and serene mind, should build a great Buddhist preaching hall, each and every one of them,

to serve as a good work making merit, so all who are born should not be a waste or failure.

‘Do not think that you lack the ability, or that it is acceptable to avoid this or fail.

Make exertions and incur hardship, so you may count on seeing the past and future times;

¹²² เวยาหังค (เวหาหังค), “Limbs of the Veda,” auxiliary disciplines of Hindu philosophy: phonology, prosody, grammar, etymology, ritual and astronomy/astrology.

¹²³ คันธกุฏิ, *khantha kuti*, *gandhakuṭi*, “fragrant monk’s residence”; a phrase used for the residence of the Buddha, especially when staying at the Jetavana in Sāvātthi, mentioned in many *jātaka* tales.

¹²⁴ Pitchaya (*Somdet phrajao prasat thong*, 34–37) suggests this refers to the move of a massive Buddha image from the ruined Wat Chi Chiang to a new location, sheltering it with a *mondop*, and renaming the image with the name Prasat Thong will assume as a future Buddha, Sumaṅgala, hence the modern name, Wat Mongkhon Bophit. The new structure is thus a “fragrant quarters” for himself in a future incarnation. In the *Anagatavamsa*, Sumaṅgala is described as having an aura of gold, as in this verse (see Introduction). Boonsomying (“Somdet phrajao prasat thong,” 28) suggests this refers to Wat Kutī Thong, to the north of the city across the moat. According to legend, the abbot predicted Prasat Thong’s ascent to the kingship, and as reward the king built a “fragrant kuti,” meaning a hall to place a Buddha image, which had enough golden decoration to earn the name of the *wat*.

¹²⁵ อาวาสสถานบอรัมศรีสรรเพช (วัดพระศรีสรรเพชญ์), *awat sathan borom si sanphet*. Given Prasat Thong’s association with the Palelai elephant, probably this was the hall known as Wihaṇ Palelai on the south side of Wat Phra Si Sanphet. The base for the Buddha image has a high central portion and two wings, consistent with a Palelai image where the Buddha sits with legs pendant and is flanked by an elephant and monkey. Pitchaya (*Somdet phrajao prasat thong*, 24–31) suggests that Prasat Thong not only built this *wihaṇ* and image, but encouraged officials to follow his example (see v.111–115), as Palelai images with similar faces have been found in Saraburi, Phetchaburi, Phra Phutthabat, and elsewhere.

believe that sense-instincts¹²⁶ have no substance, have no utility for the self.

It is as difficult to discover the religion of the Buddha as to see the flower of a fig tree.¹²⁷

Because I have merit I have met the Buddhist monks, the pupils of the great Gotama.”¹²⁸

120 Great ministers and courtiers thus paid respect to His Highness King of Ayutthaya.

That done, the Buddhist monks gathered and agreed together happily:

“Praise to the virtue of the holy lord. Like the seven Sīdantara oceans, beyond compare,

the thousands, millions, crores of territory under his command are beyond reckoning,

downwards, through the earth to the realm of hell fires and great *nāga*,

upwards, beyond the immaterial realms¹²⁹ to the limits of the most excellent heavens,

territories spanning the boundless universe.

Though there were one man who could speak through the duration of the ages, until the end of the era,

and that man had 1,000 heads, and in each head 1,000 mouths,

and in each mouth 1,000 tongues, each perfect in principle,

130 each with the ability to speak elegantly, still he not could convey the sacred virtue of this noble lord,

who has had a Buddhist preaching hall built in the *wat* of the great omniscient one.¹³⁰

Now that the preaching hall has been finished, through his power as a majestic king,

he should erase the lesser era, following the advice of the Buddha, as set down in writings.

¹²⁶ รักขันธสันดาน, *rak khan sandan*, “love-group-instinct,” where *khan* may be ขันธ์ ๕, the five aggregates of human existence: corporeality, sensation, perception, volition, consciousness.

¹²⁷ อุทุมพารัต, *uthumpharat*, *udumbara*, *Ficus racemose/glomerata*, cluster fig; this is a well-known idiom—trees of the fig genus have no visible flower, because the flower grows inside a pod which expands to become the fruit.

¹²⁸ ศิษยาภิเษกโคดม, *sitwarokhodom*, *sisṣa varo gotamo*; meaning the monkhood.

¹²⁹ อากาสา, *akasa*, *ākāśa*, the Brahma levels without material factors (B; see Reynolds and Reynolds, *Three Worlds*, 259–262); alternatively meaning “the skies.”

¹³⁰ See v.110.

At that time, the king spoke, as if the Buddha, the well-farer, had come to give commands,

the lord omniscient, shoot of a future Buddha, had come to be a support for the great religion of the Buddha.”

Then His Highness Lord of Ayutthaya, who had listened to these words, smiled and laughed.

“As you lords state, this is fitting, nothing varying from the verses of the Tri Pañcaka.

Thanks to you for speaking such good words, which are composed as of old.

We will act in conformity with the words that the holy one of great insight gave as firm commands.

140 He has trust in those who desire to be in the lineage of the Buddha, excellent people seeking insight.”

That done, His Highness the Great King gave royal commands

to have built at the front of the polo ground¹³¹ a jewelled palace, shining with scintillating gold,

gilded to shine like the light of the sun, with crores of sparkling gems, bright enough to eclipse the light of the sun,

like a jewelled lotus, as brilliantly beautiful as the divine moon.

Then the king gave it a sacred name as the Great Palace of Si Yasodhara,¹³² as crafted by the gods.¹³³

Then the divine fragment,¹³⁴ marvel of the world, gave thought to what was appropriate,

pondered on the suitability, having doubts and concerns that his mind had been mistaken.

He relayed his thoughts upward to address Lord Indra, to relate the matter from beginning to end,¹³⁵

to explain, as if it were seen, the content of what was ordered, in total with nothing missing,

¹³¹ ฅานคหฺล, *chan khli*; the open space on the east side of the Ayutthaya Grand Palace, used for military displays.

¹³² ศรีศรียสโศธร, usually ศรียโสธร ศรียโศธร, *si yasothon*, an old name for Angkor.

¹³³ แม่นพจง, *maen phajong*, where *phajong* comes from a Khmer word meaning “finely made.”

¹³⁴ บันเทวะ, *ban thewa*, perhaps บัน, part. Pallegoix (*Dictionarium*, 41) gives บัน as “loins.”

¹³⁵ As becomes evident below, this is Prasat Thong’s “prophetic dream” (*subin nimit*) that Indra visited his bedchamber, as mentioned in the chronicles (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 216; *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 273).

