

## 9: Phlai Kaeo leads the army

[I/157]

After his mother and wife had gone, Phlai Kaeo got ready his saddlery, herbs, medicines, weapons, and other things he could not trust to others.

He took leave of his mother-in-law, mounted his elephant, and left Suphan along with many servants and conscripts. He entered the city of Ayutthaya

and hastened **to find the king's officer.**<sup>1</sup> He lodged overnight and after sunrise went to the royal audience.

The almighty king came out to sit on the Suthasawan throne. High officials all entered together to pay respects, packing the audience hall of victory.<sup>2</sup>

The king gazed at Phlai Kaeo and his face brightened with pleasure. 'Make haste to move the troops out. May you meet with success.

Grind the Lao into fine dust! Have the strength of a lion! I present you with this sword. The hilt contains a spirit.'<sup>3</sup>

The king also gave him a fine, bright-colored yok, leggings,<sup>3</sup> a brilliant sash, and a fringed helmet.<sup>4</sup> Phlai Kaeo prostrated, took leave,

and went out to the assembly hall. Soldiers and volunteers were milling around. After inspection, he received his official orders,<sup>5</sup> and took leave of the high officials who gave him their blessing.

At an auspicious time to march, the massed hordes of elephants, horses, and units of soldiers of different ranks and types marched out of the capital.

All across Lumphli plain<sup>6</sup> was a mass of magnificent red shirts,

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<sup>1</sup> **The person who received the king's order**

<sup>2</sup> *Phrarongchai*

<sup>3</sup> *Sanap phlao*, long-legged inner trousers (Mat).

<sup>4</sup> *Tumpi*, topee.

<sup>5</sup> *Tra*, a document with a seal.

<sup>6</sup> The area immediately to the north of the city, close to Wat Phu Khao Thong. The word is a distortion of

bristling with weapons of all types, fluttering with flags and pipe-flags,<sup>7</sup> echoing with the sound of gongs and war-cries for a long time.

They marched to the mouth of the Bang Lang Canal<sup>8</sup> and crossed over to the side with houses. Porters dropped the loads which had bounced up and down until the frames loosened. They untied the shoulder poles to take a rest. [158]

As soon as they had eaten **some winged beans**, Phlai Kaeo ordered the troops to march on to the start of the route they would travel.

‘Unharness the elephant and horses and wait for me at the sala of Wat Pa Fai.’ The troops saluted their chief and moved off immediately.

Left alone, Phlai Kaeo looked around and saw the boat of Phim and his mother at mooring. He went down from the sala to meet them, and the three talked together on important matters.

As he was going far away to war with consequences unknown, they would plant three bo trees<sup>9</sup> and pray that if disaster struck any one of them, one of the bo trees would be disfigured in a similar way.

They went off to look around for bo tree shoots, and dug them up, taking care not to wrench them sharply or snap the roots, and to keep a nice clump of soil.

They loaded the shoots on the boat, crossed the river, and dragged the bows up the bank. They got down and carried the bo trees to a site marked by a big tree.

They made offerings to the gods which resided in that spot, and then dug holes. Each planted one of the shoots and each made a wish.

Thong Prasi made the first wish. ‘If I pass away and cannot survive, may this bo tree of mine die. If I’m sick, may the bo tree sicken in the same way.

If I’m hale and hearty with no suffering, may this bo tree be bushy, lush, and cool for anyone to see.’

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Lumphini, the Buddha’s birthplace.

<sup>7</sup> *Tieo*, pipe flags.

<sup>8</sup> The Bang Lang Canal branches from the Old Lopburi River in a northwesterly direction.

<sup>9</sup> The village of *Pho sam ton*, Three Bo Trees is on the banks of the Bang Lang Canal (now called Khlong Kua), just north of Ban Maen where Phlai Kaeo arranged to meet Thong Prasi and Phim at the end of the last chapter. Whether this scene was inspired by the village’s name, or the village was named after some such incident, is impossible to tell. The village was used as one of the headquarters for the Burmese troops during the siege of Ayutthaya in 1766-7. The main wat is called Wat Khai Raman, the wat of the Mon camp, referring to the Mon Suki who headed the garrison left behind when the main Burmese army departed. This wat is full of bo trees, though there seems to be no place with a triplet.

