

LITERATURE IN GOLD: *RAMAKIEN* AS DEPICTED ON
THAI LACQUERWARE CABINETS FROM
THE EARLY RATTANKOSIN PERIOD

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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วรรณคดีลายทอง: ภาพรวมเกียรติบนสู่ลายรดน้ำสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น

นายเฟรเดอริก บี กอสลีย์



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต

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วิทยานิพนธ์นี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการใช้ภาพเรื่องพระรามหรือรามเกียรติ์ซึ่งปรากฏ
บนตู้ลายรดน้ำทองและคำในสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์ตอนต้น โดยเชื่อมโยงกับความรู้ทางไทยศึกษา
หลายแขนง ทั้งวรรณคดีไทย ศิลปะไทย ประวัติศาสตร์ และพระพุทธศาสนาของไทย จุดมุ่งหมาย
ของการศึกษาคือ เพื่อให้เข้าใจว่าภาพเรื่องพระรามบนตู้ลายรดน้ำนำมาใช้อย่างไร และเพราะเหตุ
ใดเรื่องเล่าทางโลกย้อย่างเรื่องพระรามจึงปรากฏอย่างชัดเจนบนตู้ลายรดน้ำ โดยมีหน้าที่พิทักษ์
คัมภีร์ศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของพุทธศาสนา

ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการศึกษานี้คือตู้ลายรดน้ำในสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์จำนวน 376 ตู้ ซึ่งเก็บรักษา
ไว้ที่หอสมุดแห่งชาติ พบว่าตู้ลายรดน้ำบางส่วนปรากฏภาพเล่าเรื่องบนตู้ โดยจำนวนประมาณ
ครึ่งหนึ่งของภาพเล่าเรื่องบนตู้เป็นภาพเรื่องพระรามซึ่งมีปริมาณมากกว่าภาพเล่าเรื่องประเภทอื่นๆ
รวมถึงภาพเรื่องเล่าทางพุทธศาสนาตามแบบจารีต อาทิ พุทธประวัติและชาดก ผลการศึกษาพบว่า
ภาพเล่าเรื่องพระรามมักจะเน้นฉากการต่อสู้และการยกทัพ ซึ่งเป็นฉากแบบแผนที่นิยมในการ
แสดง โขนและการแสดงหนังใหญ่ อย่างก็ตามพบประเด็นที่น่าสนใจว่าภาพเล่าเรื่องบนตู้ลายรดน้ำ
มักนำเสนอฉาก “อวสานอินทรชิต” อันเป็นฉากที่ไม่ปรากฏในขนบการแสดง

การศึกษานี้ได้ผลสรุปว่าเรื่องพระรามซึ่งปรากฏบนตู้ลายรดน้ำใช้เป็นสัญลักษณ์แทนการ
ดำรงอยู่ของพระราม และสื่อพฤติกรรมของพระรามไม่ว่าจะเป็นความเกี่ยวข้องหรือความเชื่อมโยง
กับพระมหากษัตริย์ในฐานะผู้พิทักษ์และผู้คุ้มครองพระพุทธศาสนา นอกจากนี้ความหมายเชิง
สัญลักษณ์นี้ยังทำให้ภาพเล่าเรื่องพระรามเป็นคำสอนที่สื่อให้ผู้เสพประจักษ์บทเรียนแห่งชัยชนะ
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The purpose of this research was to examine the use of the Thai rendition of the Rama story, know as *Ramakien*, as depicted on gold on black lacquerware cabinets from the early Rattanakosin period by combining various elements of Thai Studies, including Thai literature, Thai art, Thai history and Thai Buddhism. The objective of the study was to see how such depictions have been used and then address the question of why the ostensibly secular Rama narrative was used on cabinets designed to hold the sacred Buddhist scripture.

This study examined the 376 lacquerware cabinets held by the National Library of Thailand assigned to the Rattanakosin period and found that of those that have some form of narrative depiction, approximately half can be associated with the Rama story, more than for any other group of narrative, including traditional Buddhist narratives, such as the Life of the Buddha and the *jātaka* tales. It was found that the Rama related depictions tend to focus on scenes of fighting and combat, traditionally scenes that have been popular for performance in *khon* masked dance drama and *nang yai* shadow puppetry. However, interestingly, the scene that is depicted the most is that of the ‘Death of Intharachit’, a scene not typically part of the performance repertoire.

It can be concluded from this study that the Rama story, as depicted on the lacquerware cabinets, was used in a symbolic manner to create the presence of Phra Ram and convey the message of Phra Ram acting, either in association or conjunction with the king, as the protector and guardian of Buddhism. Along with this symbolic meaning, one could also read a didactic message through the depictions of the Rama story, that being to convey a lesson of the triumph of good/truth over evil/ignorance.