- 150 that His Highness Lord of Ayutthaya had built a great palace with a *prang*,¹³⁶ as crafted by the gods,
and, when finished, had given it a sacred name by lineage, according to the royal wish, appropriate to the occasion.
At that time, the immortal one,¹³⁷ through his powers of hearing, listened to these fine words,
and having heard this speech, in no time raised ten fingers above his head, clasped his hands in respect to the king,
“It is fitting I should leave my heavenly abode to help the Holy Sage of Great Sages¹³⁸ to erase the era,
because he has not yet had the opportunity to resolve the issue, and his mind is wavering back and forth.”
With this thought the immortal lord guardian proceeded gracefully by the way,
striding across the sky to the shimmering, shining jewelled palace,
entered the palace of the crown, arrived above the bed where the king was sleeping,
approached almost to touching the royal feet, and spoke in a riddle,¹³⁹ the whole matter, as a means
160 to have him establish a wheel battle array¹⁴⁰ in the divine silver palace, the various parts properly arranged,
then he flew to the palace [audience hall], wearing a shining cloth of gold, armlets, and earrings,
arrived above the beautiful pure yellow-wool throne¹⁴¹ decorated with diamonds and jewels,
and praised the handsome king with ten fingers raised above his head, while everyone filling the hall of righteousness gave salutations and praise to the one of great merit.

¹³⁶ ปราง, a Khmer-style tower or spire, marking the residence of a king or god.

¹³⁷ อมรชาติ, *amorachat*, *amara jāti*, meaning Indra.

¹³⁸ พระมุนีมุนิพร, *phra muni muninthara*, meaning the bodhisatta.

¹³⁹ See v.71.

¹⁴⁰ จักรวายุห, *jakkara phayu*, *cakka byūha*, an army battle formation in the shape of a wheel, found in military manuals (Fine Arts Department, *Tamra phichai songkhram*, 117, 173), and mentioned in Vaddhaki-Sukara-Jataka, No. 283 (Cowell, *Jātaka*, vol. II, 275). Cushman translated this as a “circle of the host.” *Jakkara phayu* is also a name for *thaksa*, a 3x3 cell diagram used for horoscopy and prediction (Horawet, “Rueang jakkara phayuha”).

¹⁴¹ บันฑุกำพล (บันฑุกัมพลศิลาอาสน์), *banthukamphon*, *paṇḍu kambala*, the name of Indra’s throne.

The king ponders over the dream

Then His Majesty the King, Lord of the Land, awoke from sleep in his divine palace bedchamber with a mind full of concern,

not because the people would be afflicted by disorder, and not because he had thought wrongly—people need not doubt.

“The golden hall was adorned with a group of door guardians at seven levels like the crore of great gates of Tāvatiṃsa.

Our thinking was true and correct, not wrong, and thus hundreds of gods, great and small, came to give their blessing;

otherwise, there would have been no great conch, Hari-Visnu¹⁴² holding the conch, discus, club, and bow,

170 nor Brahma with four pristine faces surmounted by a jewelled crown, and riding on a great shining swan,

when I heard these sweet-sounding words like a taste of clear nectar, the sound of sacred commands,

telling me to perform a rite of worship and a fire ceremony¹⁴³ to bless and anoint the great holy palace.”

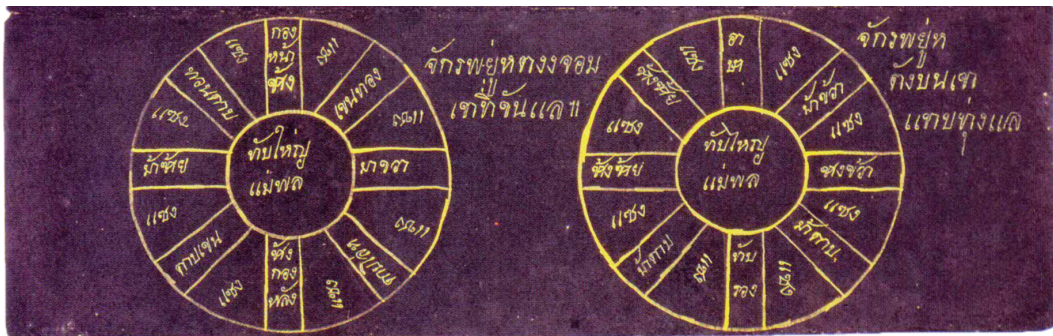


Figure 1. จักรพรรูป, *jakkara phayu*, wheel battle array from Fine Arts Department, *Tamra phichai songkhram*, 117

The king gives commands for all to hear

At that time the King of Kings had heard the words of nectar from he who came from the realm of the gods to the palace

and spoke fine words of praise, good sayings, ancient matters and old history,¹⁴⁴ explaining his desires.

Having thought, he proceeded gracefully up onto a throne in the

¹⁴² หริสฤงษดิสังหอร, *hari sarit sanghon*, S: hari sṛṣṭi saṃharaṇa, “creator-destroyer.”

¹⁴³ โหมพธิ, *hom phithi*, *homa vidhi*, an offering made with fire, such as by throwing butter into the flames, or making a sacrifice.

¹⁴⁴ บุรพานิทาน, *burapha nithan*, ancient tale; probably this means he is citing precedents from history.

portico¹⁴⁵ of the god-crafted palace, wishing to pose questions in fine words.

“Listen, multitude of ministers and officers, last night I had a dream and saw matters that none can enquire about without being amazed.

I saw the figure of Lord Indra, wearing a holy breastchain¹⁴⁶ and nine-gem earrings. He approached almost to touching and spoke matters in the pure, supreme palace,

telling me to establish a wheel battle array, which is like a riddle about the holy name [of the palace]. He appeared as real in my mind. I awoke with great doubt and concern.

In my thinking, I have considered all the rights and wrongs, listened to explanations of this and that, and come to a decision, which I believe is correct,

180 to establish a wheel battle array by the ways and means available. That is, the palace at the front of the polo ground, as a result of misconceptions in the past,

was named, according to the royal liking for Cambodia,¹⁴⁷ as the Si Yasodhara Seat.¹⁴⁸ As a result, the god came down to state in a riddle that there was a problem there. I have thought very firmly that it should be Jakkawat Phaichaiyon,¹⁴⁹ this is what the god’s riddle made me realise.

I have thought on the rights and wrongs, but never mind. Tell me what you think on the rights and wrongs. I offer pardon. Do not have fear of being incorrect.”

Thus, having given thorough thought, he raised his hands in worship, admitting fault, along with the two Brahman priest-teachers¹⁵⁰ close to the king.

¹⁴⁵ The main audience halls in the Ayutthaya Palace had a porch or portico, usually on the eastern end, where the king could appear in audience before people in the adjacent courtyard.

¹⁴⁶ สังกวาลเวท, *sangwan wet*; *sangwan* is a breast ornament, often of crossed bands or chains, worn by kings and gods; *wet* is probably from Veda. Today *sangwan* is also used for a Brahman’s sacred thread, so perhaps that is what is meant here.

¹⁴⁷ ตามกำแพงพระสงฆ์, *tam kamphut phrasong*. As Pitchaya details, Prasat Thong’s drawing on Angkorian art and architecture was very extensive. The frontage of this building has remains of a frieze of *garuda* and lions similar to the terraces outside the former palace in Angkor Thom (Pitchaya, *Somdet phrajao prasat thong*, 18–20).