With these words, she lifted the bo tree and put it in the front hole. Next, Phlai prayed to the gods: 'I'm going off to war.

If I gain victory over the enemy, may this bo tree sprout profusely. If I die, may this bo tree die too. If I'm not sick, may this bo tree be healthy and flourish. If I have success in war, may it be beautifully green, lush, and bushy.' [159]

With this wish, he lifted the bo tree along with its roots into the hole, pushed in some soil, and tamped it down. Phim's tears spattered down.

She raised her hands and paid respects to the gods of the place, and then collapsed, racked with sobs. She cradled the little bo tree in a daze. 'Oh lords, gods of great power,

with this bo tree of mine, I pray that if at home my body should die and spirit be snuffed out, may this bo tree likewise sicken and die. As long as I have life, may it not die,

but grow happily to be so lush and shady that even the nectar of the gods bears no comparison. Should my body sicken, wilt, and waste away, may the leaves of the bo tree wither and look strange.'

With this wish, she planted the shoot, her face bathed in tears. They heaped earth around the three holes and poured water. Each took off their sabai,

folded it, and gently wrapped around each of the trees. 'We call on the gods, that the cloth tied on each bo tree is a mark that we three

will be far away from one another. On return, may we succeed in meeting together again Should any one of us die, may that person go happily to heaven above,

to be born again in the next life. May we meet together with certainty for a hundred ages and one hundred thousand eras into the future until reaching nirvana.'

Having wrapped the three bo trees, they left the wishing place and boarded the boat which the servants poled out and paddled away.

They moored at **Wat Pa Fai** at the end of the embankment, and gave orders for goods to be loaded onto elephants. Phlai Kaeo waived his mother.

Thong Prasi gave him a blessing for success. 'May the future be auspicious and prosperous.' Phim was trying to swallow her tears. She sobbed out, 'Safe journey.'

Phlai Kaeo said to her, 'Save your heart, save your love, wait for me.' Then he bottled his love, steeled himself, and stepped up from the boat to go. [160]

Thong Prasi, Phim, and the servants pushed the bows of the boat around. Husband and wife craned their necks to look at one

another, trying to hold back the tears until they were out of sight.

The servants joked merrily among themselves. Phim sat with face lowered, unable to speak. Her mother-in-law tried to soothe her and cheer her up as they returned to Suphan.

Phlai Kaeo began missing his wife and mother as soon as they left. Everything was ready on time – elephants, horses, and porters.

Baskets and panniers swayed to and fro. Fish heads poked out with mouths jutting open like bamboo shoots. Boxes of chili and boxes of ginger bounced up and down, swung to and fro, and clattered together as they walked in file.

Some dragged their feet with fatigue and stiffness. Some stopped and played **bait-and-switch**,<sup>10</sup> ignoring the reprimands. Some stopped to take medicine or rub oil but were pushed to keep moving.

Some sat down to smoke ganja, closed their eyes with a drowsy yawn, fell asleep and burnt their clothes. They jumped up blearily, still trying to strike a flint. They crossed the plain heading for the forest.

Phlai Kaeo rode on an elephant named Sanghan<sup>11</sup> which stood lofty and commanding in the forest. After one day, they reached Thung Sopha.<sup>12</sup> ‘Oh what a pity, my beautiful Phim!’

At Ban Kratong, where they crossed to Bo Landing,<sup>13</sup> he thought of the three young bo trees. In the evening the army stopped and was allowed to sleep. At dawn, the soldiers marched across the water.

They passed by Nakhon Sawan through the forest, and found their way along the river in the shade of local types of flowers. Phlai missed his beloved wife.

‘Oh my fair gentle Phim! Your breast will be aching as if broken. You sent me off to war and went back home to pine. I see you sitting pale and quiet.

