

### 32: The presentation of Soi Thong and Soi Fa

[III/151]

Khun Phaen arrived at the capital feeling pleased at their achievement. He talked with his son that everybody, Lao and Thai, including the king of Chiang Mai, should moor at Khan Landing, while the two golden prathiap boats should moor at Wasukri Landing.<sup>1</sup>

He gave orders to the *khun*, *muean*, and attendants to wait on the platform of the royal jetty. Then he took his son into the inner court sala,

and made obeisance to Chaophraya Jakri. ‘The flotilla has brought the princesses and the king of Chiang Mai to the capital,

but the mass of Lao phrai and forest people have been left at Phichit along with the cattle, buffalo, carts, horses, elephants, and various military equipment.

We feared that bringing all of that would have slowed us down, so they are left there awaiting a sealed order from the king.

As for the Vientiane Lao who escorted the princess – over three hundred of them – only Kamkong has been brought down according to the royal wish.

Chaophraya Jakri was pleased, and had the statement recorded to be read to the king.

Then he turned with a smile and said in praise, ‘Sir, you made no mistake in volunteering. Both father and son are wise, brave, and valiant beyond estimation.

You took the city of Chiang Mai in just one breath. The whole realm views you as supreme soldiers. You fulfilled the king’s wishes and should be richly rewarded for your achievement.’ [152]

He summoned the minister of the capital and said, ‘Sir, as the Lao ruler’s case has not yet been heard by the king, place him under arrest until such time as there in a royal order.’

Minister Yommarat<sup>2</sup> assigned executioners, Jom Jai-at and Fat Jai Kla,<sup>3</sup> ready to slash him dead, and royal punishers<sup>4</sup> from the inner

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<sup>1</sup> Khan Landing was at the northeast corner of the palace, and was the main jetty for entering the palace, sometimes called *Tha khoi*, Waiting Landing, where boats waited for their masters. Wasukri Landing was adjacent to the east, and was the jetty for the king. It would have a permanent *chanuan* or corridor to screen royal ladies from public view. (R ed: 435-6; Kuk:298)

<sup>2</sup> The name of the minister of the capital.

<sup>3</sup> Official titles of executioners of *muean* rank, but also fearful names: Bold Attack, and Daring Slash (Kuk:300,

guard.

Both officers and men wore tight belts, and carried Ai-Thanat<sup>5</sup> canes tied in bundles as big as an arm. They brought chains and cangue. ‘Whoever he is, don’t delay.’

The king of Chiang Mai was put in chains. Officers and phrai surrounded him, front and back. Ngam Muang<sup>6</sup> and Phetpani<sup>7</sup> with their loud voices, Ratchasakdi,<sup>8</sup> and the palat of the palace<sup>9</sup> were drafted to go along.

Chiang In, felt devastated, as if on the point of death. His face was pale with grief and terror of punishment.

Seeing the executioner and royal punishers, he thought he would not survive. His whole bodied flowed with sweat. In dismay, he bowed his head and kept silent.

At sunrise, Chaophraya Ratchasi, Chaophraya Mahasenabodi,<sup>10</sup> and the four-pillar ministers entered the palace.

Civil and military officials were all massed to left and right. When Chaophraya Jakri entered the palace, he gave orders to Khun Phaen and his son,

‘Wait in front of the golden audience hall. I will report the matter to the king from start to finish. Then I will present you to his foot.

The king will probably ask you about the war. Keep everything in mind. Don’t forget the facts. Tell the truth.

My only worry is about Phra Thainam. The king will be critical of what he did, but your victory should give him some help. Wait at the guardhouse by the gate.’

Almost at the time for the audience, all the officers, pages, and palace officials crowded into the splendid audience hall of victory.  
[153]

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Red:437).

<sup>4</sup> *Ratchaman*, officials who enforce royal punishments.

<sup>5</sup> Name of a type of cane, ‘The Enforcer’ (Kuk: 300).

<sup>6</sup> Khun Ngam Muang, a court official under the ministry of the capital, sakdina 800 (KTSD, I, 229; Red:437)

<sup>7</sup> Khun Phetpani, *Palat thun chalong* under the ministry of the capital, sakdina 1000 (KTSD, I, 229; Red:437).

<sup>8</sup> Khun Ratchasak, a *khun dap* officer in the left division of the main royal guard (*krom tamruat yai sai*) (KTSD, I, 288; Red:437).

<sup>9</sup> There were two palat in the palace guard under the ministry of the palace, Nai Prakatmonthian and Nai Sathianraksa, sakdina 600 (KTSD, I, 237; Red:437). The idea here is that several departments of guard must participate in the imprisoning of such an important figure.

<sup>10</sup> Jakri and Kalahom.

The king, preserver of the world, annihilator of the people's misery, resident of the brilliant jeweled spire, the fount of happiness and prosperity,

lay in the royal bed surrounded by consorts and palace ladies. When the sun's rays pierced through the window, he left the bedchamber,

and went to bathe in fragrant water. He wore a lower cloth in red with a Garuda pattern,<sup>11</sup> and a belt with a jeweled buckle.

Carrying the supreme sword in his left hand, trailed by many ladies carrying regalia, he walked out from the inner palace to the jewel audience hall

and sat on the throne, looking as fine as the god-king of Traitrueng.<sup>12</sup> He received all the lords and those attendants who entered the audience hall of victory.

The chaophraya and other officials of the departments all crawled in en masse to attend on the king of the three worlds. They all prostrated and waited on their knees.

Chaophraya Jakri saluted and addressed the king. 'My liege, righteous king. My life is under the royal foot.

Khun Phaen and Phlai Ngam, who went to war, have brought the four-divisions back to the landing. The two golden *prathiap* boats have come, along with the villainous King of Chiang Mai.

