

## 43: Crocodile Khwat

[III/390]

Since he escorted Soi Fa back to the capital, Elder Khwat, adept at knowledge and famed for his powers throughout the realm of Chiang Mai, had been like a brave royal lion.

The Lao king praised and rewarded his goodness, 'He has more merit than all the monks together.' He was appointed patriarch of the Lao chapter,<sup>1</sup> and stayed at Wat Phrathat Ratcharam.<sup>2</sup>

He was given the regalia of a patriarch including a bowl-sling, taliphot fan, and side-bag, beautifully embroidered with gold pieces, a boat with curtains, a palanquin, and a *sapthon* umbrella.

The king of Chiang Mai gave him Lao as temple slaves, with great numbers in service on rotating months. His disciples numbered around a hundred, with Novice Jiw as his eyes and ears.

They lived in four kuti like a palace, with each building crowded and lively. Layered half-moon tables were set with articles of worship all made from Batavia crystal with gold rims.

There were big mirrors on the pillars in all directions, glass windows framed with mirrors, a Chinese bed with the legs of a golden lion, and a room full of ornaments.

One day after the patriarch had eaten the midday meal, he went out to the verandah where his disciples prostrated all around. He reclined on a bed with a golden back-rest

and a triangular cushion to support his back. He picked up a Batavia mirror to look at his reflection. His face was healthy, fair and fine, the skin perfectly radiant.

He noticed the mark of the wound on his forehead where Chumphon had cut him with his short sword. His anger rose immediately. 'You're good, are you? Let's play and see.

I'll go down to Ayutthaya to catch and kill you.' He leapt up from the bed, tossed away the pillow, and stumbled into the kuti.

He put on his robes, and shouted to his disciples. Novice Phrom held the umbrella and fan. Novice Si put the side-bag over his shoulder and followed the teacher. [391]

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<sup>1</sup> *Sankaratchamalawong*. Sankarat was the title of the head of a monastic community. *Malao*, is a variant form of Lao. The sangha of Siam was called the Sayamwong, and that of Lanna the Lannawong.

<sup>2</sup> No such wat, but the meaning – the royal wat with a relic – would make it equivalent to Wat Chedi Luang.

Temple slaves came and waited with the palanquin. Elder Khwat walked grumpily over, and clambered into the palanquin with a colored roof. They carried him through villages to the inner palace, and stopped before the Elephant's Ear Gate. He descended from the litter, walked quickly into the palace, and ordered to be taken for audience with Princess Soi Fa.

Soi Fa was living happily in the Sandalwood Pavilion, attentively raising her beloved son Phlai Yong until he was grown up.

When a servant girl reported that the teacher had come to the main palace, she led her son by the hand straight over there, and invited the patriarch to sit in the seat for monks.

She offered him betelnut and mortar, and paid her respects. 'Your honor has taken the trouble to come here. Sathu sa! What business brings you? Or can I be of some service?'

Elder Khwat sighed, gave a blessing, and said, 'I have a big problem. These days, the flowers look lovely on the outside, but inside feel bruised, night and day.

When I bite on anything, it's difficult to swallow. I start awake at night with chest burning. If it goes on like this with no easing, I think I'll enter a coma<sup>3</sup> and die.

I came with the intention of taking leave to go and rid myself of this problem. Don't stop me and put my life in danger. Your highness, have compassion for this teacher.'

Soi Fa felt sorry for Elder Khwat. 'I have devoted myself to you for a long time. Please explain what the problem is.

There was only one time when I stopped you, and that was when you wanted to go down to the southern city to take revenge on Khun Phaen and Phra Wai. I stopped you because of concern for Phlai Yong.

I feared the child would become fatherless, so I appealed to you against your wishes. If you don't wish Phra Wai to die, then go ahead with your idea of going down there.'

The patriarch was pleased to hear this. He shifted up close and whispered, 'Morning and night, I think [392]

ceaselessly about taking revenge on Chumphon. He treated me with contempt in a shameful way. Since birth, I've never let anyone

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<sup>3</sup> Not really coma, *atisan*, a painful state preceding death (Mat:948).

look down on me. Letting him get away with this is too much.

If I don't repay him so the grievance disappears, I must die of the hurt. I intend to transform my body into a crocodile and go down to Ayutthaya.

I'll throw the whole city into confusion, and make it bother King Phanwasa too. What good person will then come out? Probably the only volunteer will be Phlai Chumphon.

I'll lure him down into the water, and fix him properly by merrily biting him to death. Once that is achieved, the worry will disappear and I can live happily in the northern city.

As for Phlai Yong's father, I've no thought of killing him. I came with the hope of taking leave. Please give your blessing for success in my aim.'

Soi Fa was happy and laughed heartily because of her hatred for Chumphon from the past. 'What the elder says is like scratching an itchy spot.

If you kill this fellow Chumphon, I'll thank you like sending you to heaven. I'll give you whatever you want except the sun, moon, and stars which are beyond me.

But be careful. Your body is old, and Chumphon is very clever. When he disguised himself to fight Phra Wai, he chased everybody off into the forest on his own.

He's a master of tricks and he doesn't play about. I saw him when he disguised himself and surrounded you. If you're at your peak, you will survive. But if you're no good, you'll die and not return.'

Elder Khwat replied, 'Don't worry. I won't let him hurt and shame me. Though my body is this old, my knowledge is still excellent.

On that occasion I drank liquor and lost my senses, so he was able to come up and grab me. Had it been other people in thousands, they'd have died. Though I slipped up, I didn't lose.

If we can meet face to face, have no fear. Let him come riding on the neck of his father and brother, I'll destroy them into dust. If I'm not good, don't receive me back again. [393]

Tomorrow I take leave because it is an auspicious day of the 9th with Saturn at the fifth. I'll hasten straight down to Ayutthaya, and won't take long to accomplish the task.'

Soi Fa wai-ed and gave her blessing in pleasant words. 'May your powers be strong and valiant so that nobody can withstand your might.

May you overcome the enemies, so the villains are defeated and die as desired. May your every wish be fulfilled so that you succeed and return quickly.'

Elder Khwat took his leave. 'Stay well with young Phlai.' He got up and blundered off, through the gate and into his palanquin.

The temple slaves carried the palanquin along quickly, with the disciples holding his umbrella and bag trailing behind. In a short time, they arrived at the kuti. He went up the half-moon terraces into the inner room.

He changed his triple robe into old clothes, and called Novice Jiw to come close. 'You stay here and look after the disciples on my behalf. I'm going to Ayutthaya

to take revenge on Chumphon. I'll do him to death, and return within fifteen nights.