If you came along with me in this difficult time, I could point out

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<sup>10</sup> *Dak luk sapa*, pick-a-kneecap, which was probably similar to bait-and-switch.

<sup>11</sup> Meaning ‘killer.’

<sup>12</sup> The next section is in the style of a *nirat*, a genre of poems in which the author on his travels is constantly reminded of his loved one by things seen along the way, especially plants, animals, and place names. Here Thung Sopha, meaning Plain of Beauty, reminds him of beautiful Phim. A lot of these illusions depend on such wordplay and thus are difficult to render in translation. Thung Sopha was probably in the south of present-day Singhburi, where there is still a Wat Sopha. This would mean they marched to the west of the Chaophraya River.

<sup>13</sup> Ban Krathong is in the north of Chainat province, near Amphoe Wat Sing.

things to see, like all the different pretty trees and the birds perched twittering on their nests.

There's a pair of doves on that *khoi* tree, and cotton teal geese<sup>14</sup> nesting in the *khae*.<sup>15</sup> I left our bridal house to come so far away from you in this forest. [161]

There's an imperial pigeon<sup>16</sup> pecking at a bunch of big roseapples. They remind me of my love's pink cloth. The scent of the *phayom* stirs my heart because it's like the fragrance of your sabai that still lingers with me.

The aroma of so many forest flowers are like the scent on the cheeks that I yearn for. There are parrots squawking together on the *kaeo*.<sup>17</sup> Who can *you* talk to, my poor darling?

There's an oriole<sup>18</sup> flying up to a fig tree.<sup>19</sup> Oh my Phim, your skin will lose its luster because you are too sad to bother with turmeric.<sup>20</sup>

Look at the fruits beside our route. The *maprang* are like your two cheeks. There's in,<sup>21</sup> *phrom*,<sup>22</sup> angelbreast,<sup>23</sup> and sandal.<sup>24</sup> But I have no krajae or sandal to powder anything.

That krathum bush is putting out shoots as thickly as your beautiful wavy hair. I'm lonely and my heart feels cold as ice. When will I see you again?

Full of grief, he spurred the troops ahead, along the woods and into the wilds of the big forest, thick with trees. Bark on the trunks had split and peeled away.

Tall, swaying yang and yung<sup>25</sup> trees leant away from the wind in a dense mass. Gusts battered on the trees and echoed around,

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<sup>14</sup> *Khapkae*, *nettapus coromandelianus*, cotton teal goose or cotton pygmy goose

<sup>15</sup> *Sesbania grandiflora*.

<sup>16</sup> *Kraumphu*, otherwise *lumphu*, name for several birds in the pigeon family.

<sup>17</sup> *Murraya paniculata*. Echo between *nok kaeo* (parrot) and the *kaeo* tree. China box tree, orange jasmine.

<sup>18</sup> *Kamin*, echoes with *kamin*=turmeric. General name for orioles.

<sup>19</sup> *Madeua*, name for several fig variants, including *ficus hispida*.

<sup>20</sup> Depends on echo between *kamin* bird and *kamin* (turmeric) powder.

<sup>21</sup> *In*, sometimes *jan*, name for several similar trees in diospyros family with small orange fruits. Used here because *in*, *phrom* echoes Thai pronunciation of Indra and Brahma, and because it's homophone with *jan* powder.

<sup>22</sup> Sometimes called *namphrom*, *carissa cochinchinensis*.

<sup>23</sup> *Nomsuwan*, *clerodendron paniculatum*, pepangil, pagoda flower, borneo sunset, kashmir bouquet.

<sup>24</sup> *Jan*, *chanthana*, *ipomoea bona-nox*

<sup>25</sup> *Dipterocarpus alatus* and *grandiflorus*

disturbing the nests of the field rats.<sup>26</sup>

Branches were heavily stained with lichen along their whole length. A shrew followed a squirrel but was blocked at his hole. A green snake slithered all along a branch.