They have brought gold, silver, and other goods as royal levy:<sup>13</sup> cash, seventy chests in total; Lao families, five thousand in total; able-bodied young men, 1,1,50;

large cannon, two hundred; small cannon, three thousand; spears with feather plumes, one thousand exactly; swords belonging to the war prisoners themselves, 1,200; swords from the main arsenal, almost five hundred;

elephants, 305; horses, eight hundred; cattle of all sizes in great numbers. There are no injuries among our officers and men, owing to the meritorious power of the king.

The villainous King of Chiang Mai has been placed in chains under all five restraints according to procedure. What is to be done or not done in his case awaits the king's wishes.' [154]

On hearing about Khun Phaen, the almighty king, peak of the Ayutthaya realm, felt he had been transported to the heavenly city of

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<sup>11</sup> สุปรรณ, *supan* (Suparna), 'he who has golden feathers,' an epithet of Garuda (*Hindu Myths*, 222).

<sup>12</sup> The second of the six heavens ruled by Indra, sometimes called Daodueng (RI:428).

<sup>13</sup> พัทยา, *phattaya*, goods which become property of the king.

sixteen levels.<sup>14</sup>

‘This Chiang In insulted me badly. Today he’ll show his face. He used to be very boastful, but now we have him, his head has shrunk immediately.’<sup>15</sup>

This war was no joke. On reflection, it was a major conflict. Because of the complex background, it was not an ordinary battle.

He had captured our people, and it was known he would kill them if we attacked. The father and son were able to infiltrate and rescue them in time.

Then when it came to battle, it would have been wasteful to have blundered into a siege of their city, since their numbers were many times ours, and would have been impossible to reduce by killing.

The father and son were good at military ploys. They sneaked in and captured the king of Chiang Mai, removing the source of danger. Once he was caught, the matter ended in success.

They must be praised and accorded royal approval. High rank should be conferred on them. Bring them in immediately. And bring that that thick face, Thainam, too.’

The minister turned to speak to a palace guard at the front. ‘Summon Thainam, Khun Phaen, and his son Phlai Ngam – all three.’

The palace guard crawled out backwards, and conveyed the message first to Khun Phaen, ‘The king, peak of the world, has sent for you three.’

Khun Phaen and Phlai Ngam felt happy. They promptly put on *sombak* and rushed to the audience hall. [155]

The almighty king was pleased to see the father and son. He bellowed like a lion, ‘Now, Khun Phaen and Phlai Ngam!

It’s no bad thing that you are of military lineage, brave and expert on the field of battle. I sent you off to this war with only thirty-five soldiers.

Chiang Mai city has over 100,000 soldier, but their warriors could not stand up to you. The Lao were pulverized, and our people recovered, because of your handiwork.

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<sup>14</sup> ႁံၼၼ, *salot*, a Pali word for sixteen. This phrase refers to the sixteen Brahma realms which constitute the ‘world with only a remnant of material factors,’ the middle section of the Three Worlds cosmology between the ‘world of sensual desire’ and the ‘world without material factors.’ At the various levels of this sphere, beings are able to lift themselves upwards by mental application (R&R, 49-50, 245-257). The word *salot* also acquired the more colloquial meaning of perfect happiness, and was used as the title for a treatise on gambling (RI:1234).

<sup>15</sup> The image may be more like a turtle withdrawing into its shell, but it works also as a play on ‘big head’ in English.

It was smart and daring to capture the king of Chiang Mai. You thought that out on the spot. Also there was a lot of fighting at the end of the lake. Don't hide and mumble. Tell us what happened.'

Khun Phaen made obeisance and reported. 'Owing to the power of the king of the three worlds, victory was gained and the city taken.s

I volunteered to go with thirty-five good soldiers. We made use of special knowledge<sup>16</sup> and the meritorious power of the righteous king.

We went up to the big lake, and set up camp there. We talked and agreed together that just the two of us, Phlai Ngam and myself,

would go, disguised as Lao. We enchanted everybody to sleep, and went up to the main jail at the third watch. We found Phra Thainam without difficulty, and all of them followed us out,

including the Vientiane people. Together we killed many guards, went to the armory to seize weapons, and also stole horses for everybody from the stables.

Then we went to seize tuskers from their camps. That afternoon, the Lao troops came en masse. I and the others went out to give combat. The Lao armies broke and scattered.

That same day, Phlai Ngam and I enchanted everyone to sleep, entered the palace at nightfall, and captured the king of Chiang Mai. He gave his word that he would

beg to be a servant under the dust of the royal foot, and hand over his life and throne at the royal pleasure. Since that day, he has been true to his word. This is my report to the victorious foot.' [156].

The king was matchlessly happy at this report. 'This lineage of Khun Krai doesn't fail. Son and grandson are skilful and clever.

As for this old fellow, the king of Chiang Mai, I'll let him go. I don't want to kill him. Even though he acted arrogantly, it would be wrong to call it a revolt,

because his city is of the first rank, and outside the dominion of the capital of Ayutthaya. Now that he has submitted and agreed to offer tribute, he should not be done away with.

If I were to chop him dead in revenge, who would trust Ayutthaya in the future? But if he acts improperly again, he should be punished with his life.

Khun Phaen and Phlai Ngam, you have my approval. I will reward you accordingly. Khun Phaen is appointed governor of Kanburi with regalia of rank – ceremonial swords,

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<sup>16</sup> ขุนวิทยา, *khunwitthaya*, more than just knowledge; conveys the idea of special power, magic.

umbrella, jug, golden betelbox – and royal gifts of elephant howdah and palanquin for use in war, all in keeping with the royal approval you have won.

You will become Phra Surinthareuchai Mahasunphakdi<sup>17</sup> – very grand.’ He commanded the *phrakhlang* to give fifteen chang in cash as reward,

along with a *sombak* in flower-patterned silk-wool<sup>18</sup> and many royal gifts of various grades. ‘As for you, Phlai Ngam, you will also have rank to show for it.