You stay here. I'll finish this matter. Wait and count the days. If you see it's longer than I said, follow after me without delay.'

The clever Novice Jiw felt frightened. 'How come the teacher, whose situation here is so good, wants to rush off and confront danger?'

With this thought, he replied to the teacher, 'Going off heroically like this isn't a good idea. This unruly Chumphon is smart. We saw that with our own eyes.

Any power or magic device which you can do, he's faster. Good people have not disappeared from Ayutthaya. Don't be careless or you'll lose.

You're old now, in your late eighties, very comfortable with rank and status. You've come this far but don't know how to enjoy it. How many more years will you live? [394]

You can sit and eat, sleep and eat till the end of your life. You shouldn't be thinking of revenge. Why go and create hardship for yourself? Die in Chiang Mai and be cremated on a *meru*.'

Elder Khwat sat listening with his face drawn. 'Struth, Jiw! You're a coward and you're insulting me. You're taking Phlai's side, novice. Am I not skilful?

Even if he has powers as strong as iron, he's only a little kid, no bigger than a testicle. Just how deep is his knowledge? His breath hasn't lost the smell of his mother's milk.

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<sup>4</sup> Meaning a grand cremation befitting his royal favor. The elaborate cremation sites for royalty and other dignitaries are representations of Mount Meru, the central focus of Buddhist cosmogony.

We got captured by him because of your mistakes, so now your head shrinks in fear like a boiled shrimp. If I hadn't been drunk out of my mind so the formulas got muddled,

if I'd been as good as I am now, I'd have slashed their necks off in droves. You stay in the kuti for around half a month. If I seem slow, hurry after me.'

Novice Jiw's hair stood on end in fright. But he was too afraid of Elder Khwat to stop him. He wai-ed to give his blessings as wished. 'May you succeed in your intent. Go.

May you win victory over Phlai Chumphon. May your devices achieve your hopes. May the fame of your great powers spread. I'll stay to look after the kuti as your eyes and ears.'

The patriarch was pleased to hear the novice comply, and laughed heartily. On this occasion, Elder Khwat was fated to die, so he believed he had the advantage and would not lose.

He collected his martial equipment – a *takrut* cord and a golden rosary, both old things, a headband thread to ward off evil, a silk headscarf, and an important mercury amulet.

He stuffed them in a side-bag slung on his shoulder. He changed his sabong, and put on a sabai, an upper cloth, and a belt. He went to the shrine and made a prayer to take leave.

He grasped a walking stick and stepped off. A jingjok dropped down dead in front of his eyes. A barn owl brushed over his head. The monk stopped dead with thoughts racing.

'Oh, what's this? Looks like a bad omen.' He stopped and sat to concentrate his mind. He closed his eyes and chanted a formula to counter the omen. He stood up and changed direction to go north. [395]

He stepped down the half-moon terraces to the lower level. A cobra slithered up, hissing and swaying its head. It spread its hood and blocked the way. The elder knew this was a bad omen.

He hugged his chest and looked up for a sign in the clouds. Strangely he saw a body with no head or arms. He knew for sure this meant he would not return.

'If I backtrack, Soi Fa will call me a coward. As a man, I must die sword in hand.' He gritted his teeth, steeled his heart, and set off, straight to the graveyard.

He sat cross-legged and focused his mind steadily. His body disappeared and was transformed into a vulture.

He thrust his feet against the soil, and flew upwards. His head was

bald, his beak hooked, and his ears red.<sup>5</sup> His tail waved, and his wattle swayed. On a strong wind, he soared towards Ayutthaya.

He hovered down above Ang Thong, in the forest opposite Bang Maeo Canal.<sup>6</sup> The vulture turned back into a monk. He sat and prayed 108 times.

He enchanted his walking stick and attached it to his body as a tail. He put his almsbowl over his head and leapt into the river. He turned into an enormous crocodile,

with a body nine wa long,<sup>7</sup> and white fangs curving upwards from his jaws. He thrashed around, called out with a sound like thunder, and disported himself on the surface of the water.

People who heard had no idea. The area had earlier been settled with houses. After Elder Khwat transformed himself into a fierce creature here, the village from then on was known as Ban Jorakhe Rong,<sup>8</sup> the village of the crying crocodile.

This place, named after the story of the teacher, still exists today as a densely settled village in the district of Ang Thong.

Crocodile Khwat was as big and long as Lord Chalawan.<sup>9</sup> He thrashed against the bank with his tail, making a loud noise and stirring up waves.

The old crocodiles who were lords of that locality hid themselves away under the ground, or fled away into lakes, or clambered up onto dry land and hid in the undergrowth, in fear of death. [396]

He came down quickly past Ban Talat Kruat.<sup>10</sup> Buffalos and elephants fled away. He thrashed and bit them dead in piles, then chased on further downstream.

In a short while, he arrived in front of Ang Thong. He waved his tail and groaned loudly. When villagers came down to the jetty to wash fish, he grabbed them in his jaws, and dived underwater.

He thrust half his body out of the water, waved his tail, and raised the corpses as an offering to Siva.<sup>11</sup> He rushed to the governor's

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<sup>5</sup> Probably a red-headed vulture, *sarcogypus calvus*, Bird:111, which has a rather bare, red head.

<sup>6</sup> The canal branches northeast from the river around 2 kms north of Ang Thong.

<sup>7</sup> Eighteen meters.

<sup>8</sup> About 8 kms above Ang Thong, just south of Amphoe Chaiyo.

<sup>9</sup> A massive crocodile in the folktale, *Kraitthong*, which was converted into an outer drama by King Rama II.

<sup>10</sup> Immediately to north of Ang Thong.

<sup>11</sup> In legend, Siva went to travel in the water, so Uma brought him a crocodile as a vehicle. Square markings on a crocodile's head are the remnant of Siva's throne. As the crocodile is Siva's mount he has to offer a body to Siva

residence with the bodies in his jaws, thrashed them to bits, and scattered them around.

District officials and villagers rushed around screaming in fright. They saw the crocodile with bodies still in his jaws go down the steps and thrash around in the middle of the river.

The crowds on the banks swirled around in chaos. 'Where are the spirit doctors? Go and fetch them.' Spirit doctors who had no teachers and knew only nonsense<sup>12</sup> thought they could stab the beast easily as usual.

Old teachers understood better and tried to stop them. 'Forget it, you young fellows! This crocodile is big. Don't try it.' 'If he pushes you with his jaws, you'll fall in the water and drown.'

'There's an ancient saying, "A crocodile 3 wa long has the power to foretell the future." This one is more than 3 wa. I don't think mantra will be enough.'

Some saw this was true and ran away, trembling with fear. One stubbornly believed in his own skill. 'Even it if were Chalawan, so what!'