Field of Study: Thai Studies

Academic Year: 2016

Student's Signature

Advisor's Signature

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After completing my Master's Degree in Thai Studies in 2007, which also focused on the Rama narrative in Thai, I continued my exploration of this most entrancing tale and seem to have formed a special bond with this story. That bond led me to my latest, and perhaps most ambitious, academic endeavour, culminating in this PhD dissertation. Naturally, this long and at times intense project, has involved many people who need to be heartily thanked with sincere appreciation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the panoply of the world's great literature, there is one piece that stands out for its breath of scope, range of transmission and variety of representation. This piece, although not as well known in the Western world, is of paramount importance in South and Southeast Asia, being represented in one form or another in nearly every culture and civilization in the area. This piece is, of course, the classic tale of Rama, a tale generally known in India as Ramayana, its place of origin, and as Ramakien in Thai identified societies.

The Rama story is a piece of literature in which one can find time-honored themes of love and devotion, good versus evil, truth over ignorance, faith and devotion, all presented through intricate plots and sub-plots involving a multitude of characters. In the Thai literary tradition, the Rama story is often considered the most important work and is widely represented in Thai culture, as well as being an important manifestation of long-established Thai social customs and traditions. From abstract ideas of 'ideal' behavior, to concrete depictions and live performance, this tale has been both a reflection of and a reflection on traditional Thai society for centuries. This, naturally, makes this piece of literature an important topic to study in order to understand Thai customs and culture.

Given its importance and relevance, the Rama story in a Thai context has been well-studied and researched in many facets. A search of relevant databases and libraries indicates there have been at least 70 academic theses and dissertations with some aspect of this narrative as the focus. In addition, there have been numerous articles and papers written on this subject, albeit with the majority of such research works published in the Thai language, with little available in English. The focus of such research ranges from general literary analysis to dance and performance and use of the Rama story in education. As well, there have been a number of works that have focused on the depiction of the Rama tale in various art forms, with the primary intent to analyze and examine the artistic and aesthetic aspects of such depictions. Less attention has been paid to examining the role and purpose for the use of this narrative in Thai settings. This dissertation is an attempt to fill some part of that research gap.

If one looks at the array of artistic works in Thailand with the Rama story as the theme, the best known would be the mural paintings along the Gallery of Wat Phra Kaeo (also often called the Temple of the Emerald Buddha) at the Grand Palace in Bangkok. These murals are said to be the longest continuous mural in the world and depict nearly the complete narrative of the rendition of the Rama story composed by King Rama I (hereafter to be called *Rama I Ramakien*). In addition, there are a number of other Buddhist temples and other places with mural depictions of the Rama narrative, along with many places where depiction of individual characters and other images appear. Another significant source of depictions of the Rama story can be found on black and gold lacquerware cabinets that were designed to hold the sacred Buddhist scriptures. Depictions on these cabinets have been less studied, particularly with respect to the role and purpose of using the ostensibly secular, Hindic-identified Rama story in a seemingly sacred Buddhist setting. Such is the focus of this research.

Objectives of the Dissertation

1. To research how the *Ramakien* has been used in depictions on Thai lacquerware cabinets from the early Rattanakosin period in terms of narratives, forms of depiction, and other relevant factors.
2. To analyze the role and purpose of these depictions.

Major arguments, theories and hypothesis

Background and Importance of the Research Questions

The extensive use of *Ramakien* as a source for narrative depictions on Thai lacquerware cabinets highlights the sacred and moral symbolism embodied in the Rama story. In this regard, the use of images from the Rama story has two important roles: first, in a didactic mode – to convey moral and ethical messages embodied in the story, particularly, the triumph of moral good over immoral evil, or in more Buddhistic terms, truth over ignorance; and, second, in a symbolic mode – with Phra Ram, representing and in association with the king, as a guardian and protector of the Buddhist scriptures, in particular, and Buddhism, in general.

The Rama Story – A Reflection of and a Reflection on Thai Culture

The representation of Thai culture, values, traditions and society in the Rama story in a Thai context has been well established and written about by many leading scholars in the field of Thai Studies, including Srisurang Poolthupya in “Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien” and Maneepin Phromsuthirak in “The Ramakien and Thai Cultural Life”.¹ These scholars, and many others, emphasize many important points regarding the impact of the Rama tale on Thai culture, including:

1. Deep Reverence for the King: One of the aspects of Thai tradition that is most clearly evident in the narrative of the Rama story in Thai is the role and position of the king, the supreme authority in society. Each ruler in the story is portrayed as receiving utmost respect and obedience from their subjects.