You’re still a youth, very quick and strong, and should be retained for service close at hand. I’ll give you an appointment that will be to your liking and fitting for someone who took a city.

You become Jamuen Wai Woranat, *hua muean* of the royal pages, guard of the right side,<sup>19</sup> along with royal gifts of regalia, cash, silk-wool, and various cloth.’

Then the king said, ‘This Wai who has done so well, doesn’t have a house. A *hua muean* on his own is not good. I must set him up in a house.

Minister Yommarat! Send a requisition to the district officer to find<sup>20</sup> land for a house for Wai in the city. Make sure it’s close to the palace.’ [157]

The king then ordered the head of the department of the inner army to build a house of around five units including a kitchen and fence around the compound, and to make it befitting with his appointment as Muean Wai.

The king turned to find Phra Thainam, looking angry enough to kill him. He bellowed like a lion, ‘Mmm! Thainam, you did a fine job!

It was a waste of my time to like you and promote you as *phra*. I didn’t know you’d be a coward. I wrongly trusted you as a soldier, and then the Lao tied you up like a monkey.

You didn’t even fight back to scare them off. Pah! A heart like a woman! A terrible failure, truly awful! Sitting there and letting yourself be captured was shameful.

If Khun Phaen had not come to help, you’d still be tied up in jail

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<sup>17</sup> According to the Three Seals Law, the title for the governor of Kanburi, a third class city, was Okphra Phichaiphakdi Simahaisawan, sakdina 800 (*KTSD*, I, 324). Khun Wichitmatra notes the title given to Khun Phaen is similar to the title used for various posts in late Ayutthaya (Red:439).

<sup>18</sup> ฝูมดำน, *phum* is silk dotted with flowers (Mat: 562).

<sup>19</sup> The *wen khwa*, right division, was on duty at night (Red: 439).

<sup>20</sup> Literally ‘step on the land,’ meaning exercising royal right to dispose of it.

being thrashed with two canes. You atrocious fellow, who made your master lose face, are reduced to be a commoner and will serve as a gatekeeper.’

He commanded the head of the department of the front guard to fetch the king of Chiang Mai, and sent Phraya Thamma<sup>21</sup> to escort the princesses to the inner palace.

A guard rushed to tell the jail governor that the king had summoned the king of Chiang Mai. They lifted him by both upper arms and brought him in. He prostrated, trembling in fear.

The king bellowed loudly like a lion, ‘Hey! Phraya Chiang Mai, you blackguard! Your actions have displeased me.

You seized the princess, imprisoned some Thai, and on top of that sent a missive with a challenge to war. What should be the punishment for such arrogance? Don’t remain quiet. Answer right now.’

The King of Chiang Mai shivered in every pore. Sweat dripped, and his chest felt on fire, as if he had been buried under the earth.

He replied with a confession. ‘The victorious king has given favor over my head. The errors committed by this servant of the royal foot deserve punishment with death.

If by your grace, I receive royal pardon for my wrongdoing and am not chopped dead, let me be a servant of the foot of the mighty king, and keep my word to act properly until death. [158]

Let me present my royal property, and the great territory of Lanna, to be placed under the royal foot, and let me depend on the royal protection from now on.’

The king, ruler of the world, heard the king of Chiang Mai out. ‘Now you show proper awareness and fear, I will pardon you this time,

and send you back to rule Chiang Mai. Make sure you keep your word to Ayutthaya, and maintain friendly relations forever, according to the example of other countries’ rulers.’

He ordered senior officials of Mahatthai and the army to take the king of Chiang Mai to swear the water oath.

Then he had a lodging prepared to accommodate them as city guests, with walls dividing into inner and outer sections,<sup>22</sup> so that the

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<sup>21</sup> Phraya Thammathibodi, minister of the palace.

<sup>22</sup> That is, in the style befitting a king, with an inner section for private life, and an outer section for public

king and his entourage would feel comfortable.

‘Distribute supplies of food, clothing, and bedding. Provide a place for the soldiers and servants to sleep. Minister of the palace, make sure they are not bothered by anyone.’

Then the king ordered rewards of cash and cloth for the thirty-five soldiers who went to the war, and the porters following the army.

‘They are exempt from royal service, city work, and all other duties. They will be attached to *athamat*,<sup>23</sup> and will be called up in future if there is war.

Give each of them a sealed order forbidding collection of tax farms, customs, and market dues. Draw up a list with all of them under their unit head, and place them under Jameuan Wai.

As for the officers and men of Lanchang Lao who escorted Princess Soi Thong, requisition silver and cloth to give them, and send them all back to Vientiane.’

The king left the glittering audience hall, and walked up to the palace of victory.

Phraya Thammathibodi went to the palace gate and told the Thao Nang inside to get people to go fetch the two princesses. [159]

Then he arranged for golden palanquins with curtains embroidered in *hak thong khwang*.<sup>24</sup> Both ladies came looking lovely, along with the mass of old Thao Nang.

Princess Soi Thong was invited to get in the leading palanquin, with Princess Soi Fa in the one behind. The Thao Nang led the way into the inner palace,

and hastened to arrange a residence and guard so Soi Thong and Soi Fa could stay without any inconvenience while awaiting the king’s order.

The king, auspicious crown of the heavenly abode of Ayutthaya, resided in the crystal and golden palace, surrounded by palace ladies sitting in wai.

At sunset, the moon’s chariot glided aloft. Stars glittered in the sky. Moonlight bathed the earth in a cool light.

Inside the palace was as bright as a heavenly city under the moonlight. A breeze gently blew. The king’s thoughts turned to the

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affairs. This phrase indicates that Chiang In is now recognized as a monarch and guest of the city (Red:440).

<sup>23</sup> See note in chapter 29.