¹⁴⁸ ศรียาศิโยธรรยง, *si yasothara yanyong*, *sri yasodhāra parayaṅka*.

¹⁴⁹ จักรวัติไพชยนต์ (จักรวรรดิไพชยนต์), *cakkavatti vejayanta*. *Vejayanta*, “of victory,” is the name of Indra’s banner, palace, and chariot. *Cakkavatti*, “wheel roller,” is the epithet of a Buddhist emperor from the *Three Worlds*. Other than the wheel reference in the name, it is not clear how this answered Indra’s riddle. In the chronicle version, the courtiers interpret the dream and advise on the renaming, but here it is the king.

¹⁵⁰ Meaning the two Phra Maharatchakhru.

Both raised their clasped hands, saying the king had spoken beautifully, and praising the glory of the royal foot, the monarch of excellence beyond description:

“The king of accumulated merit, the ten-powered one, had great kindness¹⁵¹ to be born in the world of the senses¹⁵² to govern the great city of Ayutthaya.

His glory troubles warlike enemies, who all turn their heads and feet [to flee]. Their clans, brothers and sisters, friends and allies, the whole bestial tribe, have died and disappeared.

In all ten directions, all directions beyond count, both below and above, even as far as the Akanittha,¹⁵³ Brahmas repeatedly come to offer prayers and respect.

Through the power of the king, the throne in Indra’s palace became hot. Indra quickly travelled across the sky to reach the palace of the crown.

190 He approached almost to touching, explained the matter from the beginning in the words of the great teacher, then went out from the divine palace into the great sky,

wearing a beautiful coloured cloth, shining as bright as the light of the sun, offered his prediction to the king, then gracefully departed.

The king has spoken his thoughts, including the solution for the name of the Jakkawat Phaichaiyon palace, like a pure solar palace crafted by the gods.

May the supreme lord patron have a beautiful royal sheet of gold inscribed and placed in a jewelled pavilion¹⁵⁴ in order to continue the joyous royal lineage

until the end of the sun and the moon. When the era of the dawn is completely destroyed, then the royal glory and fame of the lineage will end, as the great lineage disappears, gone to *nibbāna*.

May your servant humbly offer an address, according to ancient procedure, that his lordship the king begin work according to the history from the past.”

¹⁵¹ มหานาถายาสัย, *mahanadathayasai*, mahanta adhyāśaya, great/expansive disposition/courtesy.

¹⁵² กามภูม, *kamaphum*, kāmabhūmi.

¹⁵³ อัคขนิษฐ, *akkhanit*, “unequalled in rank,” highest of the suddhavasa, pure abodes, twenty-seventh of the thirty-one levels of the Three Worlds.

¹⁵⁴ โกฏฐาคาร, *koṭṭhakāra*, koṭṭhakāra, a treasury, but also in Thai meaning a building with a spire. The purpose of the gold sheet is not clear. Perhaps this is another confusion between the palace event and the calendar event: in the chronicle’s account of erasing the era, the king has one golden sheet representing the old era and another representing the new placed at the top of the Meru (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 222; *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 278–9).

Then great Lord Rama, the king who crossed continents,¹⁵⁵ having heard advice from the teachers, spoke serenely about stability:¹⁵⁶

“Listen, both twice-born great teachers, help think on the correct course to bring about stability in accord with the omen, the words of the god.

Teachers, go quickly with fitting speed to see the flawless palace, to prepare for a fire ceremony.”¹⁵⁷

The twice-born great teachers took the royal order, placed it upon their heads,¹⁵⁸ paid respect to take leave of the king, and departed from the royal residence.¹⁵⁹

200 They went up into the Phaichaiyon Palace, set up a bench throne¹⁶⁰ with a bright and beautiful roof like an array of stars surrounding the ancient moon,

and a net, curtain and cushions on the beautiful throne. Once quickly finished, they had images of deities fashioned to decorate the mountains, and set out the seven Sīdantara with waters flowing,

then raised victory umbrellas, flags, pipe-flags, filling the sky, covering everywhere, moving and flapping in the wind, blocking the light of the sun, making things sultry and dull.

They set up the Meru Kailasa mountain as a great throne,¹⁶¹ pure and shining, and placed masterful rishi, *vijjadhara*,¹⁶² *gandhabba*,¹⁶³ *dānavah*,¹⁶⁴ *garuda*,¹⁶⁵ *yakkā*¹⁶⁶ and great *nāga*;

then placed eight magnificent elephants,¹⁶⁷ decorated in gold, like

¹⁵⁵ ทิโปปารัง, *thipoparang*, *dvīpa pāra*, “continent + other side” (B).

¹⁵⁶ เสถียรสถิตย, *sathian sathit*, standing firmly.

¹⁵⁷ กุณ, *kun*, *kuṇḍa*, a fire-pit, and associated ceremonies.

¹⁵⁸ A gesture of raising the clasped hands over the head and then lowering them palm down onto the crown, as if placing the words there.

¹⁵⁹ Here the Brahmins set off to attend to the renaming of the palace, which according to the chronicles took place in CS 994, and arrive in the preparation for the rebasing of the calendar, which took place six years later.

¹⁶⁰ เตี้ย, *tiang*, a low, backless bench. Presumably this is for the king to view the ceremony.

¹⁶¹ In the chronicle version, an image of Indra is enthroned on Meru.

¹⁶² วิหยาธอจ (วิหยาธจ, วิหยาธจ), *withayathon*, “bearer of (special) knowledge,” a non-human being, ranked below deities, with the ability to fly through the air and a penchant for mischief, larceny and quarrelling.

¹⁶³ (คน)อจจณ, (*khon*)*than*, Gandharva, celestial musicians.

¹⁶⁴ ทานพ, *thanop*, *dānavah*, a kind of *asura* or demon.

¹⁶⁵ สุบรรณ, *suban*, *supanna*, another name for *garuda*, a mythical bird with a human body and the head, wings, and talons of an eagle; the mount of Visnu.

¹⁶⁶ ยักษ์, *yak*, *yaksa*, ogres, human-eating demons.

¹⁶⁷ In the chronicles, these elephants appear around the construction made for erasing the era (*Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 279, Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 222).