Fallen trees had fallen but still stood as if planted but with their roots exposed, broken, and parched, piled up in a **messy, dead tangle**.<sup>27</sup> Overhead the rattan canes intertwined like a canopy.

**Below was dank and marshy**, a tangled, dilapidated mass of decomposition and decay. A disheveled fluff cloaked the rattan fruit.

Some trees were shiny where herds of elephants had scratched their flanks and stripped the bark. Where the trees were lush and leafy, carpenter bees had hollowed cavities.<sup>28</sup>

Monkeys and langurs ran along the way, breaking off small branches as they swung ahead. Lianas hung intertwined, **as if fashioned that way from the ancient past**. [162]

They entered a gorge. Overhead, the cliffs rose up into shady overhangs. Straight ahead they could see through like a cave. Below their feet,

sunlight reflected and sparkled off striations of red and green. Misty purple quartz looked as if it had been daubed in five colors.<sup>29</sup>

Red shone out like rubies in an exotic and elegant bracelet. Black shone out like jet fashioned into the shape of luxuriant foliage.

White shone out like diamonds. Water splished and splashed, throwing up a dancing spray which smashed against the cliff, shaking the forest.<sup>30</sup>

They walked through the forest down to a big rocky stream where the water flowed flat and clear over a bed of pebbles. 'Oh Phim of mine,

if you'd come, I'd collect all the pebbles you like, lots of them, so you could play with them with your pretty fingernails. It's a pity you're far away.

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<sup>26</sup> *Nu phuk*.

<sup>27</sup> Tangle is a guess for *kathum kathim*

<sup>28</sup> The early Bangkok poet is clearly intent on portraying the forest as a place of death and decay.

<sup>29</sup> *Benjarong*, five colours used for a style of pottery.

<sup>30</sup> This landscape seems to be between Nakhon Sawan and Kamphaeng Phet, but that is impossible. There are no hills along the river or remotely close. Possibly this is a description of the Ping River's Kaeng Soi rapids which were situated in a gorge and had mutli-colored rocks. The rapids are now submerged under the reservoir of the Bhumibol Dam. (Thanks to Steve Van Beek, whose travels down the river are recorded in *Slithering South*).

If you see anything pretty, you can't leave it alone but love to play with it. If you'd come with me into the forest, you would sit plaiting garlands on the elephant's back,

and hang them around the howdah like a fresh, fragrant braid. The more I think, the more I can't help being disappointed that my heartmate didn't come.<sup>31</sup>

They cut across to Kamphaeng Phet, Rahaeng, and Thoen. 'If we dawdle around admiring the scenery, people will talk.' He showed his orders to the governors immediately.

They organized troops from the three cities, and held a big, noisy feast. Then at an auspicious time for victory, with gongs ringing and guns firing,

the army marched off shouting and hollering, brandishing their weapons, with throngs of elephants and horses, up to the boundary of the Chiang Thong region.

Forward units were sent ahead to locate the Chiang Mai troops. They fell on any hideout they found, cutting the enemy down in great piles, and seizing their rice and equipment. [163]

They forged ahead without resistance until within earshot of Chiang Thong. The Chiang Mai forces could not organize their defences in time. The Thai troops cut them down and chased them away.

They had become careless and overconfident after Chiang Thong had not put up a fight but waved the flag of surrender and changed sides. Officers and men had wandered around the town,

or gone off to forage for food far away from camp. The Thai stabbed them to death in large numbers. When the Lao realized the enemy had arrived, they chaotically called their troops

to return to camps around the moat. The Chiang Thong people saw their confusion and understood this was because of the Thai army. In joy, they closed the gates immediately.

The ruler of Chiang Thong and his people were exuberant that the Thai army had come to help in time. 'I'll chop off the heads of Chiang In's people!

Have the head monk go out to explain to the Thai army that we didn't rebel against the king, lord of the land.' The lords and chiefs agreed.

The patriarch,<sup>32</sup> who was learned and fearless, left from the rear of

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<sup>31</sup> No break here, but seems as if there should be.