<sup>24</sup> Break-gold-athwart, an embroidery technique used on royal regalia such as fans and umbrellas in which a pattern is made by laying cut lengths of golden silk thread perpendicular to the weave, and attaching them by overstitching (RI:1280).

two princesses.

‘Word had already spread to the lower city that Soi Thong, daughter of the king of Vientiane, was the supreme beauty of Lanchang. Everyone in the three worlds desired her.

Then there’s young Princes Soi Fa, the favorite daughter of the king of Chiang Mai. How splendid are her looks?’ With these thoughts, he gave orders to the head royal governess.

Thao Worajan<sup>25</sup> went to tell the two princesses to get dressed. They powdered their faces to have complexions like moonlight,

coiled their hair to suit their faces, inserted hairpins of sparkling crystal, and embellished their chignons with beautiful flowers. They put glittering tasseled ear-rings in both ears,

gold bangles on each wrist, and rings on every finger of both hands. They wore beautiful yok of dazzling golden silk, and upper cloths of silk embroidered with gold.

Looking as beautiful as kinnari, the two walked together, led by the head governess, to the golden spire to prostrate at the king’s feet. [160]

The head royal governess prostrated and wai-ed. ‘Princess Soi Thong is the one prostrating on the right, and on the left is Princess Soi Fa.’

The king, ruler of the world, looked at them. Both were suitably attractive to be royal daughters, but the manner of each was different.

He examined Soi Thong. She had a soft face, superb figure, and gentle manners – perfect in every way to be the darling of the Lao country.

She seemed quiet and reserved, with a youthful beauty and affectionate manners befitting a young lady. ‘So this was why she became so famous in the Lao country that Chiang Mai heard about it and tried to seize her.’

Then he turned to examine Soi Fa, and saw she had a coquettish character. ‘Her poise and bearing are truly good. Her only fault is that she looks quick-tempered.’<sup>26</sup>

Her eyes are very sharp, and they dart around. After a quick glance, I feel bored. She’s like a drama actress with her beautifully slender and rounded waist.

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<sup>25</sup> Thao Worajan was the head royal governess (*thi somdet phra phi liang*), sakdina 1000, in overall charge of the inner palace (KTSD, I, 221; Red: 444). She is referred to in the text as *Jao khrua nai*, translated as the head royal governess. Often this position was occupied by a former consort of a prior king.

<sup>26</sup> Guess. *rai ngon*, which could be something uptilted.

She has the slim elegance of a racing boat. A clumsy oarsman would almost capsize.’ He looked at her thin lips and rounded chin. ‘This shows she’s quick-tongued and talkative for sure.

If she were a horse, you’d be wary of mounting her. If an elephant, the type that must be pleased. Even if decked with a golden harness as a royal mount, a careless rider would get hurt.

Soi Thong, the daughter of Lanchang, has both rank and manners – **not bad**. But this elephant Princess Soi Fa looks scary.’ The king whispered to the head governess,

‘Governess, what do you make of the manner of these two girls? Do they look as if they will please me or not? Soi Thong’s manner looks good, but Soi Fa seems like a drama actress.’

I could keep her as an inner elephant<sup>27</sup> and have a trial ride to see first. But on second thoughts, I’m not so sure. I’m getting old. Should I **delay things**?’

Knowing the king’s disposition, the head governess prostrated and said to the lord of the three worlds, ‘I think your appraisal is correct. [161]

Soi Thong has the right attributes. Her appearance is beautiful in every way, but Soi Fa looks coquettish and unsuitable to be beside the royal foot

Her manner looks like a boat hit by waves, pitching and tossing and spinning around. I’m afraid she’ll displease you, like a bucking horse that needs to be controlled.

Though her figure will appeal to you with no sagging flabbiness, she’ll be the source of royal displeasure. She won’t make you bloom with joy.

She’s not like the lovely Princess Soi Thong who merits praise and the king’s desire. Her manner seems suitable to support the foot of the victorious king.

If Princess Soi Fa is to enter royal service, the level of lady attendant<sup>28</sup> seems adequate. May the king, ruler of the world, make the appropriate decision.’

The king smiled. ‘I’m bored with coquettes and sick of being displeased.

But if I keep her only as an attendant, she’ll feel it’s a debasement and loss of face since she’s the daughter of a ruler. Better to have her married off.

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<sup>27</sup> ช้างระวางใน, an elephant adopted as a royal elephant and given a title (Sup: 466).

<sup>28</sup> นางพนักงาน

Now then! Phlai Ngam has won royal favor and has gained rank in a big way, including property, a house, and servants, but he still has no wife to carry water.<sup>29</sup>

I'd already thought of finding him a wife under my patronage. If we leave him unattached, he might grab some low person who'll prejudice his good knowledge.

He's now Jameuan Wai Woranat, *hua muean* of pages in close service to me. The king of Chiang Mai at this moment is indebted to him for his support.

I don't think it will anger the king of Chiang Mai. If I ask, the king should give her as I wish. That will settle the issue of Soi Fa and give face to Muean Wai.

It seems a totally appropriate solution. How do you feel, governess? When Meun Wai gets Soi Fa, it will give him encouragement in royal service.' [162]

The head royal governess prostrated to the royal foot and showed her respects for the royal consideration. She responded following the king's gist. 'The king should give her to Jamuen Wai.

Now he took the Lao city, news has spread throughout the domain. If the king grants him Soi Fa as wife, it will strengthen his loyalty to the victorious king.'

Hearing the governess endorse his own wishes, the king said, 'This Wai is right for Soi Fa.'

Then he turned to talk with Soi Thong. 'Don't be depressed. I will keep you in a state befitting a royal daughter of Si Sattana, given me by her father in friendship.'