2. Social Hierarchy: In traditional Thai society, family relations and kinship have a well-established hierarchical structure. This is reflected in the relationships between the many characters in the Thai Rama narratives, including between the older and younger brothers, husbands and wives, generals and soldiers. In addition, there is hierarchy of position in society, with those considered holy or with deep knowledge having the highest positions such that even the kings and rulers pay respect to and obey them.

3. Solemn Ceremonies to Celebrate Special Occasions: Thai tradition is full of special ceremonies and solemn occasions to celebrate. In *Rama I Ramakien*, there are many episodes in which ceremonies are described that include many Thai identifiable elements for special occasions, including births, coronations and

¹ Srisurang, “Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien”; Maneepin, “The Ramakien and Thai Cultural Life,” 188-189.

investiture ceremonies, royal weddings, rain-calling ceremonies, bathing ceremonies, and, of course, cremations.

4. Rama I Ramakien as a Thai Historical Reference Work: *Rama I Ramakien*, completed in 1797, can serve as a Thai historical reference book giving the reader a unique window into many aspects of life at that time. This includes descriptions of architecture, lists of flowers and fauna, dress and ornamentation, references to food, and dance postures.

5. Place Names: There are many examples of place names in present day Thailand that can be associated with the Rama tale. The most obvious is the close resemblance of the name of the capital city, Ayutthaya, with the principal city in the Rama story, Ayuthaya, but also including the city of Lopburi and places in Chainat, as well as many other provinces.

6. The Rama Story as Referenced in Other Literature: There are many other literary works in Thai that make references to events or episodes from the Rama story, including numerous pieces of classical literature, even from the early period in the Thai literary tradition. This appears to attest to the long and deep relationship between the Rama story and Thai society.

7. Use of the Rama Story in Ceremonies: Many elements of the Rama story have been, and still are, part of many state and royal occasions. There are references to the use of the Rama story in royal ceremonies performed during the Ayutthaya period, such as part of certain water consecration rites. Also, there has traditionally been a *khon* masked dance drama performance presented during the cremation ceremonies for royalty and important people.

8. Language: Many common idioms, similes and expressions in Thai come from the Thai Rama narrative. These include such expressions such as “ill-fated like Hanuman;” being called “a Thoraphi child” or “to measure one’s foot print”, which means an ungrateful son; and “just like *Ramakien*” meaning something that is very, very long.

9. Plants and Food: There are a number of plants and foods that take their name from the Thai Rama story. This includes a medicinal herb with a long list of potential benefits called *Maiyarap* and a tree named *Samo Phiphek*. In addition, there are a number of plants and fruits named after Nang Sida.

10. Education: The Rama story is a regular part of the educational curriculum for elementary through university students. In this regard, there have been many research projects and master degree theses written about the use of this story in education lessons.

This summary of some of the elements of Thai culture and customs, which will be elaborated on in greater depth in Chapter 3, that are either a reflection of or are reflected on the Rama story in Thai, clearly attests to the depth and impact this piece of literature has had on Thai society. This also attests to the importance of study and research that involve the Rama story in Thailand in order to further the understanding and knowledge in this area.

A Truly Thai Tale

Today, the most complete written version of the Rama narrative in Thai is from the late 18th century. However, there is archeological and other evidence of the presence and importance of the story from earlier eras, including evidence for the

Rama tale being known during the Sukhothai period, with references made to a ‘Phra Ram Cave’ in the famous Sukhothai Inscription No. 1. In the Ayutthaya period, 1351 to 1767, there is more evidence that the Rama story was quite well known from the many verses that remain from that time, albeit some only fragments, as well as evidence for the development during this period of the shadow puppet theater, *nang yai*, and the masked dance-drama, *khon*, which typically have used the Rama story as the narrative for performance.

There is evidence of the story’s presence and some level of significance during the Thonburi period (1767-1782), attested to by the fact that King Taksin, the ruler at that time, found time during his many war campaigns to compose several verses of the story. In fact, there is an indication that King Taksin may have learned of some versions of the Rama story while on one of his southern campaigns and brought back ideas that were used in his own composition. This would appear to indicate the widespread presence of the Rama story in the area of what is now present day Thailand.

It is at the start of the Rattanakosin period, 1782 to present, under King Rama I, the first ruler of the present Chakri dynasty, that the Rama story in Thai took its full form as we know it today. Rama I directed the composition, or perhaps compilation and re-composition, of a complete telling of the Rama story as part of his extensive efforts at reconstruction after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 and the establishment of a new capital and dynasty in Bangkok. *Rama I Ramakien* is the most complete rendition of the Rama story existent, certainly in Thai, and perhaps the longest telling of the Rama story in the world, running more than 53,300 verses, without chapter or section breaks, with a recent printed edition covering 2,300 pages in four volumes. Although literary efforts relating to the Rama story appears to have received the most attention during the reign of Rama I, the importance and popularity of the story lived long after Rama I, as his successors, Rama II, IV, V and VI all made their own contributions to the Thai Rama literary repertoire.