Airavata¹⁶⁸ of Indra from the excellent Amnuai lineage:¹⁶⁹

in the east, a white elephant, shining beautifully, decked in all kinds of ornaments and decorations, a great elephant of power and rank;

in the south-east, a great fighting elephant,¹⁷⁰ with a colour like the god of fire, and a body looking beautiful with a lovely aura of light;

in the south, a great elephant of the Rattana class,¹⁷¹ with a base colour of moonstone, and much pure gold¹⁷² in a colour like ripe betel nut, with a bright golden aura and elegant ornaments;

in the south-west, the powerful Anchana¹⁷³ elephant, bright and beautiful with the colour of a blue lotus, a sleek and pretty body, a great elephant from the solar lineage;

in the west, Komuta¹⁷⁴ with a base colour of lapis lazuli; in the north-west, an elephant from the Nila¹⁷⁵ blue lineage, unmatched in the excellence of his body;

210 in the north, from the Tamba¹⁷⁶ line, with a base colour of gold, as should be, decked in ornaments for a great elephant, like the mount of Indra from the lineage of immortal elephants;

in the north-east, an elephant with a body completely white, a breastchain with gold stars and the beautiful nine jewels, from the topmost lineage of Indra's Airavata.

A great, powerful and coloured elephant, that stood among these elephants of great power, was the mount of the king, the greatest of the great elephants, an elephant from heaven.

¹⁶⁸ โอยราชวต, *ayarapot*, the mount of Indra, usually Erawan in Thai.

¹⁶⁹ อำนวยวงษ์ (อำนวยวงศ์), *amnuaiwong*. Elephants are classified into lineages associated with Hindu gods. Visnu arranged that a lotus flower be born from a womb with eight petals and 133 pistils, and presented it to Siva who shared it out among Visnu, Siva, Brahma, and the god of fire, Agni. The gods then arranged that the petals and pistils be born as elephants in the terrestrial world. From these origins arose the four main lineages of elephants associated with these four deities. Each of these lineages is then subdivided into several sublineages, usually eight, for the eight directions. The Amnuai lineage is sometimes classified in the Brahma lineage, or as a hybrid from crossbreeding between elephants from the four main lineages (*Tamra chang*, 49–63).

¹⁷⁰ โรหมหัทศดิทธร, *rommahatsadin*; not a lineage, โรหม มห อัทศดิทธร, *rom maha atsadinthon*, fighting-great-elephant-lord.

¹⁷¹ รัตนหัทศดิทธร, *rattana hatsadin*, probably รัตนนัข, *ratananak*, a subdivision of the Agni lineage with white toenails on all feet.

¹⁷² ชามภูวนา, *cham phuwana*, which Buntuean thinks comes from ชามพูนท, *champhunot*, pure gold; alternatively the phrase means “very royal.”

¹⁷³ อัญชัญ, *anchan*, the blue-pea flower, and its deep blue colour; a subclass with sixteen variants, distinguished by large heads and long tusks (*Tamra chang*, 57).

¹⁷⁴ โกมุท, *komut*, a red lotus; a subdivision of the Brahma lineage.

¹⁷⁵ นิล, *nin*, a division of the Amnuai lineage with several subcategories: *nilathan*, with pure dark blue tusks; *nilajaksu*, with pure dark blue body; *nilnakha*, with pure dark blue toenails (*Tamra chang*, 61, 68).

¹⁷⁶ ดามภ, *dampaha*, tamba, copper; a subdivision of the Visnu lineage with a dark copper colouring. This is the only one different from the chronicles, which have an unnamed green elephant to the north.

Then they arranged the weaponry, in numbers beyond reckoning, so many crores, with ranks of flintlock guns,¹⁷⁷ big and small, massed all around the boundary walls.

In the palace, they placed the five articles of regalia, the weapons of victory, black stone ring,¹⁷⁸ helmet, breastchain, golden lowercloth, waistchain, and earrings.

Once all the decoration in the palace was finished, they moved from that place, the Phaichaiyon Palace, and went up into the palace of the crown.

They reported to the king all that had been done, listing the deity images, lakes, circles of hills, and the eight elephants in the flawless palace, as crafted by the gods.

The king goes to view then ascends to the palace

Then the King of Kings listened to the circle of teachers, good gentlemen, make their address,

give their account and explanation, on matters by department, with heads bowed in respect.

The king listened, appreciated the fine words of both¹⁷⁹ as valuable, right, and fitting, and concluded matters with them both.

220 “I think I desire to see the many tall peaked pavilions.¹⁸⁰ Both you teachers who have come will go along with me.”

This done, the prince¹⁸¹ uttered commands to be seated on elephants at the mounting stage of victory.

The king proceeded with the twice-born teachers¹⁸² and many officers in countless crores,

and halted the elephants and massive entourage of soldiers of the prince.

They looked at the seven streams like the seven Sīdantara around sacred Mount Meru;

¹⁷⁷ ปืนนกสับ, *puen nok sap*, literally “hammer guns,” using a hammer mechanism to strike a spark. This technology was developed in Europe in the early 17th century, so the appearance here is a touch of modernity.

¹⁷⁸ เกาบิน (เกาบิล) ดำถมอ, *kaobin dam thamo*; *kaobin* is a ring used in Brahmin ceremonies; ถมอ, *thamo* means rock.

¹⁷⁹ The two Maharatchakhru.

¹⁸⁰ คฤหาสน์, *kharuehadan*; *mondop* buldings with a tall, steep spire (B). Perhaps this just means he wishes to see what they have constructed.

¹⁸¹ วัชรโรต, *warorot*, vara orasa, great son, two verses below called ยุพราช, *yupharat*, yuva rāja, young king; perhaps Chaofa Chai who succeeded Prasat Thong briefly in 1656 before falling to a coup (B). No prince appears in the chronicle version.

¹⁸² Meaning Brahmins.

looked at the elaborate images of eight noble elephants as if great Indra had brought the images on the Meru from his abode;

and looked at all the gods and deities standing splendidly as if great Indra had made these beautiful likenesses.

Once done, the king went up into the glittering jewelled building, scintillating with nine gems, all shining brightly as the sun.

The officers, troops, and great ministers in a hub-bub filled the audience hall to address the holy dust.

The king proceeds to perform a royal ceremony

Not long after, they set up the fire ceremony, a Buddha image, and the Three Baskets, the highest law,

230 an image of Visnu, an image of Siva,¹⁸³ and a Buddha of deep virtue,¹⁸⁴ excellent and powerful.

Then the excellent Buddha Sutra for Protection and Good Fortune¹⁸⁵ was recited by the eminent monks and the victory-mantra sages.¹⁸⁶

Then the group of great and noble teachers, using deep methods,¹⁸⁷ made a fire offering.¹⁸⁸

During the fire ceremony, they chanted “om” and burned offerings in worship.

Then at an auspicious time, a great conjunction of victory, it was done and finished, the twelve great gods attending.¹⁸⁹

Then the great, noble teachers gave powerful blessings for the twelve mansions of the year.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ สฤทธิสังหาร สรรสฤทธิอิศวโร, *sarit sanghon sora sarit iswaro*, where *sarit* (สฤทธิ) means something created, *sanghon* (from *saṃharaṇa*, destroyer) means Visnu, and *iswara* (Ishvara, “lord”) is a common term for Siva in Thai; in the chronicles version, there are Brahmins dressed up as twelve Hindu gods placed on the model of Mount Meru.

¹⁸⁴ คุณคามภี, *khun khamphi*, “deep value.”