He hitched up his cloth and sat in the bows of a boat holding a harpoon. In the stern, men paddled furiously without stopping. The crocodile glided around watching. When the beast came close, the man plunged the harpoon but it bounced off.

He tried again at full force. The crocodile seized the harpoon in his jaws and broke it in two. The man drew a spear and stabbed, but it glanced off. The crocodile turned back with red jaws agape.

The crocodile snapped once with great power. The spirit doctor's boat, almost 4 wa long, was crushed to powder in his mouth, along with five strong oarsmen.

The crocodile was so big that the boat, six people, and five paddles did not even fill his cheeks. He dived down, disgorged them, and swam away under water. [397]

Seeing the crocodile swallow the people, those on the banks ran around in confusion. Everybody took to their heels. The news spread to every place in Ang Thong.

Khmer, Mon, Lao, and hill people everywhere heard the news and were terrified. Nobody went down to bathe in the waterways. The crocodile floated away downriver.

When he arrived at a remote place with no house in sight, he

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before eating it. In fact, Khwat does not eat people (he stuffs them under tree roots), but makes this gesture to terrorize people (Red:635).

<sup>12</sup> Literally, 'know snake snake fish fish.'

slowly floated along like a log. When he saw houses or people on the high ground, he showed off his power by attacking.

Close to dawn he found a remote spot. He landed in the form of the elder, and went to beg for alms at the houses. After eating, he quickly plunged back into the water and became a crocodile.

The villages where he had received alms were excluded from his killing. He floated slowly along in no hurry, wishing the news to spread far and wide.

At Ban Hae<sup>13</sup> he uttered a loud bellow. The attacks were the talk of the town. He came to the start of Ban Satoe,<sup>14</sup> and dived down to hide under the water.

Villagers who were returning home after work in the ricefields, went down to clean their dirty feet at the landing in large numbers. The crocodile thrust up out of the water, clambered up on the mud, and pounced.

He chased and bit people with his tail flailing, displaying his power to the utmost. With three people in his jaws, he plunged back under the water.

He showed off his powers to thrash and bite, but hid the bodies without eating them by stuffing them in the roots of banyan trees. Then he chased off along the river.

He glided along to Pho Sa,<sup>15</sup> and came upon an old monk on almsround. He thrashed his tail, grabbed the monk in his jaws, and waved him around in the air. Men and women on the bank ran around shouting.

All the boats and rafts fled away from the river up the canals in turmoil. They bunched together in fear of death. The fierce crocodile came down to Ban Rakam,<sup>16</sup>

arriving as the sun dropped in the afternoon. The people were herding lots of buffalo down to the landing. The crocodile glided along hidden underwater, then thrust up suddenly in the midst of them. [398]

The buffalo turned to butt with their horns. The crocodile snapped off their necks, and thrashed with his tail. With buffalo in his teeth, he swam away, raised his jaws, and tossed the buffalo onto the land where they fell in the mud.

People on the land stumbled and fell down in the mud. The crocodile landed, strode along, and attacked. People on the banks

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<sup>13</sup> 2 kms below Ang Thong.

<sup>14</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>15</sup> One km below Ban Hae.

<sup>16</sup> Another 3-4 kms south.

ran off wildly. The crocodile came to the end of the bend and leapt into the water.

He showed off his power by thrashing his tail around in the middle of the river, and creating waves by diving down and coming up. People on land rushed around wildly, falling over themselves in fright.

The crocodile arrived at Bang Thewa at the end of Mok forest,<sup>17</sup> where there was an expanse of deep water. He waved his tail and went to hide in the undergrowth on the bank just beyond the wat.

The villagers had come to the festival of honoring the Buddha image. The river was packed with boats and rafts, racing one another up and down in front of the wat amid sounds of merrymaking. People were singing *propkai* songs and boat songs.

Young girls showed themselves off in upper cloths of purple silk and shirts. They set up footed trays in pairs in the stern of boats. Some laid out mats, skins, and pillows to lean on.

Fun-loving young lads came from every village in boats with roofs stretching the whole length. They laid out soft mats and pillows for reclining, and paddled round and round flirting with the girls.

Drunks arrived in boats full of liquor bottles with a Chinese table placed amidships with nibbles. They hung *daoruang*<sup>18</sup> flowers from their ears. Everybody had a new hair cut and wore a pakoma.

Novices and monks boarded the *khon*<sup>19</sup> boat and played boat songs,<sup>20</sup> making a loud racket. Young female market vendors had powdered their faces, trimmed their hairlines, and put on silk shirts.

They set up elaborate trays with elephants' feet and sold fried bananas, oranges, and *khanom jin*. The wat was jam-packed with people. Boats of various kinds were moored together as rafts.

The local roughs swaggered around acting tough with old knives and axes in their belts. When they went into the crowded wat, the girls who were afraid of the playboys went off by boat.

Crocodile Khwat saw the whole area was crowded with boats. He left the bank, glided along underwater, then shot up with a bang among the people, [399]

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<sup>17</sup> Bang Thewa, unidentified, but Pa (forest) Mok is now an amphoe, with no forest in sight. The wat figuring here would be Wat Pa Mok which had a famous annual festival with boat races (Red:636).

<sup>18</sup> *Tagetes erecta*.

<sup>19</sup> A piece of wood extending the bow or stern of a boat, and hence a boat with such decoration (RI:208).

<sup>20</sup> *Yaoyon, yonyao*, a form of boat song for the rhythm of rowing.

feet scrambling, jaws biting, and tail thrashing. Bodies were severed, and collapsed with necks limp. Others rushed screaming in turmoil, jumping down into boats, and sinking them in the chaos.

The crocodile hit a *khanom jin* vendor, and dragged her along by the foot. She shouted in her usual way, 'You old buffalo!', leapt up onto the bank, and ran shouting. She stepped on some mud, her lower cloth slipped off, and she gripped onto the end.

The crocodile barged in among the musicians in the middle of playing.<sup>21</sup> The woman fell on her back, dropping her lower cloth, and losing her senses for fear of death. She yelled and scrambled wildly like a field turtle.

The male musician leapt up dropping his cloth in the confusion. He stumbled awkwardly away, jumped, and crashed into the field turtle.

She fell. He went head-over-heels. They pushed and pulled at one another, swaying and hitting. She wriggled. He thrust full force. Suddenly ashamed of their bodies, they sprung apart.

The crocodile got a vendor in his jaws and showed his power by plunging loudly into the river. Only her head was in his jaws with her body waving around outside the teeth. Everybody on land trembled.

The crocodile with the woman in his mouth swam rapidly along against the current, and raised her up as an offering to Siva. All that could be seen was a white bottom and feet waving in the air. Nobody knew what to do.