***Rama I Ramakien* and Buddhism**

Rama I Ramakien is, for the most part, a description of one of the classic incarnations of the Hindu deity, Phra Narai (Vishnu), as Phra Ram (Rama) to overcome trouble in the world, similar to the role of other incarnations of Vishnu in Hindu mythology. It seems evident that the composers of *Rama I Ramakien* recognized that the Rama saga did not have Buddhist origins and thus the story includes prominent roles for the important and familiar gods in the traditional Hindu pantheon: Shiva (Phra Isuan), Vishnu (Phra Narai), Brahma (Phra Phrom), Indra (Phra In), and Suriya (Phra Athit). As well, *Rama I Ramakien* is full of Hindu and Indic associated elements, such as *rishi*, other major and minor Hindu deities and other incarnations of Phra Narai.

However, there appears to be evidence that in earlier renditions of the Rama story in Ayutthaya, there were more overt references to Buddhism, including recognizing Phra Ram as the Bodhisattva, similar to how he is portrayed in the Khmer and certain Northern and Northeastern Thai versions of the story. In addition, there is indication that the Thonburi version also has Buddhist overtones.

Furthermore, in Rama I’s rendition, there are some elements that suggest Buddhist sensibilities, such as the prominent role of Phra In (Indra), similar to his role

in traditional *jātaka* tales, and the frequent references by many of the characters to suffering and impermanence. In addition, one can not help but notice that *Rama I Ramakien* has been used as the basis for important mural paintings and other depictions at Buddhist temples, most prominently at Wat Phra Kaeo, the most important Buddhist temple in Thailand, and Wat Phra Chetaphun, as well as at a number of other Buddhist temples. In a number of traditional Buddhist murals, characters from the Rama story appear as part of the scene, usually in the scene of Overcoming Mara, where Hanuman and other characters are often depicted among the troops in Mara's army.

The largest repository of depictions of the Rama story, however, is on gold on black lacquerware cabinets that are intended to hold the Buddhist scriptures – ตู้พระไตรปิฎก, ตู้พระธรรม literally, *Tripitaka* or dhamma cabinet – that have been built since at least the mid-to-late Ayutthaya period. Lacquerware, an art form said to be originally adopted from the Chinese, was adapted by Thai artisans, particularly in the Ayutthaya period from the 17th century, and was used extensively through the Thonburi to the Rattanakosin periods. The lacquer technique has been used to decorate objects ranging from small decorative items to entire walls. However, one of the most extensive, and enduring, uses has been to decorate cabinets and other receptacles designed to hold Buddhist scripture manuscripts, a large number of which use the Rama story as the inspiration for their decorative motif.

Therefore, the Rama story in Thai, and most particularly *Rama I Ramakien*, while being ostensibly and on its surface a non-Buddhist, Hindu-identified narrative, has many associations and connections with Buddhism. Not only references in the narrative to common Buddhist tenants and beliefs, but also its use in sacred Buddhist settings, such as temples and on lacquerware cabinets holding the Buddhist scripture. One might venture to classify *Rama I Ramakien* as a 'Hindu-identified narrative with Buddhist sensibilities.' This is perhaps another reason why the story has had a significant impact and been widely accepted and adopted in Thai Buddhist culture and society and which makes this topic an interesting area of study.

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The Lacquerware Cabinet Collection at the National Library, Bangkok

In the early part of the 20th century, the National Library of Thailand collected a large number of lacquerware cabinets from various Buddhist temples to help preserve them. At present, there are 414 such cabinets held by the National Library, of which 376 have been classified by the Fine Arts Department as being from the early Rattanakosin period. The cabinets are primarily housed at the National Library in Bangkok, with a few in some national museums. It is these cabinets that form the basis of this study.

Approximately 60% of the total number of cabinets have some narrative depiction, that is, images of characters or scenes that can be traced to an existing known narrative. In addition to the Rama story, such narratives primarily include traditional depictions from the Life of the Buddha and the *jātaka* tales, both canonical and non-canonical, along with some miscellaneous folk tales and stories, such as Maha Vamsa and *Sam Kok*.

With respect to this set of cabinets selected for study, there about 175 with some sort of depiction that can be connected with the Rama story, representing about

46% of the total number of cabinets ('the Rama Cabinets'). Of the Rama Cabinets, approximately 60% have narrative elements, that is, with depiction of characters and scenes that can be identified and link to specific episodes in a written narrative, which for this study is *Rama I Ramakien*.