He commanded a treasury official among the attendants to arrange suitable royal gifts of a gold cloisonné betelbox, twenty chang of silver, a golden bowl,

wasp's nest ring, snake ring, tasseled diamond earrings, a bodice<sup>30</sup> with ornamental glass, gold yok, silk yok, and embroidered sapai. He also gave gifts to her ladies-in-waiting,

and arranged a residence in the major group of brick buildings along with servants to provide for her every happiness. Then he talked to Soi Fa. 'Don't be upset.

Although your father rashly made me angry, I have pardoned him. When his royal service is over, he'll return home, and I'll be father to young Soi Fa.

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<sup>29</sup> Perhaps a conventional phrase?

<sup>30</sup> น่อง, an ornamental bodice, now usually associated with dancing costume (Mat:63, pix).

I'll keep you so you are not ashamed before your peers. In future I'll arrange a good marriage for you so that you have face and nobody can cavil about me.

You'll stay in the inner palace. The head governess will arrange a ruan for you. See to this matter, governess, including a retinue to ensure she's comfortable.

If you think of your father and mother, have a palace matron<sup>31</sup> escort you over.' When the king had given his orders, the head royal governess led Soi Fa away.<sup>32</sup>

In the bright light of dawn, the king went out to the jewel audience hall. [163]

The officers and attendants of every grouping gathered around. The king of Chiang Mai, now he had escaped punishment, came to attend on the royal foot.

The king pondered on the border territories. 'As the king of Chiang Mai has set his mind, he should be allowed to keep his rank.'

So he said, 'Ha! Hey, king of Chiang Mai. I'm sending you back home, along with your servants, commoners, and palace women. You can take everything back.

Go to look after your palace and territory. Protect them against military threats from north and south. If an enemy who is beyond your powers appears in any direction, then send word down.'

The king of Chiang Mai felt he was flying in the sky with happiness. He bowed and prostrated to the king. 'May I serve the royal foot until death.

If in future I break my word and incur your anger, have me executed. As guarantee that I will not lapse, may I offer my daughter under the royal foot.'

The king, ruler of the world, laughed and smiled. 'Go home, king of Chiang Mai. You can come and go to see her with no problem.

I am very grateful that you have given me your beloved daughter. But when I saw her face, I made up my mind to ask for Soi Fa to be given to Phlai.

They are very compatible. The daughter of Chiang Mai is enchanting, while Phlai Ngam has excellent knowledge. They'll make a happy couple.

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<sup>31</sup> เต้าแก่, *tao kae*, an official of the inner palace. Both components of her name mean old.

<sup>32</sup> Soi Thong is not mentioned, so presumably....

Don't be disappointed about his low rank. I love Phlai Ngam like my own child, and he is now *hua muean* of the royal pages. You may consider the two of us connected.'

The king of Chiang Mai's heart sank in mortification over the honor of the solar lineage. He was so pent up that he could not speak.

He thought of Soi Fa. 'Oh what a pity. She should not descend to mixing with servants. But if I object, it will irritate the royal foot.' Out of necessity, he prostrated in gratitude. [164]

'I have presented you with my daughter to be a servant of the royal foot until death. If the king grants her to Phramuean Wai, that is up to the royal wish.

This Phra Wai has gained honor. He is a shrewd, talented fellow of military lineage, and in future should be in royal service. I will depend on him from now on.'

The king, ruler of the world, said, 'If anything bad happens, I'll make use of the services of young Wai.

Return to your city where your family is waiting forlornly, so both lords and commoners may be happy night and day.' The king went into the palace.

King Chiang In, peak of his people, returned to his lodging and related the king's order to his wife.

Queen Apson was happy about going home but sad about her daughter, her life's jewel.

She sent I-Mai to tell Soi Fa to come quickly. Soi Fa took leave of the governess, and was escorted over by a palace matron and the palace guard.

At her father's residence, Soi Fa pressed her hands to her chest, and prostrated at his feet. The king of Chiang Mai hugged his daughter sadly, saying, 'Your father and mother will leave you and return home.

Because we had you to present to the king, his anger abated. But you will stay in his capital. He wishes to present you to Muean Wai. I'm very concerned, father's jewel.'

Soi Fa felt she would writhe to death. She embraced her father's feet with both arms, lowered her face, and grieved.

'Oh my lord and master, you will leave your child and escape

away. Though we'd fallen on bad times, being close to mother and father gave some warmth.

Since I was presented to save lives, I have no thought of deviating from your wish. Even if you had me fetch water or carry a palanquin, I wouldn't refuse. I'll repay your kindness. [165]

I'm unhappy only about one thing – having a husband. My lord, I'm not used to it! How can I manage a household in the Thai style when I don't know the customs?

I'll be blamed, derided, and shamed before the people of the capital. They'll criticize me all year round. I'll have only shame and humiliation.

Most important – the person who will be my husband does not love me. I am given by the king. If my husband has no mercy, he'll mistreat me and curse me at will.

If he tramples over me, even hitting and slapping, how can I fight back or run away? I'll be on my own among the Thai with nobody to depend on in difficult times.

I'll cry myself to death. Father and mother will be too far away to help. How can I survive this? I'll probably die.' She made a tearful scene.

The king of Chiang Mai felt for his daughter. He sat trembling and heaving sighs. Then he braced himself, swallowed his tears, stroked and consoled her.

'It's our karma, my darling. Since your birth, I've never forced you against your will. But this time I'm at my wit's end. You are like your father's patron.

Our relatives and the ordinary people are in great difficulty as war prisoners, captured by the army. It's like you're helping them survive.

If we didn't have you to present, all would probably die in this southern city. That was enough to persuade the king to allow us to return up to our city.

The king asked for your hand for Phra Wai. It wasn't that I wanted to give you. But to have opposed the king's order would have seemed insulting, so I had to follow his order and give you.

One thing – the king has already undertaken to support you in a befitting manner. As he's gracious towards you, you can depend on him.