<sup>32</sup> *Sangkharat*, the head of the city's sangha.

the city accompanied by two other monks.

Seeing they were monks, the Chiang Mai soldiers did not attack and kill them. The monks walked to the Ayutthayan army encampment and called out for the gates to be opened to admit them.

The Thai were surprised to see these courageous monks. They opened the gates, took them prisoner, and brought them before the army commander and the assembled army hierarchy.

The Phrayas of Kamphaeng, Rahaeng, and Thoen said, 'These Lao have overstepped the mark. We cannot let it go. The penalty for spying on an army is death.' Phlai Kaeo objected.

He asked them, 'Why did you come so near evening? Tell the truth now and don't hide anything. Who told you to come?'

The patiach, both brave and clever, rescued the situation with his quick wisdom. 'Sathu! I'm a monk. [164]

The ruler of Chiang Thong sent me. You have come here with troops. May you be blessed with success. I'll tell the story from the time of the war onwards.

The city of Chiang Thong was besieged by very many troops. There were several bloody engagements, but their armies did not withdraw.

In the city, food supplies were exhausted, and it was impossible to go out to forage. So we pretended to side with Chiang Mai in order not to be killed.

We wanted to send word to Ayutthaya, but the Lao guarded the city tightly. Everything was in short supply. Today we're happy to see the Thai have come.

I've been sent to tell you that we'll help you surprise them with an attack from front and rear. As the Thai army commander, please give your word that you'll attack when an auspicious day comes.

Then we'll attack also and cut them down dead. Do not question our sincerity. These words are the truth.

If we harbor thoughts of deception or revolt, then kill us all – man, woman, and child – even kids no larger than a cotton bud. We will not beg to be spared.'

Phlai Kaeo smiled at the patriarch's words. 'We from the southern army are not afraid. Even if Chiang Thong does wrong and revolts,

this Chiang Mai army will still be crushed. We'll capture them, truss them up, and chop them to pieces – for sure. Now you monks have come to negotiate.

Because you're monks, you should be straightforward and not lie, so we find you credible. Please return to the city, and inform the

Phraya of Chiang Thong

that tomorrow afternoon we'll destroy the Lao army, for sure. Get the troops organized quickly. When the auspicious time comes, be ready.'

The patriarch promptly took his leave, hastened back inside the city walls, and relayed the message entrusted to him. [165]

At dusk, the ruler of Chiang Thong acted according to the patriarch's words. Guns were hauled up to the ramparts, and weapons of all kinds were made ready.

People enchanted their saddlery with auspicious formulas, and poured sacred herbal water to instill courage. The men of the city were happy. Gongs and drums were loudly beaten all over Chiang Thong.

Chang In's two top soldiers, Falan and Sanbadan, discussed the military situation along with Prap Mueang Maen and Saen Kamkong.

'Now the Thai have come and surrounded our army, that Chiang Thong has recovered his courage. They've closed the gates and are busily hauling guns into position ready to stand and fight.

The Thai army has trapped our army in the rear and won't let us escape. If we stand still, we'll lose our position. They'll attack our position with determination.

Why should we fear the Thai, however many thousands have come? We'll attack and scatter them up to the foothills! We'll capture the whole army and send it to Chiang In!

As for that arrogant Chiang Thong, we'll truss up his wife and children and put them to the sword, chop the little kids into pieces!' They ordered Mueang Maen and Saen Kamkong,

'You two defend the side towards the city wall against the Lao from Chiang Thong. Shoot, stab, and block their passage. We two will attack the Thai.

They have only a few handfuls of soldiers. The fighting need not last long. One blink of an eye.' With this agreement, they went off to prepare their troops.

The cavalry were courageous, strong, and capable. They wore red tunics with tight pink sashes, and carried their swords slung across the chest ready to unsheathe and slash. Each also carried a golden pike,

and a spear for hurling from horseback. The saddles and bridles looked brilliant. Each had enchanted their harness with their own

herbal medicine.<sup>33</sup> The gunners looked sturdy in their crossbelts.