The balance of the Rama Cabinets have non-episodic images, including "*phap chap*", depictions of two or three characters in a stylized form of hand-to-hand combat; scenes of 'Marching Out', that is, presentation of the leaders and armies of the two combatants marching out to the battlefield in preparation to fight; as well as other images, such as single characters.

Given the large number of cabinets with depictions that can be connected to the Rama story, the obvious question arises as to why such images were so readily selected to adorn these cabinets that held the most sacred of the Buddhist texts. Since no documents remain, if they ever existed, indicating why the choice of narrative themes was made by the patrons and artisans, an analysis of the possible didactic and symbolic roles will be addressed in this research.

Classical Thai Painting

The eminent Thai art historian and scholar, Jean Boisselier, provided a conceptual framework for analyzing classical Thai painting in his seminal work, *Thai Painting*. Boisselier espouses the opinion that essentially all classical Thai painting, of which he unequivocally includes lacquerware, rather than being merely decorative, has two primary purposes. One is didactic to teach moral lessons, mostly of a Buddhist nature, and the other is symbolic.²

Boisselier was quite emphatic in his evaluation of lacquerware as a form of classical Thai painting equivalent to the traditional wall mural paintings typically found in Buddhist temples. He was under the opinion that both forms of expression had similar didactic and symbolic motives. It is interesting to note that Boisselier states that these cabinets "...are very numerous and would repay extended study of both style and choice of subject",³ which this proposed dissertation intends to address in part.

The Symbolic Element

With respect to the symbolic element of the Rama story, there are a number of historical and other factors that need to be taken into account, particularly involving the traditional position of the king in Thai-identified societies. It has long been established that the rulers of Thai-identified territories during the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods have been looked at and expected to be both guardians and protectors of Buddhism as part of their role and duty as the ruler. As well, the recognition of the kings as being divinely associated with the Hindu deities, particularly Phra Narai, either by comparison with or as an incarnation of, has been well established. Finally, the connection between Phra Narai and the king clearly highlights the association between the Thai kings and Phra Ram, which can be seen

² Boisselier, *Thai Painting*, 23.

³ Boisselier, *Thai Painting*, 23, 34.

both symbolically and through the various pieces of literature that have been composed over the years.

Therefore, the identification of Phra Ram with the Thai king, combined with the role of the king in guarding and protecting Buddhism, appears to suggest that Phra Ram has been considered a protector or guardian of Buddhism. Accordingly, the depiction Rama related images on the lacquerware cabinets could be considered a symbolic representation of the king protecting and safeguarding the sacred Buddhist scriptures inside, and, by extension, protecting Buddhism. This analysis is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

The Didactic Element

Along with this symbolic meaning, one could also read a didactic message through the frequent depiction of fighting scenes from the Rama story, that being to convey a lesson of the triumph of good/truth, represented by the side of Phra Ram, over evil/ignorance, represented by the side of Thotsakan (Ravana). This is often reinforced by scenes of triumph, such as showing Intharachit, the son of Thotsakan, being executed by Phra Lak, or in the *phap chap* images where the side of good/truth is always shown in the top, superior position and the side of evil/ignorance in the bottom, subordinate position.

Hypothesis of the Study

The Rama story, and *Rama I Ramakien* in particular, has been used extensively as the narrative source for depictions on Thai lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scriptures with sacred and moral symbolism as embodied in the Rama story. In this regard, the use of images from the Rama story has two important purposes: First, as a didactic mode – to convey moral and ethical messages embodied in the story, particularly, the triumph of moral good over immoral evil, or in more Buddhistic terms, truth over ignorance; and, second, as a symbolic mode – with Phra Ram, representing, and in association with the king, the guardian and protector of the Buddhist scriptures, in particular, and Buddhism, in general.

Research Questions of the Study

1. How has the Rama story, and *Rama I Ramakien* in particular, been used in depictions on Thai gold on black lacquerware cabinets created in the early Rattanakosin period designed to hold the Buddhist scripture in terms of narratives, forms of depiction and other relevant factors?
2. What episodes have been depicted and can such depictions be linked to textual sources? In what form and manner are the texts and the depictions similar or different in relating the story?
3. What iconographic elements have been used to represent the scenes?
4. How do the depictions of the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets compare to other forms of depictions and as used in performance, in particular, performance of *nang yai*, large shadow puppets?

5. What was the function and purpose of using depictions from the Rama narrative on Thai gold on black lacquerware cabinets built in the early Rattanakosin period?