The crocodile floated down to Ban Phong Pheng,<sup>22</sup> saw a flock of ducks, and thrashed them to death. He kept diving and coming up along to Ban Kum<sup>23</sup> where he hid in the undergrowth.

Village girls had come down to bathe. The crocodile approached them underwater than sprung up suddenly. They screamed, grabbed at their slipping cloths, and hid in the bushes. Covering themselves with their hands like *jap-ping*, they ran up onto the jetty.

The crocodile did not hurt them, but dived further along. Worried people went out to pass on the news to every village. He floated down past Bang Ban<sup>24</sup> to Ban Phi Mot<sup>25</sup> and took a buffalo.

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<sup>21</sup> Literally, half way.

<sup>22</sup> At the junction of the Chaophraya River and the Bang Luang Canal, 5 kms below Pa Mok.

<sup>23</sup> Two kms below the junction along the Chaophraya.

<sup>24</sup> Now an amphoe, down the Bang Ban canal, about 3 kms from where it branches from the Chaophraya.

<sup>25</sup> One km past Bang Ban

Ai-Madeua raised a pole and stabbed at him. The crocodile thrashed, lopping off his head, and scattering it away. I-Moei jumped and squirmed, letting the paddle slip from her hand. She cried out loudly, 'Ui yai!' and scrambled away.

He went through Hua Taphan to Kopjao,<sup>26</sup> entered a brick house, and chased a woman who ran off losing her lower cloth. She went down into the mire, swimming wildly, getting sucked down until her whole body was smothered in mud. [400]

She feared the crocodile so much, she lost her strength, her legs turned to jelly, and she lay on her back. Her husband feared she would drop dead. He scrambled with his hands to push her bottom onto higher ground.

From Ang Thong down, terror gripped both sides of the river. News spread, making the villagers tremble. Boats and rafts would not go out for fear.

Spirit doctors who came to look shook their heads when they saw how huge the crocodile was. From the time of their grandparents, nothing like it had been seen.

People talked about it loud and long. The crocodile floated down towards the capital,<sup>27</sup> thrashing and biting people into dust. The city people spread the news in uproar.

He came in front of Ban Pom, and lay in wait hiding to snatch people and stuff them under the roots of banyan trees. He chased boats to Phu Khao Thong.

People could see this crocodile was fierce. In every house, the men and women ran off in fright. He came to the rafts of the Jek moored at the Ka Rong jetty,<sup>28</sup> and grabbed the wife of oil merchant Jek Jong in his jaws.

Her husband shouted, 'Aiyaa!' and ran to help. The crocodile gripped her tightly round the waist. The cloth tied round her belly slipped off. Her husband turned to look, and bent over crying.

The crocodile saw the Jek crying and thought this was so funny he could not stop himself from roaring with laughter. When he opened his jaws, the wife was immediately able to slip away, and survived.

The crocodile went down from the raft and rushed away. He saw a female vendor carrying goods and crying out her wares.

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<sup>26</sup> Both close together, further down the Bang Ban canal, about 7 kms past Bang Ban.

<sup>27</sup> In the past, the river veered east from Kopjao towards Ayutthaya through Ban Pom. Now the Bang Ban canal carries the water on south to Sena, and the waterway between Kopjao and the city has disappeared.

<sup>28</sup> The wat here, a crossing point just northwest of the city up the Chaophraya, appeared in chapter 24. The river through Ban Pom used to join the Chaophraya here (Red:637)

When she started her pitch, he sprang up on the stern of her boat, scrambling with his feet, biting with his jaws, and flailing her from side to side.

A Vietnamese woman paddled a boat along standing up. The crocodile grabbed the paddle and smashed it to smithereens. He swung his tail to thwack the middle of the boat. The Vietnamese fell right on the paddle-post,

which pierced her so she was unable to get herself off. She wriggled and squirmed as the blood flowed. Her husband was so shocked his eyes almost popped out. He could only cry 'Jaeo kam jun!' and swirl round in the boat.

The people on boats and rafts were in uproar. 'This terrible crocodile is worse than a tiger!' Nobody could buy or sell. Boats from the north, big and small, took refuge up the canals. [401]

The crocodile saw people were afraid. He floated along past houses, swinging his tail boisterously in mid-stream. He came to the Floating Palace.<sup>29</sup>

Government officials trembled. Jek, Lao, Khaek, and Thai were in uproar. The banks were jam-packed. Guards rushed into the inner palace.

Some went straight to the court sala, prostrated, and informed the senior officials, 'There's a very fierce crocodile attacking craft in front of the boat house.

He's very long, about 10 wa. The news is that he came from the north. He's been eating animals and biting lots of people along the way. He looks much bigger than crocodiles in general.'

Knowing that this extremely fierce crocodile which had been eating people had come to the city, the minister had to inform the king.

He put on a *sombak*, tied a prostration cloth round his waist, went to the audience hall, prostrated and addressed the king.

'My liege, almighty king, pinnacle of the city, patron. There is currently a crocodile which has come from the north and is extremely violent.

His head alone is longer than 5 cubits. He has shown his power by eating many people. He floats along the current to show off his body. He is now swimming against the stream in front of the boathouse.'

The king thought, 'A crocodile much bigger than normal has

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<sup>29</sup> Khun Wichitmatra says this is not a palace, but a jetty called *Phrachanuan nam* at Wasukri landing on the north of the palace (Red:638).

come from the north and is going around eating animals and biting people to dust.

To ignore this would make the populace angry and sow confusion throughout the city.' He ordered the minister, 'Fetch the major crocodile doctors,

including both royal and private ones, to help capture and kill this crocodile. I'll give a reward to whoever catches it. Don't let it get away. Go now.'

The noble prostrated, crawled back out, and immediately gave orders to the city officials to fetch the major crocodile doctors. [402]

The officials rushed off to find them. Many came immediately, thinking of the crocodiles they were used to killing, and hoping for the reward.

They put on leggings, tied belts tightly round their waists, and hung their gear from them. They wore auspicious threads round their heads, and boarded boats brandishing harpoons.

In all there were twenty boats, which went upstream and downstream in rows. The doctors sat legs akimbo with hands in wai holding their harpoons, praying and scattering water.

Crocodile Khwat did not fear their magic so did not dive down. He floated with body motionless, watching to see what the doctors would do.

The doctors were too afraid to come close. They saw his length and shook their heads in fright. He looked fearful, with protruding fangs, and winking eyes. Some leaned out and hurled their harpoons from far away.

This one threw, and that one threw, but they bounced off his hide without piercing. Other boats came and threw in turn. The crocodile lay still until the harpoons were finished.