¹⁸⁵ พุทธมงคลสูตรปริต, *phuttha mongkhon sut parit*, *mangala sutta paritta* (Cushman’s translation, *Royal Chronicles*, 223). The *Mangala Sutta* is a discourse on blessings from the *Khuddaka Nikaya*.

¹⁸⁶ ไชยมนตรมูณี, *chayamantara muni*, meaning unclear, perhaps because the text is corrupt; in the chronicle version at this point, the word is ราชคณะ, *ratchakhana*, meaning the official monastic hierarchy.

¹⁸⁷ คามวิธี, *khamwithi*, which Bantuean suggests is คามธีวิธี, *khamphirawithi*, deep method. The chronicles here have คามวาสี, *khamwasi*, the town-dwelling sect, but monks would not have carried out a fire ceremony.

¹⁸⁸ อธิพาศกัโหม, *athiphat* (very bright, B) *hom*; this is completely missing from the chronicles’ account.

¹⁸⁹ วอรวาทศเทวศคไณย, *wora thawathot thewa sakhanai*, *vara dvā dasa deva saga naya*. The meaning of *sakhanai* is unclear. The chronicles’ account of the ceremony states that the court Brahmins were dressed up as Hindu gods (*Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 279; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 222).

¹⁹⁰ ราศี (ราศี), *rasi*.

~ ~ ~

Now that the royal rite had been finished according to the sacred Tri Pañcaka verses,

beginning a new year¹⁹¹ on a Monday, and completing the ceremony of Indrabhiseka¹⁹² for the king,

they blew right-spiralled¹⁹³ conches three times, and played music,

beat Indra drums, like lords of the lions competing to roar loudly,

240 struck victory gongs inside the place, so the sound echoed, making loud and tumultuous music,

filling the whole royal city with joyous, boisterous, and chaotic sound, shaking and quaking the earth.

The sound of great guns added to the cacophony. The wonderful sound spread everywhere,

like thunder striking the royal territory, with as much noise as countless vast oceans,

downwards, heard to the bottom of the terrible realms of misfortune, dismay and distress,

upwards, surging up to reach the Brahmas, arousing their hearts to feel bewildered and drained.

The sounds were loud, joyous, and chaotic. Fog darkened the sky, moist, murky, and overcast in every direction.

Thunder struck the earth, loud enough to close the gates to the realm of Tāvatiṃsa,

with such enormous noise disturbing Tāvatiṃsa, the sound spreading everywhere.

Stars and moon moved in a murky sky, dark with rain, murky and overcast everywhere.

¹⁹¹ เถล่องศก (เถลึงศก), *thaloengsok*, “rising year,” the first day of a CS year, when the mean sun passes from มীন *min* Pisces to เมษ *mesa* Aries (Eade, *Calendrical Systems*, 52–53; Diller and Preecha, “Thai Time”).

¹⁹² อินทราภิเศก (อินทราภิเษก), *intharaphisek*. An old Indian ceremony based on a legend of Indra flying down in his chariot to present the five insignia of kingship: crown; sword; cane; fan and whisk; slippers. See Introduction. The account here is consistent with the description of the ceremony in the Ayutthaya Palace Law, but omits the enactment of churning the sea of milk (Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 18, 30–31; *Phraratchaphongsawadan krung kao chabap luang prasoet*, 20; McGill, “Art and Architecture,” 57–68; Maneepin, “Chak nak duek damban”; Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, 126–128; and *Kotmai tra sam duang*, I, 148–150).

¹⁹³ ทักขินาวัต, *thakhinawat*, *dakḥināvattaka*, circling to the right, the term used for the proper clockwise circulation (e.g., of a stupa or person) made as a show of respect.

250 Winds whipped the oceans and all the waterways into waves, and
ruffled the lotus leaves.

All beings in the waters poked up their heads; sawfish and sharks
chased after them; whales sprayed foam;

all kinds of crabs and crocodiles stuck up their heads, and went
downstream together, the surface of the waterways shimmering.

Birds were startled and hid away, remaining quiet and subdued, not
making a sound.

All the wild animals cried out. Serow sped away, glancing sideways,
colliding with fleeing deer.

Cows and buffaloes gathered at ponds. Fleeing elephants ran into bold
tusked boar.

All animals in the holy Himavanta were startled and fled in confusion.

Trees were cracked and broken in the forests and hills. Lakes and
rivers were muddied and badly tainted.

The guardian spirits of the forests and hills, seeing the birds flying
noisily in the skies,

thought they should soar up to look around and see what was
happening.

260 They learned that His Highness of Ayutthaya had deliberately
performed a great ceremony.

All the many gods and guardians gathered together with hands clasped
to pay respect.

Some picked flowers to make garlands, or weave as necklaces and
colourful gold ornaments.

Some scattered [flowers] down from the heavens, inclined their heads,
and bowed with hands clasped above their pates.

Some called out salutations, praising the accumulated merit of the
crowned head of Ayutthaya.

The mass of gods filled the territory to the boundaries of the world of
the gods.

Masterful rishi and *vijjadhara*¹⁹⁴ came in great numbers from the
whole universe.

Some offered glittering garlands of jewels, flowers anointed with
nectar for the king to bathe;

¹⁹⁴ วิทญาราช, *withayathon*, *vijjadhara*, see fn. 162; here it may mean beings capable of magic, sorcerers.

some conjured themselves as small as a speck of dust under the royal foot.

They jostled together to come and offer fragrant flowers, spreading a pleasing fragrance everywhere.

270 Arriving at the king, in great fear, bent over as if softened by fire, they came and bowed down their bodies in respect.

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Immortals, a multitude looking brilliant all three worlds

Gleaming golden peacocks swaying parasols all embellished

Lotus, lilies covering filling the whole sky like a rain storm

Snakes, noisy birds all the Yugandhara *gandhabba*<sup>196</sup> and *tanavah*

Divine gem dust<sup>197</sup> perfuming, permeating the whole sky

Many fragrant flowers filling the whole territory and the boundaries

Leopards, buffalos roaming filling the whole leafy forest

Strong-tusked boars<sup>198</sup> lions,<sup>199</sup> kirin<sup>200</sup> elephants at a pond

Meticulous chants many conches serenading the king

280 Silver flags glittering colourful in lines long lines

*Having completed the royal ceremony for erasing the Lesser Era, the king gives alms around the city*

Then, the royal foot, the righteous ruler and supreme power in the world, erased the Lesser Era by just command. The shoot of a Buddha then thought back and forth:

“The shoot of the Omniscient One in the past often went to an alms pavilion and gave alms to beggars and mendicants who came from every direction of the bounds of the world.

The supreme lord of great rank and glory gave goods and property to many beggars and mendicants, who, once they had received, went off home.

<sup>195</sup> The next ten lines have a heading indicating the meter is มาลินี จันทร์ ๑๕, *malini chan 15*. Each verse has thirteen syllables divided 6–4–3, with a rhyme from the final syllable of the line to the final syllable of the first and second phrases on the following line. The passage word-paints the scene of honoring the king. The sound is probably as important as the meaning.