Though there'll be difficulties in the future, you can attend in audience and petition him. As for Phramuen Wai, when he went up to trample our city, [166]

he was our enemy and used force because he was acting on behalf of his king. Now if we are soft toward him, he should also relax and

you two can become intimate.

He should see things with the friendship that existed before. Also you're being presented to him as wife by the king. If a point of conflict should arise, I don't think he'll shame you by hitting or scolding.

Anyway I'll give you Elder Khwat, who's clever with **magic** and has exceptional powers, to protect you against danger, and also another junior official, Khanan Ai.

Your mother will probably choose women who have been with you from the start and you can truly trust to be your close attendants. Though I'm going to the upper city, you won't be neglected.

As for being a housekeeper, just follow the example of your mother. She's truly good. Anything you've never done, just ask her, my sweet.

Queen Apson called Soi Fa into the main rucan. Pitying her child, she stroked and consoled her. 'Don't cry too much.

Nobody born as an ordinary human being can escape sorrow. It depends on karma. When happiness ends, sorrow begins.

If you can move beyond the time of sorrow, then happiness returns again. This has been the nature of things for ever. There's no need for fear.

Your father presented you to gain pardon. In effect, you made it possible for him to recover the country, just like the two princes, Kanha and Chali, helped their father gain enlightenment.<sup>33</sup>

Your good deed will earn great merit and benefit you in the future. Don't be reluctant and miserable. Bow your face and repay your father's goodness.

Don't be afraid because the king is arranging for you to have a husband. There should be nothing wrong. Women have husbands everywhere. Sensual desire is part of human nature.

Though your partner is foreign and speaks a different language, and you're not even familiar with one another's faces, the main thing is that he's a good person so you can have happiness, not sorrow. [167]

Phra Unarut and Nang Usa were foreign to one another, from different cities. While she slept, the god took her to him, and the couple loved intimately.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> In the Wetsandon Chadok (Vesantara Jataka), these are the two sons which Phra Wetsandon gives away and thereby achieves the 'perfection of giving,' the last of the ten perfections, which enable him to be reborn as the Buddha in his next life. See chapter 3.

<sup>34</sup> Anirut/Unarut is a romance based on the Krishna legends which was composed as a Thai poem in the

When I was a young girl, I lived far away in the city of Chiang Tung.<sup>35</sup> Your grandfather, when he was king of Chiang Mai, went to ask for my hand. I saw your father's face only on the wedding day.

Your father hadn't seen me, only heard about my appearance. We have lived together a long time without any falling out.

Sex is something natural. It depends on the love in the heart. When you're together with him, you'll **feel**<sup>36</sup> the passion inside. As soon as you know the taste, you'll lose any fear.

As soon as a young man and woman make love the first time as husband and wife, usually they get carried away in love and kisses as if they'd gone to the Traitrueng level of heaven.

When you first lie beside him on the pillow, don't be fearful or you'll make him uptight. After many days, when all the caressing diminishes, that's when you'll know true love.

Men by nature are like elephants. If the mahout knows what he's doing, they're hard-working. But sometimes when they're in must, the mahout must know how to make allowances so there's harmony.

Some husbands are violent. That's normal, and a married woman must be fearful and defer to him. Because if that husband still looks after her, it doesn't matter if other people laugh.

But if a husband leaves the wife lonely and forlorn, it's like the end of her life, her name, her flesh and blood. Women who've been deserted by their husbands get smirked at by people wherever they go.

Finding a new husband, a suitable one, is very difficult because you've lost your virginity which is unique. People don't like something that's been hollowed out by beetles.

For this reason, when you have a husband, don't be negligent. If you make a mistake, it's like life is over. You must please him every day so you win his undying affection.

Show him respect. Don't alienate him by your manner or words. If you want to arouse him, or there's something annoying you, deal with it in secret when there are no people around. [168]

Observe what he likes – in food and everything else – and then do what you can without him having to force you. Make him feel you're a truly good housekeeper.

The most important thing for a wife in pleasing her husband is her own body. If she makes him happy, he won't abandon her. The next

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seventeenth century, and adapted to many forms subsequently. This passage refers to the episode in which a tree-spirit, Phra Sairukhathewa leads Unarut to Usa because they are destined for one another.

<sup>35</sup> Sometimes called Kengtung, now in northeastern Burma. The cities of Chiang Mai and Chiang Tung have been closely related back to the beginning of their recorded histories in the thirteenth century.

<sup>36</sup> *phrawat*, past, history, does it just mean feel, or fear, or what?

thing to win his heart is food.

If she can cook to please his tongue, he won't abandon her even when she's old and no longer pretty. He should be pleading to eat her food every day. Make sure you make all kinds of things.

For example, know how to make a delicious boiled pig's foot. Take trouble over fresh eggs, fish, and *tomyam*. Chop up spleen, loin, and *khaidun*<sup>37</sup> into tiny pieces the way the Jek do it.

Try to feed him so well he enjoys it. Though he may get himself a pretty new wife, if she doesn't have a cook's touch,<sup>38</sup> he'll get over the infatuation before too long.

Your father has about three hundred consorts. No matter. I don't let him slip away easily. He gets these girl and goes gaga over them, but as soon as he's bored he misses me.

Why is he stupid over these Lao girls? Though they're beautiful, they're dumb as corpses. I still admire your grandmother's cleverness. She didn't have things the way I do until she was very old.

Being a women is about ministering to their needs. Anyone good at it finds the husband loves her a lot. If you do as I tell you, it's better than a love potion implanted<sup>39</sup> whole year round.

Soi Fa absorbed took her mother's words and placed them on her head. 'When you go away, mother, may you be well. When a year has passed, send someone

to let me know you're happy, as that knowledge will lessen my sorrow.' The two of them grieved enough to faint away.

The sun dropped and weakened in the late afternoon. The king and queen of Chiang Mai were distraught at leaving their daughter. 'It's almost time for you to go into the palace.'