Some boosted their morale by reading special mantra over their kit for might and courage. All were experienced in combat. The army was fully prepared. [166]

At the auspicious ‘diamond’ time for victory, a great cry went up and echoed around. The troops poured out of the camp in columns.

The two leaders mounted their horses and drove ahead with swords flashing and spears glittering almost to the Thai camp where they planted their flag.

Phlai Kaeo, the army commander of great power and martial expertise, stood and moved like the **king of the swans**.<sup>34</sup> He watched the Lao troops heading straight towards them.

He told the three city governors to quickly inspect the troops, draw them up ready, and prepare all the martial equipment.

He enchanted oil for the conscripts and three governors to rub on themselves. He dressed grandly and mounted his horse. At an excellent time for success,

the auspicious time of great victory, the army moved out in great uproar, hollering, yodeling, banging gongs, and firing volleys of shot.

The din shook the world. A pall of smoke made it dark as night. The Lao recoiled in shock, and broke in panic. Closing on them, Phlai Kaeo halted to survey the position.

The ruler of Chiang Thong and his men readied their columns. They heard the guns and saw the Thai army launch its attack.

They opened the gates and poured out of the city in a tight mass along with **mobile forts**.<sup>35</sup> The army alone counted around five thousand, and in addition city people came out to join the battle,

bristling with guns and lances, both masters and men. They broke into the Lao camps, wrenched up the defensive spikes in the ground, and hauled out the guns to fire. They torched the camps leaving a pall of smoke.

Prap Mueang Maen and Saen Kamkong watched the Chiang Thong forces closing on them. They fired off guns in volleys, and

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<sup>33</sup> The word ‘enchant’ has been assumed here.

<sup>34</sup> *Phya ratchahong*.

<sup>35</sup> I think this is a ring of palisades which is carried along with troops inside. Must be a technical term in English for something similar.

plunged into close combat with spears

and bamboos sharpened to serve as lances and javelins. With heads held high, they stabbed this way and that. Some fought at close quarters, slashing with their swords. Others dashed ahead, stabbing to left and right with their lances. [167]

The Lao camps were riddled by fierce gunfire from both sides. People fell dead in droves. Legs were severed and scattered around.

The Chiang Thong men were defended by their mobile forts which were impervious to gunfire. The uproar of battle echoed through the forest, but neither side yet had victory.

Falan and Sanbadan, the troop commanders, saw a fine-looking figure coming towards them among the Thai army.

He was agile on his horse, in high spirits, and bold as a lion. They wanted to question him and trick him into revealing how good his knowledge was.

They called out, 'Hey, little Thai! You're still a child, not even old enough to ordain. Seeing you, we think you must have studied only the devices of love,

and just a little bit of **magical**<sup>36</sup> power. It seems inappropriate for you to be in a battle. Maybe your friends provoked you, so you volunteered to blunder up here.

What's your name? How come the Thai king puts such faith in you? Please tell us truthfully who do you think the city of Chiang Thong belongs to.

The domains of Lao and Lao are contiguous. That Chiang Thong is crooked. He lied and placed his city under the Thai, and thus our lord Chiang In sent us here

to capture and kill this Chiang Thong rebel along with his wife and children. It's no business of the King of Ayutthaya to invade this area for any reason.

You have only a handful of troops, not as many as the army of the city of Chiang Mai. We'll just stamp on you and everything will be quiet. No need for a real battle.'

Phlai Kaeo smiled and shouted back, 'Who am I? I'm the prince of hell, the top soldier of Ayutthaya!

My name is Phlai Kaeo. I'm tried and tested, and so I volunteered. The two-faced, dubious, devious ruler of Chiang Thong irritated the royal foot. [168]

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<sup>36</sup> *Itthirithi*.

He presented the city to Ayutthaya, but then reneged and became subject to Chiang Mai. Kamphaeng Phet and Rahaeng informed the king who sent me to fight.