<sup>196</sup> ยุคนธรรพะ, *yukhonthanpha*; the text seems to run Yugandhara and Gandharva together, perhaps to conform to the meter.

<sup>197</sup> สุริยวิพัชรจจุร, *suratwiphatcharajunjop*, perhaps *sura* (divine), *wi(set)* (special), *phachra* (gem), *jun* (finely ground). Buntuean transcribed this as สุริยวิภชจจุร.

<sup>198</sup> พลุก(สุก), *pluk (sukon)*, fang (pig).

<sup>199</sup> โต, *to*, like a สิงห์โต, *singto*, a mythical lion.

<sup>200</sup> กิเลน, *kirin*, Qilin, a mythical animal of Chinese origin, usually depicted with a dragon's head, deer's body, sometimes scaly, a single horn or antler, and hooves.

Come, I will give in the manner of the Buddha in times past.”<sup>201</sup> With this thought, the king then spoke commands to the officers serving him

to decorate the city, all places, low or high; to pound the ground to make it level along the roads and paths as in times past, pounding and flattening any place that was damaged;

then to set up balustrades,<sup>202</sup> flags with patterns, and umbrellas; once done, to measure and place trees of plenty<sup>203</sup> six fathoms apart all around the boundary of the walls.

Senior officers took the royal command, placed it on their heads, prostrated and paid respect to take leave, went out of the palace, sat in the audience hall, and held a meeting.

In a short time, when the roads where the king would pass had been promptly decorated, they returned to report to His Majesty of Righteousness on all the various matters done.

The shoot of an enlightened Buddha, pure of mind, supreme in the world, having graciously listened to the courtiers’ address, felt joyful, and spoke orders to the officers

290 to use the [wealth from the] beautiful treasures—and not to be shy about it—placed on elaborately fashioned gold pedestal trays. The king took and placed them in front of the palace.

Then the king spoke in a strong and beautiful voice, a nectar of words, while pouring sacred water<sup>204</sup> onto the ground, and made a vow of truth:<sup>205</sup>

“May the alms that I give be a factor on the road to *nibbāna*. May I attain enlightenment as one of great wisdom and insight for the benefit of beings in the cycle of the world.”

On this vow of truth, the earth quaked and trembled, the moon and

<sup>201</sup> In the Palace Law, an almsgiving is the final phase of the Indrabhiseka ceremony (Baker and Pasuk, *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, 126–128).

<sup>202</sup> ราชวัติ (ราชวัติ), *ratchawat*, *rajāvati*, “royal fence”, which can mean a railing or balustrade placed to mark the boundary of an area used for a ritual, but also a temporary barrier made with a lattice of bamboos bound with bamboo lath.

<sup>203</sup> กรมพฤษ (กัลปพฤกษ์), *kammaphruek* (*kalapaphruek*), a mythical tree of plenty which provides people in the Himavanta Forest with everything they desire (see Reynolds and Reynolds, *Three Worlds*, 133, 191, 200, 233–234, where it is called “the wishing tree” and sometimes equated with the Parichat tree). The artificial trees, used in royal merit-making ceremonies, were made with a central bamboo post, topped with a bulbous frame of bamboo laths, and mounted on a base of around human height.

<sup>204</sup> น้ำทักษิณาทาน, *nam* (*thak*)*sinothok*, *dakkhiṇā odaka*.

<sup>205</sup> สัจฉิธาน, *satthisathan*, *sacca ādhitthāna*, “determined on truth”; a ritual vow, epitomised by the Buddha’s vow at the moment of enlightenment, a practice that appears often in Buddhist stories, including *jātaka* tales, again showing Prasat Thong’s status as a bodhisatta.

stars were obscured, [the sky was] wondrously dark and murky.

Sounds echoed loudly like an elephant mad in musth. Trees shook and swayed wondrously. Elephants and rhinos roared and ran about wildly everywhere.

The oceans flowed with waves, crashing and smashing loudly on the shore, flashing with light. The great mountains bent over like the tips of rattan, swaying to and fro.

Wild animals roared and growled, travelled around in search, hid away sneakily looking for animals that were lost, and poised ready to pounce and grab them.

Birds sitting on eggs and perched on trees were quiet and subdued. The guardian spirits of streams, caves, rivers, and hills, and the spirits of salt licks and plains crept along one after another.

In the forests and woods, rivers and streams flowed fast and furious. Makara<sup>206</sup> went along with the flow. Turtles and fish poked up their heads and went downstream.

All the four-legged animals, including young deer, throughout the forest, pushed through the lalang grass, scuttled down to streams, climbed up hills, and ducked into ponds, mountains, wild caves, and caverns

300 with skin crawling and hair standing on end. A tumult arose all across the world, upwards to the sky, downwards to the bottom of the netherworld.<sup>207</sup>

Though not the season for rain, the sky was dark, overcast, and gloomy in all directions. Lightning flashed bright yellow all around the boundary of the universe, like in the spring months.<sup>208</sup>

Through the power of the enlightened Buddha's pure accumulated merit, excellent beyond description, wondrous and unique, the noisy tumult spread throughout the city, the world city royal.

The *prasat*-topped golden Phaichaiyon palace was joyful and tumultuous. Preparations for the royal progress were completed in every quarter, in people's houses and royal houses, in every locality.

The king, wearing a lower cloth, breastchain, helmet, ring, and earrings, went out to the portico of the Phaichaiyon palace, surrounded by officers and soldiers.

Wearing all weapons and the crown of victory, he mounted an elephant,

<sup>206</sup> มงกร (มังกร), *makon*, *makara*, Makara, a mythical fish or sea monster.

<sup>207</sup> บาดาล, *badan*, *pātāla*, a territory deep in the earth, inhabited by *nāga*.

<sup>208</sup> วสันตมาสา, *vasanta masa*, the months beginning in March-April, often a time of thunderstorms.

and grasped a goad with diamonds and gold, like Visnu going to slay the *asura*.

Many bold elephants trumpeted loudly enough to collapse the earth and sky. Mahouts made them run like flying, together surrounding the king as he sped along.

Horsemen, carrying beautiful lances, rode their mounts at speed in circular groups, stirring up dust which covered like smoke.

Drivers of chariots with divinely decorated horses carried arrows for shooting like the fearful bow of the brave *kumbhaṇḍa*,<sup>209</sup> killing the ogre Hiran,<sup>210</sup> who writhed and fell as he fled.

The golden quivers and golden arrows<sup>211</sup> drew tight their bowstrings wound with good gold. Horses, chariots, and elephants, tall and robust, jostled together as the king proceeded.

310 The king went out through the gates in the walls of the Phaichaiyon, halted the elephant, called for the elegantly fashioned gold pedestal tray, raised his arm immediately, picked and scattered down.