Approaches to be Used

Scope of the Study

While there are many forms of depiction of the Rama story, including mural paintings, sculpture and bas-relief, this study will be primarily limited to depictions on Thai gold on black lacquerware cabinets from the early Rattanakosin period. For purposes of this study, this period is defined as covering the reigns of King Rama I-IV (1782-1868), with a few cabinets perhaps from the beginning of the reign of Rama V.

The main focus of this study will be on the 376 scripture cabinets in the collection of the National Library of Thailand that have been classified by the Fine Arts Department as belong to the early Rattanakosin Period (the ‘National Library Collection’). Other forms of lacquerware will also be discussed, including the lacquerware cabinets at the Buddhaisawan Chapel located at the Bangkok National Museum and the Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkard Palace, Bangkok. While there are many other lacquerware cabinets located in various Buddhist temples, museums and private collections, given the large number of cabinets in the collection of the National Library, this study will focus only on those lacquerware cabinets.

Furthermore, most of the research undertaken and publications made with respect to this topic have relied upon the National Library Collection. This perhaps indicates that the breadth and scope of the collection as a source of in-depth study of this subject matter has been well accepted.

It should be noted, however, given a lack of expertise and the general focus of this research on the use of narratives, not the artistic style or aesthetic aspects of the cabinets, no independent attempt will be made to apply dates or periods when individual cabinets were created. Instead, the dating that has generally been assigned by the Fine Arts Department and/or other art experts will be relied upon in this study as necessary and appropriate to the discussion.

As part of the research efforts, each episode identified as being depicted on the cabinets will be analyzed, with reference to textual sources, particularly the version of the Rama story by Rama I, *Rama I Ramakien*. Detailed review of the similarities and differences between the narrative and the depiction of the most frequently represented scenes will be undertaken and presented. As well, specific iconographic elements used to represent scenes and episodes will be identified and discussed. Finally, some attempt will be made to compare the depictions that appear on the lacquerware cabinets with those used in other depictions of the Rama story and in performance, in particular, the large shadow puppets called *nang yai*.

Previous Research and Publications

Research on Lacquerware Cabinets

While extensive research and study has been made of *Rama I Ramakien* and the Rama story in a Thai context, a search of relevant databases and on-line sources has uncovered only two academic works that address the topic of research for this

study specifically. The first is a master's thesis entitled "The study of Ramayana from ancient Thai cabinets in Ayudhya and Dhonburi periods" by Sanya Sudlumert.⁴ Sanya's research, while focusing on lacquerware cabinets with depictions related to the Rama story, was limited to only cabinets from the Ayutthaya and Thonburi periods in the National Library collection, which represents less than 10% of the entire corpus of such cabinets. In addition, Sanya primarily focused on the art style and aesthetic aspects of the cabinets, with less attention paid to the narrative aspects, particularly avoiding any interpretation of the narratives. Sanya also spent a considerable portion of the research on trying to date the cabinets based on artistic and design elements when compared to other positively dated art works, such as stucco reliefs and other objects, located elsewhere.

The second academic work is another master's thesis entitled "Cabinets with gold motifs in the Rattanakosin period" by Mongkol Pornsirikpakdee.⁵ Mongkol's research, albeit covering more cabinets than Sanya, focused almost entirely on the aesthetic aspects of the cabinets, rather than the narrative aspects. As well, the cabinets researched were not limited to just cabinets with Rama motifs. Mongkol used dates that appear in colophons on the cabinets to create a profile of design features related to that specific date and period, which, in turn, were used to date other cabinets in the collection. The subject matter of both of these pieces of academic research does not appear to address the matter that will be the focus of this research.

In addition to these academic works, there have been a number of publications that cover the topic of lacquerware cabinets and/or the use of Rama narratives on such cabinets. The most relevant to this research are a series of five books published by the National Library cataloging the collection of cabinets and other lacquerware receptacles housed at the National Library in detail.⁶ While these publications have provided the primary source of basic information for the database compiled in connection with this research, they include only limited information regarding the narratives, with no analysis or discussion. In addition, it might be noted, there appear to be a significant number of misinterpretations in the identification of the narratives.

In addition, the Fine Arts Department has recently issued a publication entitled *Ramakien on Lacquerware Cabinets* by Buntuean Siwonphot.⁷ This publication attempts to present the storyline of *Rama I Ramakien* as depicted on the lacquerware cabinets in the collection from the National Library, using images from only a few selected cabinets, without detailing the entire collection, and again, with little or no analysis of the narratives. There also appear to be a number of apparent discrepancies in the identification of the narratives. A prior publication compiled by Buntuean and the Fine Arts Department details the use of *jātaka* tales and the Life of the Buddha on the lacquerware cabinets, again using the collection from the National Library.⁸

The Fine Arts Department also undertook a study in 1995 looking at works from each region of Thailand, examining lacquerware from both royal and local

4 Sanya, "The study of Ramayana from ancient Thai cabinets in Ayudhya and Dhonburi periods".

5 Mongkol, "Cabinets with gold motifs in the Rattanakosin period".

6 Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 1 and Part 2, Vols 1-4.