One doctor, seeing the crocodile was still, approached closer and stabbed with a spear. Strangely, it did not penetrate even a little, and broke off, as powerless as if it was thrown at teak.

The crocodile of the magical elder showed off its power by jumping and thrashing around, then turned suddenly and slashed powerfully, breaking and sinking every one of the boats.

He spun round wildly like a whirlwind. All the spirit doctors fell in the water and flailed around. The crocodile turned and thrashed with his tail, crushing every one of them dead and drowned.

The crowds on the bank, men and women, watched the doctors die en masse. Everybody was so terrified their hair stood on end. It

was unthinkable that the crocodile did not hear the doctors' mantra.

The officials who had come to watch twitched and trembled on the jetty. Some ran in to audience with the Lord of Life, prostrated, and told the king the news.

Knowing this crocodile was so fierce that many spirit doctors had lost their lives, the king knew this was a very unusual affair. [403]

'A crocodile this big boldly coming down here and finishing off all the city's spirit doctors has never happened before.'

He beckoned to Jameun Wai, 'Hey, what about this fierce crocodile? You're a good person with knowledge. How do you think of killing it?'

The brave and clever Phra Wai Woranat pondered, 'This crocodile has unusual powers. It's not an ordinary crocodile.'

I shouldn't lose this opportunity for the diligent Chumphon to win royal favor.' With this sole thought, he addressed the king.

'My liege, lord of the earth. This isn't a real crocodile. It has exceptional strength, and is much larger than a normal crocodile.'

It must be a magical crocodile created by some villain. That's how it's killed all the doctors. Send my younger brother, Phlai Chumphon, to examine this beast.'

The king immediately commanded, 'Eh, Phlai Chumphon, come here. It's been many years since you were placed in royal service, but you've not yet been assigned any task.'

You come from a military lineage. On the occasion you captured the elder, you proved adept. When presenting you, your father said you're good. I can see you look suitable.

This crocodile has hurt people beyond estimation. It has attacked and pulverized many. Go and look without delay. What kind of crocodile is this?'

Chumphon took the order, crawled back out, and rushed out of the palace. He arrived at the Floating Palace and looked down at the huge crocodile,

floating on the surface of the river, looking intimidating. Phlai made an examination, and saw it was different from ordinary crocodiles.

'It's like chicken and snake; you can tell them apart by looking at the feet. It's a magic crocodile and hence vicious. Nobody realized it was an artifice that had come to challenge Ayutthaya.' [404]

With this insight, he rushed to tell King Phanwasa. 'My liege,

mighty king. This is not a crocodile in the river.

It's a magical beast. Some skilful person has adopted this form to come and test the capital's military. That's why it wasn't afraid of the crocodile doctors. I think this is a good person, for certain.

If the royal foot will grant your servant its grace and permit me according to the royal wish, I beg to volunteer to the sole of the royal foot to fight and capture it.'

The king laughed loudly in high spirits. 'That's it! This Chumphon, a man of knowledge, must volunteer to please me and earn my gratitude.

If you can catch this important crocodile, I'll reward you. Go immediately with your elder brother and your father, who is staying in the city,

to prepare your fighting gear. Wait on me at dawn at the Floating Palace. You'll fight him famously. Tomorrow I'll go to watch.'

The two brothers prostrated to take leave. With their crowd of servants following behind, they went out of the gate and along to Phra Kanburi's house.

They informed their father about the royal order. 'A fierce and powerful crocodile which has been attacking people is now in front of the boathouse.

The spirit doctors who went to deal with it were thrashed and drowned, not one remaining. It's also bitten lots of people to death. Chumphon examined it and knows it's a transformed person.

There was an opportunity for Chumphon to volunteer to capture this fierce crocodile. The king made us tell you to help in the preparations for the fight.'

Khun Phaen sat and thought carefully, then took his sons along to Phra Wai's house.

On arrival, he commanded Simala to prepare everything for offerings, and had the equipment fetched. Powder, oil, and krajae were smeared on Chumphon's forehead. [405]

In Phra Wai's hall, incense, candles, and flowers were arranged. A spirit-doctor's knife, sheath, spear, and harpoon were laid out side by side.

Chumphon bathed. Khun Phaen chanted the *athap*<sup>30</sup> formula, and anointed him with herbal medicine and oil to make him

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<sup>30</sup> See note in chapter 30.

invulnerable against dangers from animals' fangs.<sup>31</sup>

As the golden light of dawn rose up, Chumphon went to sit quietly in the shrine room. He sat still and uttered incantations, held his breath, then blew to sacralize the weapons.

By the power of knowledge, the weapons shook. Chumphon was pleased to see this power. He got dressed and went down in front of the ruan.

Khun Phaen, Phra Wai, and Phlai Chumphon hurried along with their servants crowding behind. They reached the Floating Palace at the edge of the river and awaited the king.

The almighty king, whose powers were feared by enemies from all regions, stayed in a palace as great as Wechayan,<sup>32</sup> equal to the Bantukamp<sup>33</sup> throne of Indra,

with heavenly maidens and consorts attending to his wishes by entertaining him with singing and playing the *phin*<sup>34</sup> so that the pinnacle of the earth was joyful.

At dawn, when he completed the royal toilet, and the ladies on duty put on all his apparel, he thought about the matter of the crocodile, and said, 'Today I'll go down to the raft

to watch Chumphon fight and capture this crocodile. This group of ladies will accompany me. Don't make too much noise.' He proceeded to the raft with columns of guards in procession on both sides.

On arrival, he ascended a dais, took the royal seat, and laughed. The nobles prostrated. All the groups of lords,

the palace governesses, every one of the inner ladies, royal relatives, servants of the dust under the royal foot from both the inner and front divisions, had all come.

The king said, 'Ha, hey, Meun Wai! Where's Chumphon got to?' Phra Wai called Chumphon who crawled up and prostrated beside Phra Wai. [406]

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<sup>31</sup> *Khieo nga*, literally teeth-tusk, meaning danger from animals with fangs (Mat:147).

<sup>32</sup> Name for Indra's palace and chariot. 'In the middle of this city [on Mount Meru] of the thirty-three *devata* there is the Vejayanta castle which is 25,600,000 *wa* high. This castle is most exquisitely beautiful and is covered with the seven kinds of gems, which are 2,400,000 *wa* high. This Vejayanta castle, which is covered with the seven kinds of gem, that are gloriously beautiful beyond anything that can be conceived, has been provided for Indra; and he is lord of this Vejayanta castle.' (R&R, 223-4; Mat:813).