The crowd of beggars surged upwards, trembling in confusion, snatching, pushing and pulling, intent on getting something, and once their desire was fulfilled, immediately went off home.

Some remained, bowed and prostrate, wheezing, distressed and destitute, tired, flat on the ground, crowded together. Those who received went home.

Those who had not yet received anything, faces flowing with sweat, bearing the suffering, their whole bodies covered with dust and rolled in sand, came from all over, from every place.

They waited with heads bowed, looked at the hundreds of trees where the king would scatter, watched the king come and go, disappointed and devastated, raised their own two hands, and beat their breasts in distress.

The king arrived and halted, gave alms as in the old way. The beggars prostrated, bowed and scraped, rose up and crawled down, and when they had received the royal alms, walked slowly away.

Those who had received alms, left. Those who had not yet received,

<sup>209</sup> กุมภีณฑ, *kumphan*, *kumbhaṇḍa*, pot-bellied and sometimes dwarfish creatures, generally malevolent, often classified among the *yakka* ogres.

<sup>210</sup> ยักษ์หิรัญ, *yak hiran*. In the Puranic literature, Hiranyaksa is a violent *asura* who attacks the heavens and tries to destroy the earth goddess by dragging her into the ocean. Visnu assumes the form of Varaha, a man-boar hybrid, to rescue the goddess and then slay Hiranyaksa by goring and trampling. There is no sign of a *kumbhanda* or arrows in the story.

<sup>211</sup> Probably names of troop units.

prostrated and crawled forward. On receipt, looking fresh and pleased, they went to their homes.

The king went around the city, halting the elephant at each tree, giving alms to the mendicants and beggars in great numbers, all around the territory and borders.

The king proceeded to the Grand Palace. All the officers sat in audience in rows like stars adorning the moon in the broad sky.

The king entered the palace, supremely beautiful beyond description, where throngs of ladies attended from the departments of the left and of the right. He looked like Indra entering Vejayanta.

320 Surrounded by heavenly maidens, wearing a coloured breastchain, rings, and earrings, he grasped a golden yak-whisk and raised his arm in the great and beautiful palace.

*The king thinks about the tradition of the Buddhas, and the military parade*

Then his highness lord of Ayutthaya, with a mind as fine as the nine great gems of King Rama,<sup>212</sup> thought hard:

“The shoots of enlightened Buddhas in the past made great exertions to increase their holy accumulated merit,

not thinking of their material existence,<sup>213</sup> destroying their own bodies to become alms without thinking of the consequences,<sup>214</sup>

plucking out their own eyes, or cutting off their own heads like a pure and fresh flower garland [for offering].

One split open his breast and lifted the heart out from his chest to give as alms with a clear and loving mind.

One removed the eyes from the royal body as alms, a great event unmatched throughout the three [worlds].

One made his blood spill from inside like a great river with more water than the holy Ganga.

This was the thinking of the Buddhas from the past, as set down in writing for the most beneficial result for the people.

One who wished to become a fully enlightened Buddha gave as alms his wife and son, his most beloved.

<sup>212</sup> ศุภจิตตวันวราเมศวจินดา, *supha jit nawa rametsawa jinda*.

<sup>213</sup> ชันธสันดาน, see v.117.

<sup>214</sup> This passage may be based on the Anāgatavaṃsa; in previous incarnations, the first, ninth, and tenth of the ten future Buddhas sacrificed themselves, while the fifth and ninth allowed their children to be killed. Similar scenes of self-sacrifice are found in the Thai collection of the *Paññāsa Jātaka*; see Arthid, “Self-Sacrifice of the Bodhisatta”; Baker and Pasuk, *From the Fifty Jātaka*.



330 One who removed his heart from his breast, putting an end to his life,  
did not waver from giving, did not have a care for himself.

All this to be a Buddha in the future for the great benefit of the various  
people who were lost in delusion.

Now that I have become great in the lineage of the Buddha, how can I  
increase my merit, as in the past?

I will act following the Buddha's great and excellent advice, firmly  
following the great words,

which are the last good words that remain in the three worlds eternally  
from the past.

I will give various kinds of wealth to mendicants and beggars in the  
great seven times 100 donations:<sup>215</sup>

100 elephants, slaves, infants,<sup>216</sup> seven gems, and gold as alms to the  
beggars, those in hardship,

cloth and lots of things, without regret, intent on the effort to allow me  
to escape from this world.

At the same time, let there be a great festival, and happiness throughout  
the land for three days,

with strings of horses, decked out, cows and carts, saddles, gem-made  
horses, peacocks, masses of elephants, hard-working royal mounts,

340 kick-through-lasso,<sup>217</sup> sword fights, old-style *rabeng*,<sup>218</sup> archery, and  
verse composition games."<sup>219</sup>

With these thoughts, His Highness of Ayutthaya felt fine and joyful.

On the king's words like nectar, the nobles bowed and prostrated with  
hands clasped above their pates,

inclined their heads to address the golden crown, saluted his flower-  
foot, and came out from the place to hold a meeting.

### *The order of the military parade*

Sitting in the audience hall of the righteous lord, crown of the world,

<sup>215</sup> สตสดกกษะมหาทาน, *sattasadakanamahathan*, *satta satakana mahā dāna*, "700 great donations," meaning donation of seven items, each in the quantity of 100; in the chronicles' account of this event, the beneficiaries are both Brahmins and beggars, and the seven items are: elephants, horses, male slaves, female slaves, silver, gold and royal chariots (*Phraratchaphongsawadan krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 280; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 224). This practice appears in the Vessantara Jātaka and some versions of the lifestory of the Buddha (see Introduction).

<sup>216</sup> ทารก, *tharok*, infant, but probably a miscopying of ทาษี, *thasi*, female slave. See the list in v.380–1.

<sup>217</sup> ลอดปวง, *lot buang*; now played by kicking a *takraw* ball through a hoop.

<sup>218</sup> รเบง (ระเบ็ง), a dance performed by males, originating from south India.

<sup>219</sup> เล่นลเบงฉันทภาษา, *len labeng chantha phasa*, "play-compose-poetry-language."

the officers, courtiers, and lords acting on the king's behalf then  
gave orders to the officers all around the city and land in the king's  
name

to hold a military parade,<sup>220</sup> conducted according to the king's  
command, with no deviation.<sup>221</sup>

The departments of city, palace, treasury, and lands came with cows,  
carts, horses, and royal mounts, expert and brave.

All the cities, first and second class, outer and inner, brought carts and  
saddled horses to compete and display in formations,

350 with everything beautifully decorated, including patterns on the wheel  
spokes with gems and gold,

harness ropes with embroidered patterns,<sup>222</sup> yokes, saddles, elephant  
forecloths,<sup>223</sup> wheel hubs and guards;<sup>224</sup>

drivers mounted on jewelled chariots, holding and jiggling the ropes,  
many of them, all ready, all around;

stages for dance-drama and dance to left and right, *mongkhrum*,<sup>225</sup>  
*phala*,<sup>226</sup> *rabeng*, and energetic dances,

kick-through-lasso, sword-fight, walk-on-stakes, archery contests by  
the strong,

the pick of swordsmen and shieldmen, whirling around, brandishing  
blades, dancing around noisily;

thrusting with sword, parry and slash, sword and shield striking  
together, slash, crash, bash.