When we arrived, the city of Chiang Thong agreed to return to the old position and not to waver. They said they'd been besieged and failed to flee in time, so tricked you into believing them.

Now they come out to fight on our side and you'll be destroyed for sure. Don't be so bold as to underestimate the Thai. If we weren't good, why would we have come?

What's *your* name? You talk big, rant around, and boast a lot. But in one blink of an eye, you will die.

All those who marched here will meet their life's end. Nobody will be left to return. I'm telling you this to earn merit and peace of mind. Please submit to the Thai and survive.'

Phraya Falan clapped his hands and laughed his head off. 'Dammit! You're a good talker, and not afraid. It's known in every region of the three worlds,

that the city of Chiang Thong has been subject to Chiang Mai since ancient times. If Chiang Thong harbors thoughts of revolt, it will be dangerous for the city.

They treat one another as lord and servant. It's not your business. Don't interfere. If you act too big for your boots, I don't think you'll survive alive.

Me? My name is Phraya Falan. That colleague is Sanbadan. Have no illusions!' With that, he stopped talking and ordered his troops to advance en masse.

The Thai hollered, fired guns, brandished lances, and charged. 'Hey! Get them! Fear nobody!' The teeming mass of the Lao

were turned back by the guns. Some staggered and fell. Many were knocked rolling by bomb<sup>37</sup> thrown to explode in their faces.

The Lao replied with gunfire, killing and wounding large numbers of the Thai who retreated, giving the Lao the opportunity to advance. [169]

Phraya Falan and Sanbadan led their troops into the attack, brandishing swords and lances, with their shouts echoing around the forest.

Phlai Kaeo, brilliant and bold, gripping the victory sword presented him by the king, spurred his horse into a gallop straight towards Sanbadan, the army leader.

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<sup>37</sup> Literally, *mo din*, earthen pots.

He slashed, but the Lao turned the blow with the end of his spear. Sanbadan lunged but Phlai Kaeo dodged away nimbly. The Lao missed him and toppled forward, eyes bulging, crying out, 'The dog dies! Come here quick, mother!'

Phlai Kaeo slashed at him with a loud thwack, cutting him open from shoulder to waist. Falan saw, and spurred his horse straight towards Phraya Kamphaeng Phet.

He slashed but missed and fell from his horse. Phlai Kaeo barged in and slashed Falan so shit came out. His severed head fell, and his horse dropped to the ground.

The troops saw their leaders were dead and broke in flight, running in all directions with the Thai giving chase. Countless fell to the ground dead, with others bloodily wounded.

The Thai troops despatched many of the fleeing Lao. Headless bodies were scattered everywhere. The Lao abandoned elephants, horses, weapons, and families along the way.

Lampang put up no fight.<sup>38</sup> The city's people fled in droves. Lamphun's inhabitants took off to the forest. The Thai army camped comfortably.

They took the shortest route towards Chiang In, looting along the way. But at Chomthong,<sup>39</sup> they gave protection and forbade the troops from harming anyone.

The gods induced Phlai Kaeo to have this idea so he would get Laothong to love. So by chance, here the troops were kind and helpful. They passed in and out freely.

Many conscripts found a wife, old or young according to fate. While waiting to return to Ayutthaya, they enjoyed themselves all the time.

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<sup>38</sup> This means the Thai army chased the Lao troops back towards Chiang Mai, taking cities along the way. Sujit interprets this as meaning the Lamphun and Lampang contingents in the Chiang Mai army flee the battlefield, but this doesn't look right. (Sujit: 98)

<sup>39</sup> Throughout, the geography of the north is vague and faulty, in strong contrast to the geography of the central plain. The authors knew place-names in the north, but had little idea of their relation to one another. Chomthong is in the southwest of the Chiang Mai valley, and way off the 'shortest route' from Lampang/Lamphun to Chiang Mai. Chomthong is also site of an important relic chedi. The fact this is not mentioned during the account of Chomthong is another indication of the limited knowledge of the north.