<sup>33</sup> *Bantukamponsila-at* (pale yellow woollen stone), throne of Indra. 'Under this [Paricchattaka] tree there is a dais of gem stone, which is called Pandukambala and is 480,000 *wa* long.... Whenever Indra sits on this stone slab it is soft and he sinks down to his navel; but then Indra gets up and leaves the stone, the stone fills in just as it had been before.' (R&R, 233; Mat:495).

<sup>34</sup> A string instrument, akin to a lute.

The king asked, 'How is it, Chumphon? Can you capture this magical crocodile?' 'My liege, mighty king. If I can't, I offer my life.'

'That's it! That's what I like to hear. You just do it as we expect. If you kill this crocodile, I'll reward you with riches.'

Phlai Chumphon saluted the order, backed out, and went off. He had a raft brought down to the landing. He prostrated elegantly three times.

'I salute the lord Buddha, and beg protection for his servant against danger. May the lord of the earth, the lord of the waters, and the merit of my father and mother safeguard me.'

He walked down to the raft. The watchers were both excited and terrified. Senior people shouted their blessings. Young girls were unable to drag their eyes away.

Phlai Chumphon, with his exceptional powers and elegance, surrounded by spirits, had the raft released to go out mid stream.

He chanted the Holy Regal Siva<sup>35</sup> formula. He intoned the story of the race of crocodiles from the beginning, until they was cursed to live in the land of men.<sup>36</sup> Then he pronounced the mantra for overcoming crocodiles.

'Om, crocodile!<sup>37</sup> Don't stay quiet. I'm the Prince of Hell come to kill you. Siva sent me to take your life.

Om, crocodile! Come up quickly. Why are you lying low, oh crocodile?' He enchanted rice to counter evils, and scattered it.

'Any spirits who have taken up position to give protection, get away from this place right now.' He enchanted water and scattered it. The elder's spirits fled away.

Crocodile Khwat could not remain lying low. Looking up and

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<sup>35</sup> *Phra sayamphuwanat*. Sayambhu is one of the names of Siva, and *phuwanat* is a word of Sanskrit derivation meaning lord of the land, king.

<sup>36</sup> Uma, wife of Siva, populates the world with animals, including the crocodile. After the crocodile is chosen to be the mount of Siva, it gets very puffed up about having a throne on its head, and goes around eating humans and other animals. Rishis and disciples living along the river cannot bathe or fetch water, so the rishi complain to Siva, who in turn passes the buck to Uma. She vows to cast harpoons into every pond and lake, and brings the crocodile to be trussed up and tormented by the disciples. The rishi take pity on the beast and explain that Uma made them do it because the crocodile was eating land-dwelling animals. The crocodile complains that it is not fair as land-dwelling humans eat water-dwellers. Uma enchants a turmeric root and throws it into the crocodile's mouth where the root becomes a discus and cuts out the crocodile's tongue so it is not able to taste anything. Hence the crocodile fears turmeric and harpoons, honors Siva, is always hungry, and lies with mouth open waiting for any food. (Red:642-3. Sup:658)

<sup>37</sup> *Nakkaphut*, the surfacer, term of address for crocodile from legend.

seeing Chumphon on the raft, he was happy things had turned out as expected.

‘Chumphon has come as hoped. I’ll take his life.’ He surfaced and floated along. The king watched in excitement for a long time. [407]

The people on the rafts could not be prevented from crowding down to the front. In the palace, the female guards chased people away. ‘You thick face, don’t you listen to orders?’

If you want to watch, just sit quiet and obey orders, or your beautiful appearance will be ruined by stripes on your back!’ The more they were ordered off, the more people became daring and would not listen. ‘These palace ladies have no shame!’

The valiant Chumphon saw the crocodile surface as hoped. ‘Above the water, it can do damage. This villain knows I’ve come.’

He enchanted three strands of sacred thread, tied them round his hand, and waited. He had the spirit-doctor’s knife on his body, and held the harpoon in the pose of victory.

The monk of good knowledge got the position and charged. Big waves crashed against Chumphon’s raft which looked as if it would capsize and sink.

Amid the splashing of the waves and roar of the crowd, the raft almost broke. The watchers’ eyes were glued to the excitement. The female guards shouted out, ‘You jokers. You’re too playful, not ashamed of yourselves.’

Crowds of people were watching – Khmer, Mon, Burmese, Vietnamese, Karen, Jek, Farang – all cheering. The Thai said, ‘Come and look if you dare!’

Shy Tavoy ladies turned their faces and said in dialect, ‘Maeng khawaeng che mara cha malu.’ A Mon said, ‘*I’m going, your honor. Throw pan and lime.*’<sup>38</sup> Lao said, ‘Bo hu bo han khoi yan jing [I know nothing. I’m really scared].’

There were many people and many languages. Some people sat, some stood, watching on the riverbank. Jek and Khaek argued together melodiously, sounding ‘Nung ning no na,’ so cute.

A Khaek said, ‘Mo moha yo po.’ The Jek argued, ‘Ua la mai ai mu thu.’ When the crocodile surfaced, people were startled. They packed together jostling at the water’s edge.

Phlai Chai Chumphon, with the powers of a lion, watched the

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<sup>38</sup> The first part of the sentence seems to translate from Mon, but the latter part perhaps sounded like Mon but also had a nonsensical meaning in Thai. Thanks to Pat McCormick.

crocodile approach, got a good position, and stabbed so the blood spurted.

The crocodile turned its tail and instantly crushed the raft with a great crack. Chumphon fell off. People screamed. The king was greatly shocked. [408]

He cried, 'Wai, what's up? This crocodile has knocked Chumphon down!' The nobles were shocked and worried. Wai prostrated three times and said to the king,

'Chumphon hasn't lost to the crocodile. In a moment he should come up.' None of the nobles were so confident. The palace crowd was noisy with excitement.

The ladies who were in love with Chumphon were in a pitiful state of agitation. Some hid their faces and wept thinking of him. 'When will Phlai come up?'

Phlai Chumphon was able to dive down and stay underwater because of a formula. He drew the spirit-doctor's knife. The crocodile came to confront him aggressively,

thrashing his tail, and Chumphon defended with the knife. The crocodile turned and retreated, luring Chumphon on, then returned to the attack. As the crocodile approached, Chumphon got a grip on his neck. The crocodile rose up, and Chumphon swung up to ride on his neck.

The king slapped his thigh and roared. 'That's it! Get him! Such bravery, that's my son. Get him for real! Don't wait!' All the nobles cheered Phlai Chumphon.

Khun Phaen and Phra Wai sat with eyes glued. The palace crowd ran up to watch in tumult. The cheers of the people echoed over the water. Gentlemen mingled with riff-raff without concern.