Then a person was lifted to lie face-up on a row of pikes, stepped on  
and hit,<sup>227</sup>

yet no bruise, no scratch, not a trace, even after walking up and down  
on him, no mark on his body,

<sup>220</sup> ออกสนาม, *ok sanam*, "go out in the field."

<sup>221</sup> From here on appears to be a description of the parade, rather than the commands.

<sup>222</sup> เชือกชักหักกลวดกวาดกรอง, *choek chak hak luat kuat krong*; probably these are plaited ropes or embroidered straps using metal wire along with the fiber.

<sup>223</sup> ตระพอง (ตระพอง), *traphong*, the humps on an elephant's head, often decorated with a triangular cloth.

<sup>224</sup> ปะแหรกปะรังบังดุม, *paraek parang bangdum*; *paraek* are "pieces of wood at the sides of a car to protect the wheels" (Pallegoix, *Dictionarium*, 49); *dum* is a wheel hub.

<sup>225</sup> A ritualistic drum performance probably originating from India, played as part of royal ceremonial in the Ayutthaya period, and revived in early Bangkok. Players wearing *lomphok* conical hats and long *khruai* robes act as deities attending a festival at Mount Kailash (*Saranukrom wathanatham thai*, central region, vol. 11, 5297).

<sup>226</sup> ฝาลา, a dance or dance pose in Southern Thai dialect.

<sup>227</sup> A mural at Wat Pradu Songtham in Ayutthaya shows this practice; see Figure 2.

he smiled and whooped with  
laughter. They dragged his body  
away to slice and cut,

360 stab and slash, with short swords  
and clubs, like hacking at a log  
rolling on the ground

with pike and sword, yet he had no  
fear at all, was fine, and showed off  
like a lion. Elephants were quickly  
brought,

the pick of those serving the valiant  
king, arrayed in formation ready to  
go into battle.

Splendid horses and chariots  
engaged in races, competed at polo,  
hitting and running all over the  
place,

competing, racing, wheeling round,  
stirring up dust that covered the sky.

Some horses with tails of golden  
peacock feathers paced out  
beautifully, strutting back and forth  
proudly.

When the horses saw masses of elephants with trunks and tusks, they  
shook with fear, knowing they were in musth,

both cheeks leaking oil, crazed, rearing up and charging without any  
fear, swinging from side to side, thrusting and stabbing,

like wild male elephants in the open, showing off by swinging their  
tails, and swaying back and forth like bees.<sup>228</sup>

Next came many ranks of soldiers, displaying screens, shields, pikes,  
and bows and arrows,

370 elephant chariots, elephants, and horses, covering the earth, too many  
crores to count.

One rank of soldiers came in procession with pike, sword, javelin,  
spear, staff, bow and arrow;

golden shields and golden screens, elegantly etched and carved,



Figure 2. Acrobat portrayed in Wat Pradu Songtham, Ayutthaya, from *Muang Boran, Wat Pradu Song Tham*, 28.

<sup>228</sup> A surprising simile given the contrast in size, but bees on approaching a flower hover from side to side with a rhythm similar to a swaying elephant.

looking showy, gleaming in the light;  
 golden quivers, golden bows, shining armour, decorated with many  
 moonstones;  
 ranks of guns parading on left and right, covering the earth, too many  
 to count,  
 making bright yellow flashes like lightning bolts as bright as the aura  
 of the sun.

At the end of the ranks of soldiers came the commanding officers,  
 with masses of decorations all around,

then horses with pretty harness and beautiful bodies, all pacing in the  
 same rhythm;

then the great elephants [who live] in *mondop* halls of gold and  
 gems;<sup>229</sup>

ranks of soldiers of all types in proper order, like in the royal city-  
 realm of great Indra;

380 then 100 elephants, female slaves, and male slaves, all looking beautiful;  
 then the cows, horses, silver, and gold, all beautiful, 100 of each thing  
 as ordered.

At that time of noise and tumult, word spread everywhere throughout  
 the land and its boundaries

that His Highness Lord of Ayutthaya was making a great ceremony of  
 this parade.

“We are overflowing with merit to see this parade, such a treat for the  
 eye and ear!”

As said, masses of people filled the paths and roads to overflowing, in  
 extraordinary numbers,

like rivers of water flowing and overflowing, without a break in the  
 current,

crowded together, jostling, happily coming and going, tired and thirsty,  
 their hearts blown away.

Some called out loudly to friends and got together in groups like rafts  
 on the surface of a river,

as if the whole earth and sky was filled with crowds, making so much  
 noise that the earth shook.

<sup>229</sup> Meaning the king's prize elephants, which were housed in luxurious stables inside the palace compound, as described by several European visitors to Ayutthaya.

390 The registrars,<sup>230</sup> *mahathai*, and guard searched and inspected the jewelled audience hall, inside and out.

When done, the hall was opened for the entry of the official guests from Ava-Hongsa<sup>231</sup> in great numbers who sat crammed together, and those from the city of Si Sattanakhanahut,<sup>232</sup> who came to the same place, and talked together.

The two official guests expressed heartfelt friendship. Masses of troops were present.

At that time, the chief astrologer of the great lineage of kings calculated the day and minute of an auspicious conjunction in keeping with the ascendant.<sup>233</sup>

They entered into audience at a time of victory, then promptly at 2 o'clock invited the king.

At that time, His Majesty heard the astrologer say that lords had come to pay court.

The king went to bathe his Buddha-body pleasantly in a thousand streams ...<sup>234</sup>

<sup>230</sup> สัสดิ (สัสดิ), *satsadi*, keeper of the records for recruitment.

<sup>231</sup> "In CS 1002 [1640/1 CE], a year of the dragon, the King of Ava, sent an envoy with a missive..." (Phraratchaphongsawadan *krung si ayutthaya chabap phan janthanumat*, 280; Cushman, *Royal Chronicles*, 224).

<sup>232</sup> Si Sattanakhanahut means "a million elephants," same as Lanchang, and here probably refers to Vientiane. The visit is not mentioned in the Thai chronicles. Surinyavongsa became king there in 1638, after a period of disorder, and had a long and prosperous reign. The architecture of the time has clear Siamese influence. Stuart Fox, *Lao Kingdom*, 86–100.

<sup>233</sup> ลักขณา (ลักขณา, ลักขนา), *lakhana*, lagna, the planet rising on the eastern horizon at the time of birth, the most influential planet in a horoscope; sometimes used to mean the horoscope as a whole.

<sup>234</sup> The text ends abruptly at the end of one *samut thai* volume.

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