7 Buntuean, *Ramakien on Lacquerware Cabinets*.

8 Buntuean, *Jataka and the Life of the Buddha on Lacquerware Cabinets*.

artisans, which was published in a volume entitled *Development of Lacquerware*.⁹ This work, as with the others mentioned above, essentially covers the technical and aesthetic aspects of lacquerware. However, this publication has an interesting representation of works from outside the collection of the National Library, noting that local artisans often use a greater variety of source material for the subject of the depictions and tend to employ a freer artistic style.

Muang Boran Publishing has issued a number of works relevant to this topic, including two works by the well-known art historian, N. Na Paknam: *Tripitaka Cabinets: The Best of Lacquerware Art*,¹⁰ and *The Art of Lacquerware*.¹¹ As well, Muang Boran recently issued a work entitled *Thai Lacquer Works* by Apiwan Adulyapichet.¹² All three of these works focused on the art and design aspects of the lacquerware cabinets, with little attention paid to the narratives.

Finally, the only work in English that addresses this subject matter in any depth is an article by Michael Wright, a self-taught art historian, entitled “Towards a History of Siamese Gilt-Lacquer Painting,” printed in the *Journal of Siam Society* in 1979.¹³ Wright, once again, uses the collection from the National Library as the basis of his work, and again focuses on the art style and aesthetic aspects of the cabinets, with little attention paid to the narratives. Wright uses various design features, along with some positive dates in the colophons, to create “families” of cabinets, and thus attempt to apply rough dating to some of the cabinets.

As can be seen, nearly all of these publications and research focus on the art and design features of the lacquerware cabinets, rather than the narrative aspects, or are merely descriptive in nature, with little or no analysis. While these sources are all very informative and useful to this research, they do not appear to address the primary focus of this study.

General Literature on *Rama I Ramakien* and the Rama Story

The body of serious academic literature in English relating to *Rama I Ramakien* and the Rama story in a Thai context in general is somewhat limited. The literature that is available, much of which has been cited where appropriate throughout this study, is mainly broad based in scope covering a general description of the story or is focused on social or cultural aspects. Specific titles of such literature include “A Comparative Study of the Sanskrit, Tamil, Thai and Malay Versions of the Story of Rama with Special Reference to the Process of Acculturation in the Southeast Asian Versions” and “The Rāma Story in the Thai Cultural Tradition” both by S Singaravelu; “Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien” and “The Indian Influence on Thai Culture in the Thai Ramayana,” both by Srisurang Poolthupya; “Ramayana, Rama Jataka, and *Ramakien*: A Comparative Study of Hindu

9 Fine Arts Department, *Development of Lacquerware*.

10 Paknam, *Tripitaka Cabinets*.

11 Paknam, *The Art of Lacquerware*.

12 Apiwan, *Thai Lacquer Works*.

13 Wright, “Towards a History of Siamese Gilt-Lacquer Painting”.

and Buddhist Traditions” by Frank E. Reynolds; and “Notes on the Saga of Rama in Thailand” by Christian Velder.¹⁴

There is literature on specific topics from the Rama story, including a review of historical material by Prince Dhani Nivat in “Review of Books-*The Ramakien of King of Thonburi*”; information about performance aspects in “Hide Figures of the Rāmakien at the Ledermuseum in Offenbach, Germany” also by Dhani, who also wrote many articles in Thai on this subject; “The Ramayana in the Arts of Thailand and Cambodia” by Julie B. Mehta; *Ramakien in Modern Performance: The Reflection of an Identity Crisis* by Kittisak Kerdarunsuksri; and a discussion of a specific episode in *Rama I Ramakien* in “The Episode of Maiyarab in the Thai Rāmakien and Its Possible Relationship to Tamil Folklore” by Singaravelu.¹⁵

In addition, there are a few serious studies on specific episodes and sections from Thai renditions of the Rama story. Theodora Helene Bofman undertakes a detailed review of the literary aspects of the Rama narrative in *The Poetics of the Ramakian* [sic], in which she translates and analyzes 60 pages of verse from *Rama I Ramakien*.¹⁶ Bofman looks at the overall structure of the verses and then analyzes the linguistic and literary devices used in the text. Klaus Wenk in *Phali Teaches the Young, A Literary and Sociological Analysis of the Thai Poem Phali son nong*, analyzes a specific speech and eight corresponding texts from other sources of the Thai Rama story, comparing the different versions and making observations on the sociological aspects of the speech, concluding that the general purpose of the compositions was “to offer useful precepts” and offer a useful lesson in sociology.¹⁷ Finally, Pensak Chagsuchinda in *Nang Loi: The Floating Maiden* translates one scene from Rama II’s rendition of the Rama story.¹⁸