Royal retainers all watched, shouting out loud, 'Chumphon can ride the crocodile!' Some said, 'Unbelievably fearsome!' 'It's both big and long.' 'Looks about 9 wa.'

The female guards told them to be less noisy. 'For pity's sake, you make a bit of noise and they tell you off.' 'They want you to watch something with eyes only.' 'Don't cheer here. Get away from here quick.'

Elder Khwat in crocodile form could not shake Chumphon off his back. He twisted and turned angrily. Chumphon kept his seat, and stabbed strongly,

thwacking him repeatedly until the water was stained red with blood. The crocodile could not stand it, and was at wit's end. He used magic,

chanting a formula 108 times. The crocodile was transformed into a fish. Chumphon disappeared and became a bird. He dived down and searched for the fish in the waters. [409]

The crowd stood watching in excitement. The Floating Palace was on the point of collapse. Concubines, palace ladies, and eunuchs<sup>39</sup> were making a racket at the water's edge.

The king asked Phra Wai several times, 'How did they both disappear? Is Chumphon winning or losing?'

Phra Wai's eyes were fixed on his brother. He knew his skills and had no doubt. He said to the king, 'The enemy transformed to get away. Chumphon transformed to give chase.'

Just as he spoke, he saw the elder transform again into a great tusker which came ashore and chased people, scattering them in fear. Chumphon transformed into a tiger,

followed the elephant up onto the bank and attacked. He leapt and got a tight grip on the trunk. The elephant shook wildly and managed to get free. As the elephant turned, the tiger pounced at his throat.

Some watchers were frightened enough to flee. Others stood their ground watching with no fear. The tiger clung on and bit into the neck. The elephant raised his trunk up and trumpeted loudly.

The nobles all cheered. The king was still assailed by doubts. 'Which is our side, Wai, the tiger or the elephant?' 'Sire, it's the tiger.'

The tiger bit the elephant to a standstill. Then the elephant disappeared and became a monkey in front of their eyes. Chumphon also transformed into a cobra and came to attack.

The watchers understood they had transformed, and all jostled forward to get a view. 'He's changed into a monkey.' 'He's good but he won't escape the snake.'

The monkey attacked. The cobra snapped at him, coiled round his body, and pulled him down to the ground. The monkey disappeared and became the monk-teacher. Chumphon changed from snake to human,

and with his two hands got a firm grip round Elder Khwat. 'It's this villain! I thought it was someone else.' He took him over in front of the king's seat, made obeisance, and awaited the royal command.

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<sup>39</sup> Eunuchs are little mentioned in accounts of the Thai court, perhaps surprisingly given the long contact with China. This mention, in the same sentence as concubines and palace ladies, strongly suggests they had a role in the inner palace (Kuk:406-7).

The mighty king, pinnacle of the great capital of Ayutthaya, saw the monk was held at the front of the palace courtyard. He clapped his hands loudly and said, [410]

‘Eh, you deserve thanks, Chumphon. You’re very brave and tough. On this occasion you have won royal favor utterly. Enough! You’ll get all you deserve.’

Then he looked over angrily. ‘Struth! You big rickety old wreck! What kind of holy man are you? Going around eating people is inhuman.

You came with the intention of challenging the capital with such arrogance and over-confidence. There must be some treacherous criminal gang that put you up to coming here transformed.

Ha, hey, Meun Si Saowarak! Take this elder off and interrogate him thoroughly. Don’t fear sin. Put up a post, clap him in fetters and cangue, and find out why he came,

who sent him, what village and district he comes from, what’s his name, and why he transformed himself.’

Then the king turned and saw Phra Kanburi. ‘This son of yours, Phlai Chumphon. I was not wrong to have taken him into service.

His knowledge was equal to this trickster who came transformed. He bravely volunteered to fight. We all watched his powers and they were worth seeing. He’s fit to be partner to Wai on royal duty.’

The king left his seat and went up into the palace. Inner ladies and officials entered the palace and went to their homes feeling joyful.

The people went off home in crowds, talking about it noisily. They showered Chumphon with praise as a good person. ‘What exceptional powers!’

‘This old elder who came transformed is a rare and daring teacher. He destroyed spirit doctors, punt poles, and paddles in thousands. Chumphon knew how to tie him up and knock his down like a fairground monkey!’

Some said they enjoyed it so much they forget to run away. ‘Really more fun than the mask-play.’ Another said, ‘When I saw the snake I almost jumped. It swayed up less than a wa away.’

Khaek, Farang, Chinese, and Cham walked along, praising in different languages. ‘Never seen anything like it anywhere!’ Only one Jek said, ‘In China, this has happened. [411]

In the wars at the time of Kiang Ju Yae, fearsome bands of spirits fought together.<sup>40</sup> But that was a long time ago, over a thousand

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<sup>40</sup> Kiang Ju Yae was an army commander of Pu Ong, lord of Chaiki, who made war on King Tiu Ong using spirits. The story appeared in the Chinese chronicle, *Hong Sin*, which was translated into Thai during the

years. To have seen this occasion was a treat for the eyes.’

A woman complained, ‘I’m so fed up with fighting. I get so scared I can’t watch with my eyes open. I just made wishes for Phlai Chai Chumphon.

His figure’s so frail like a whittled stick. I feared that terrible oldie would crush him.’ Another said, ‘I was so worried I was praying for him to escape danger.’

While adults talked, young girls kept quiet. They walked along with heads bowed but faces wreathed in smiles. They were too shy to open their mouths, but thought of nothing but Phlai all the way back home.

Jameun Si Saowarak-rat, unmatched in valor and skill, came from the Floating Palace and called out to Phlai Chai Chumphon,

‘Beware of this old trickster. Guard him and don’t let anyone interfere.’ He commanded the inner guard to disperse the crowd, then went to the royal seat behind the boathouse,

and brought the monk for questioning. ‘Tell the truth and don’t fantasize. Why did you kill so many people? Who entrusted you to come here.’

The monk sat sad-faced. He made a statement full of lies. ‘Nobody sent me. I wanted to see Ayutthaya, so I came by myself.’

Phramoen Si said, ‘He’s not telling the truth. He’s rocking back and forth, trying to fool us with a lot of nonsense. Seeing the city and merrily killing people! He’s a big liar, not straight and true.

Somebody must have sent him. Guards! Bring the pillory post in here.’ The front guards ran up in chaotically and set up the post in the boathouse,

along with chains, cangue, the whole set. The guards trembled and twitched as they tied Elder Khwat to the wooden frame, looping several times both inside and out.