The queen removed a nine-peak ring and gave it to her daughter. 'Sold cheap, it'll fetch ten chang. Keep it in the palace for when you face poverty or hopeless difficulty.' [169]

Then she selected the Lao girls to be her retinue – first young Mai to be her nursemaid, then four others who were just-of-age with good appearance. 'Keep them as your friends, my darling.'

Then she gave strict order to Mai. 'Don't think of yourself as a servant, but as a sister from the same womb. Try to look after one another and teach one another.

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<sup>37</sup> Literally, inguinal gland, there must be a culinary word.

<sup>38</sup> Literally, the charm at the end of the ladle.

<sup>39</sup> ฝัง, suggesting some long-acting method, not a one-off dosage. CHECK what this means.

It's almost time they close the gate, mother's jewel. Hurry back into the palace. May you be eternally happy. May danger and evil not cross your path.'

Soi Fa felt her heart would break. She prostrated at the feet of her mother and father with tears flowing down.

'It's very late. I can't stay. I'm sad but I have to rush into the palace.' The sun had almost set. It would be a worry if she did not go.

The palace matron warned it was getting dark. Soi Fa became even more sorrowful about having to leave her parents. She kept on grieving until she entered the palace.

The king of Chiang Mai cried with the sorrow of parting. His eyes followed her until she disappeared behind the wall, then he sat quietly sobbing.

Queen Apson also cried so much that the whole group of palace ladies gave way to grief. After they had gradually recovered, the king called his officers over and said, 'The king of Ayutthaya has pardoned me and allowed us to return to our city.

Go and order the Lao soldiers and servants to make preparations for the return. Be ready from tomorrow. On the day after, an auspicious one, we will leave.'

The Lao officers and lords were happy to learn that they could return to the north. They hastened to organize boats, find chili and salt, and prepare food.

All the Lao soldiers and servants milled around on duty. They caulked boats and rafts busily. They collected goods together in piles. [170]

Some went to buy clothes and food. Those who had debts hurried to repay. They rushed around to be ready in time, but even when they were exhausted and the sweat flowed, they were not bothered.

Traders who had heard that the Lao would leave arrived in crowds carrying goods on their shoulder poles. They pressed the Lao to buy things to take home, and happily sold things worth one fueang for one saleung.

The Lao ladies in royal service were worried about their property, and rushed around to find chests for packing. They folded their cloths and sapai, and packed as much powder and oil as could be carried.

All of those returning home were beaming. But those who had to

stay in Ayutthaya were red-eyed and down-in-the-mouth.<sup>40</sup> When spoken to, they did not reply.

The king of Chiang Mai took pity on them, and handed out lots of gratuities. 'Bear up! Stay here with Soi Fa, and next year I'll arrange to bring you home.'

At dawn, crowds of officials came from Kalahom, Mahatthai, and the department of the inner arsenal. Everywhere people were carrying things. Concerning the property which had been confiscated,

there was a royal order for the goods sent to the capital and the palace ladies to be returned. On the return journey, they were to stop by at Phichit

to collect the horses, carts, servants, and people left there. Officials would go to check items against the manifest, hand everything over according to the royal order, and then return immediately.

The Lao officials and nobles of Chiang Mai carried things in file. They called the boats to moor in a line, then loaded each one to the gunwales

Porters bustled about carrying goods belonging to the king and nobles. Boats once loaded were backed out to their moorings. The water echoed with the sound of Lao voices.

The boat of the king of Chiang Mai was moored at the landing below Ban Taphan.<sup>41</sup> Next behind came the boats of the palace staff, with those of the commoners at the very end.

When everything was ready, the king and queen of Chiang Mai boarded near nightfall. The boats of the nobles were arrayed in lines waiting to go. [171]

Near dawn, the moon slid down and set, the morning star still shone brightly, and the city sounded with cock crows.

The Lao awoke in various places. They steamed rice and grilled fish, as needed. When the sun rose and flooded sky, earth, and water with light,

they all went down to board the boats. The king of Chiang Mai came outside the curtains. At the auspicious moment when the sun's rays appeared, the boats left the jetty.

They paddled in time, churning the water and making a racket. Entering the deep water, they passed in front of the main palace. The king missed his daughter even more. He sat quietly in the stern with tears flowing.

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<sup>40</sup> Literally, dry in the chest

<sup>41</sup> Perhaps a place, but *taphan* is used below in what seems to be sense of 'jetty', so this might be the same.

When his boat made its way upstream to the elephant enclosure, he was disheartened at the sight of elephants tied to posts in rows. ‘You male elephants followed the herd and got lured into the trap.

Now you stand lonely at these *jalung* posts<sup>42</sup> with trunks resting on tusks, eyes looking at nothing in gloom, and tears flooding your faces. You no longer charge with your tusks.

You used to do so in the wilds, charging with courage and fear of no one. You were carried away by the pride in your own strength, and got caught and put in harness.

Love for female elephants clouded your eyes. You joined the herd and simply followed along. It was lust that led you astray into the trap, and now you have to be tied up all the time.

You think of your friends, just like we do. In the past, there were all kinds of pleasure, and wonderful possessions. Every city quailed.

Falling in love with Soi Thong was a mistake that brought enormous misfortune. I lost my home, lost my city, and gained torment. My beloved child cannot return with us.

The more I think the more I feel down-spirited.’ He sat crying. At the Mon village,<sup>43</sup> he saw a Mon couple standing on a log and poling it along the shallows.

At Three Bo Trees, he saw the three trees standing tall and fine in a row. The leaves of the middle tree looked sparse, [172]

withered, and sad. The other two looked lush and beautiful. ‘Those two are like us going back to govern the city, while our daughter is sad like the central bo tree.