The adroit Phramoen Si promptly began the interrogation. ‘Tell the truth. Don’t keep quiet. Where are you from and who sent you here?’ [412]

The elder was hurting, and told the whole truth. ‘I live in Chiang Mai, sir. I used to be servant of little Princess Soi Fa. My name is

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Second Reign, and compiled with other Chinese chronicles by Chaophraya Phrakhleng (Hon). Khun Wichitmatra estimated the events took place 3,000 years ago, while Suphon argues *Hong Sin* is legendary, pre-historical. Kiang Ju Yae was later adopted in Chinese *saiyasat* as an overlord of the spirits. (Red:646. Sup:663).

Elder Khwat, let me tell you.

When I came down and stayed in Wat Phraya Maen, Chumphon son of Khun Phaen captured me, and wanted to slash me dead so I fled back to Chiang Mai, my hometown.

Nobody sent me. I had a grievance against Phlai Chumphon who captured me, so I transformed into a crocodile and came to Ayutthaya again.

I anticipated that if anyone came out to fight me, it would be Chumphon who volunteered. If I lured and tricked him, I could grab him and drown him underwater.

As for the king, I had no thought of revolt. That is the full truth. As for my punishment, have mercy.'

The powerful Phramoen Si laughed. 'This old guy has lots of excuses. You resented Chumphon so much that you crushed and ate people for any old reason?

Don't you know that in the provisions of the law code, the penalty for murder is execution. You have bold ideas of treachery and rebellion but you're wasting our time with these tricky excuses.'

He had a clerk take down the elder's words. Close to midday, he went to the forward audience hall. When the king entered, he prostrated and told him what the monk had said.

Informed of the matter, the king pondered carefully. 'This fellow was said to have died many years ago, but now he turns up again.

Ha, hey, Phraya Anuchit!<sup>41</sup> You covered up things and lied to my face. At that time, you said the novice and elder had died but now he comes back. What do you have to say?'

The *jangwang* of the guard did not raise his face. He feared royal authority so much his sweat flowed. 'I was stupid and simple. Because the inner guard said they were dead,

I took it on trust without checking, and carelessly had them thrown in the graveyard. If the king disapproves, may I be punished by death,' He prostrated. [413]

The king, ruler of the world, said promptly, 'Henceforth, let it be established as regular practice,<sup>42</sup> that if an accused person dies, a report is sent to the pages and guard to make an inspection

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<sup>41</sup> Phra Anuchitaracha, *jangwang* in the right department of the guard under Kalahom, sakdina 3000 (KTSD, I, 383; Red:647).

<sup>42</sup> บรรพ, guessed from context and Premseri:630. Dix don't help

without fail, along with Kalahom and Mahatthai, and only then is the body taken to the graveyard.’

Then he ordered the ministers and judges of the royal court to confer on the punishment for the old trickster according to the provisions of the law code.

The councils of the court and royal court,<sup>43</sup> after consultation with each minister, ruled that Elder Khwat was guilty of a gross crime, and should be executed.

The king listened to this advice and promptly commanded, ‘This fellow is tricky and untrustworthy. Chumphon is entrusted to carry out the execution.’

The king went inside. The minister of the capital rushed off to relay the king’s order that the elder was entrusted to Phlai Chumphon.

Phra Wai Woranat had wanted revenge on the monk from the beginning. ‘This old elder uses magic and knowledge.’ He advised Chumphon not to trust him.

Khun Phaen handed Skystorm to his son. Both Phaen and Wai gave Chumphon strict instructions, ‘You must carry out the execution, and then take care of the head.

When it’s stuck up, there must be guards all the time. Don’t be careless and leave the place unattended. Station guards by the fire. This fellow has people who’ll want to take the head.’

Chumphon took leave, and led the elder under escort with officers and men of the ministry of the capital following behind.

Crowds of people gathered to watch. Guards inspected and kept order, not allowing anyone to approach close.

They halted at the execution ground. People milled around in uproar. A post was set up. The elder was tied to it, sitting and bent over. Chumphon flourished the sword and severed his neck. [414]

Among the people who had come to watch the execution, nobody felt pity. Some said, ‘Got what he deserved.’ ‘What kind of monk goes around eating people?’

Relatives of the dead crowded around shouting insults. Everyone returned home. Chumphon ordered the guards to keep watch.

‘Stick up the head, and keep close watch. Good people may come

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<sup>43</sup> *Fai luk khun sala lae san luang*. These seem to have been two councils of senior nobles. They are mentioned three times in the Three Seals Law in laws dated 1743, 1758, and 1783 (*KTSD*, IV, 229, 261, 324), and the membership is different in each case. According to Vickery, the first was ‘a council of the officers in charge of the most important government departments,’ while the second was ‘a council...of judicial officials from various ministries,’ and may have been a kind of appeals court mentioned by Schouten and Van Vliet. (Vickery, ‘Constitution,’ 172–3)

to take it, so keep guard without fail.' He gave orders and returned.

The mighty king, feared in ten directions and every place, resided in the bedchamber of the palace, surrounded by consorts like scattered stars,

some fanning to please him, others on duty to massage and loosen the royal tendons, some to play music and sing beautifully for his comfort and pleasure.

In the golden light of dawn, when birds sang like the sound of the conch, the king walked from the golden throne. Masses of consorts prostrated and wai-ed.

He bathed and dressed in splendid glittering, nine-jeweled raiment. He went out front to deal with city affairs, and sat on the throne at the window.

He looked as elegant as the lord who rides on a swan.<sup>44</sup> All the nobles prostrated, along with senior officials and royal kin. The king thought of Chumphon.

'By overcoming the crocodile, he has won royal favor. I should confer rank on him as reward. He's another person who can be used on royal service. He's as clever as Wai.'

With these thoughts, he roared like a lion, 'Chumphon has won royal favor. I thank him. He volunteered without thought for his own life.

On this occasion he's earned royal favor on a large scale. If he'd not got the crocodile, things would be difficult. He's appointed as Luang Nai Rit.<sup>45</sup> He'll serve me closely.

City officials and inner military will find a place to build a house for him to live. Wai, help look for somewhere. He's too young to know about houses.' [415]

The king commanded treasury officials to arrange silk *sombak*, wool *sabai*, and five chang in cash on a tray. After the presentation, the king went up inside.

Luang Nai was very happy and smiled brightly. Phra Wai led the way out, and servants carried all the things.

They went to the house to tell their father. Everyone was ecstatic. The whole family celebrated, and all lived happily from that time onwards.

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<sup>44</sup> *Thao kanlai hong*, Brahma (RI:219).

<sup>45</sup> Nai Rit, *nai wen* in the right division of the royal pages, the same unit as his brother Phra Wai, *sakdina* 800 (KTSD, I, 224; Red:648).