What misfortune!’ **They came to where two rivers met.**<sup>44</sup> ‘When will we meet our daughter again?’ He lamented along the journey. At Ban Khwang Tha,<sup>45</sup> he felt heartbroken.

He looked ahead towards the queen, and saw her sobbing sadly. He felt bored by the villages and districts along the way. Although there were birds and plants, he did not enjoy seeing them at all.<sup>46</sup>

Close to evening they halted and found somewhere to stay. Morning, they went on. In the heat of the sun, they rested in the

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<sup>42</sup> တဲလုံ, means twin rounded posts for tethering elephants.

<sup>43</sup> In 1767, Three Bo Trees was the site of the Burmese camp, left in charge of the Mon, Suki, and its wat is still called the Wat Khai Raman, wat of the Mon camp. The Mon village is perhaps a remnant of that time. There is a Wat Pom Raman, wat of the Mon Fort, just north of Ayutthaya.

<sup>44</sup> Possibly at Singburi. Here the geography is being used in the style of a *nirat* as triggers for emotions of love and loss.

<sup>45</sup> Probably about 3 kms east of Ang Thong where there is a Ban Khwang and Ban Wat Tha next to one another.

<sup>46</sup> This is a sort of anti-*nirat*: he feels so bad, he cannot respond to the landscape in the conventional way.

shade. They passed villages, districts, Inburi, Phromburi,<sup>47</sup> Chainat, and Manoram in order.

After Nakhon Sawan they switched to the main channel, and entered a tributary at Paknam Koei Chai.<sup>48</sup> At Bang Khlan,<sup>49</sup> they did not stop but poled ahead until they arrived before Phichit.

The governor and local officials, informed by a sealed order, came out to receive them. They handed over all the various goods that had to be returned by royal order according to the manifest.

The families and goods required by the king were dispatched down to Ayutthaya. The arrangements were completed in a few days, and a report sent on what had taken place.

The king of Chiang Mai ordered one group to go in advance by land, taking the families, cattle, horses, and elephants, and wait before Satchanalai.

All the boats entered the Phing Canal, passed Kong Landing,<sup>50</sup> and went up the Yom River past [Ban Mai](#) to the boat landing.

The governor and local officials of Sangkhalok, who guarded the capital's northern boundary, had heard that the king of Chiang Mai was released to return home. They prepared chili, salt, rice, and fish.

When all the Lao arrived, they distributed supplies of food, and checked the manifest of men, elephants, horses, and arms allowed to proceed.

Luang Phon Songkhram follow along to send them off at [Pak Khong Phong Daen](#).<sup>51</sup> Then a horse messenger was dispatched to inform Thoen. [173]

When the column was all ready, the king of Chiang Mai disembarked and led the troops in seven days to the district of Nakhon (Lampang).

The governor and nobles of Lampang all came out in welcome, as had been the former practice. The king of Chiang Mai began to become less troubled. He ordered a halt to rest from tiredness.

The lords and servants attending the king of Chiang Mai sent a

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<sup>47</sup> Going up the Chaophraya. Phromburi should really come first.

<sup>48</sup> Just south of Amphoe Chumsaeng on the Nan River.

<sup>49</sup> South of Phichit

<sup>50</sup> Kong Krailat. On the Phing Canal, see note in chapter 27.

<sup>51</sup> Probably on the Thung Saliam route, but unidentified.

detachment ahead to inform the people that the city had been restored to the king and queen.

The Lao of Chiang Mai all came out in happy crowds. A splendid procession was arranged, decked with green and yellow flags,

including the royal litter and golden palanquin, gongs, drums, and all kinds of musical instruments, to tell the city people to go and make a welcome at Lamphun.

When the king of Chiang Mai arrived there, everybody including officials and relatives went to attend on him, and welcome him with joy.

On an auspicious day, everybody came to wai the king and invite him to return and rule the nine-jeweled city.

They invited the king and queen to mount golden palanquins and travel in procession from Lamphunchai to Chiang Mai on that day.

On both sides of the procession route, royal screens<sup>52</sup> and umbrellas were set up. The house owners sat in rows to receive the king's blessing as he passed.

Everybody scattered flowers and raised their hands in wai. The king entered the city like Phra Wetsandon had done in the past.<sup>53</sup>

'Hail to *chaiyatuphawang*,<sup>54</sup> the king of auspicious victory! May the king be ever happy!' All the people of the city gave their blessing.

When he arrived at the palace, a large number of monks were sitting waiting with many different kinds of offerings used in the past for ceremonies to mark the passing of misfortune. [174]

The supreme patriarch invited the king of Chiang Mai to sit under an arch of banana plants, and the queen under another. The monks chanted to dispel misfortune.

The holy patriarch<sup>55</sup> took a water bowl, pronounced a mantra to concentrate power, and then poured the water to dispel misfortune immediately, to the loud strains of joyful music.

In the late afternoon when the sun was about to set, many royal relatives, officials, servants, and palace staff gathered to sit in the jewel audience hall.

They invited the king and queen of Chiang Mai to be seated on

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<sup>52</sup> *Pheng rachawat*, normally a railing placed to mark the boundary of an area used for a ritual.

<sup>53</sup> A reference to Phra Wetsandon's return to his city in the finale of the Mahachat. See chapter 3.

<sup>54</sup> No idea, no help from dix.

<sup>55</sup> *Phra sankarat*, the head of the sangha.

royal thrones. They placed *baisi* and set out food and various other things.

Phraya Jai Ban, the elder, gave a blessing to strengthen the royal souls and invite them to return there. Then he tied sacred thread on each of their wrists according to custom.

When the ceremony was over, the king went out to a pavilion. People came in a noisy crowd. Some **Kui**, the best from all around, staged a wrestling contest in the palace courtyard.

The hubbub continued until evening, when the celebration ended and everybody returned home. Chiang In was bursting with joy. He ruled Chiang Mai with happiness every day.