The body of literature regarding *Rāmāyaṇa* is too vast to summarize effectively here. There are many courses of study and academic programs devoted solely to *Rāmāyaṇa* research, including periodic International *Rāmāyaṇa* conferences, the first being held in 1984 and the most recent in 2014. A few of the anthologies of articles and writings on *Rāmāyaṇa* that deserve mention are *Many Rāmāyaṇa, The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* and *Questioning Ramayanas*, both edited by the well-known *Rāmāyaṇa* scholar, Paula Richman; *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited* edited by Mandakranta Bose; *Ramayana Around the World* edited by Lallan

14 Singaravelu, “A Comparative Study of the Sanskrit, Tamil, Thai and Malay Versions of the Story of Rama”; Singaravelu, “The Rāma Story in the Thai Cultural Tradition”; Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”; Srisurang, Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien; Reynolds, “Ramayana, Rama Jataka, and Ramakien”; Velder, “Notes on the Saga of Rama in Thailand”.

15 Dhani, “Review of Books-*The Ramakien of King of Thonburi*”; Dhani, “The Shadow-Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play”; Mehta, “The Ramayana in the Arts of Thailand and Cambodia”; Kittisak, “Ramakien in Modern Performance”; Singaravelu, “The Episode of Maiyarab in the Thai Rāmakien”.

16 Bofman, *The Poetics of the Ramakian*.

17 Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 199.

18 Pensak, *NANG LOI: The Floating Maiden*.

Prasad Vyas; *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia* by Garrett Kam; and John L. Brockington's *Righteous Rama, the Evolution of an Epic*.¹⁹

A Note on the Source of the Rama Story

Before launching into the body of the study, a few background notes might be in order on the source of the Rama narrative to be employed in this research. In performing the analysis, *Rama I Ramakien* has been selected because it is the longest and most complete rendition of the Rama story in Thai, thus providing the most extensive material to analyze.²⁰ The entire work has been thoroughly reviewed to identify the sections applicable to the objectives of this research, using the original Thai text.²¹



¹⁹ Richman, ed., *Many Ramayanas*; Richman, ed., *Questioning Ramayanas*; Bose, ed., *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited*; Vyas, ed., *Ramayana Around the World*; Kam, *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia*; Brockington, *Righteous Rama*.

²⁰ *Ramakien of King Rama I, Vols 1-4*.

²¹ In this regard, it should be noted that all translations in English of the Thai text taken from *Rama I Ramakien* were rendered by the author of this study, thus any mistranslations or misinterpretations are solely his responsibility. Here applicable, quoted text has been provided in both the translated English and the original Thai language script, with no transliteration into Roman script provided for the quoted passages. To the extent names and other selected words have been transliterated, the transliteration was rendered using the program made available by the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

Chapter 2: The Rama Story in India and Southeast Asia

The title to Paula Richman's book, *Many Rāmāyaṇas*,¹ highlights the diversity of the Rama story, and what diversity there is, with the Rama narrative being represented in some version or another in almost every country and culture in Asia, as well as many throughout the world. The Sahitya Akademi in India, in collaboration with the Union Académique Internationale in Brussels, published an inventory of studies on the Rama story which lists 49 languages covering primary texts, translations and studies.² While nearly all these versions and renditions can ultimately trace their origin in some form or another back to India, the path followed is often long and convoluted. In fact, tracing the origin of the many versions and renditions in India alone, said to be more than 300, is also unclear, given its antiquity and diversity.³

Rāmāyaṇa is one of the classic poems, along with the longer *Mahabharata*, that make up some of the most important texts, both religious and secular, in India. K. Krishnamoorthy states:

The *Rāmāyaṇa*... drew a larger circle of writers as it came to be invested with a sanctity and religious merit unknown elsewhere in the history of world literature... the *Rāmāyaṇa* is not just an epic but a national fountainhead of all legendary lore and ideal ethical conduct.⁴

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

While the origin of what many consider the 'original' *Rāmāyaṇa* itself is subject to debate, most would attribute the earliest oral composition of the Rama story to an Indian poet named Vālmīki. While some say that Vālmīki is just a general term, not a specific author of a specific text,⁵ Robert Goldman, the eminent Ramayanic scholar, provides a list of a number of well-known scholars who agree that the work was by a single poet, noting "...modern scholarship has, by and large, accepted Vālmīki as historical personage."⁶ The date of composition is also a matter of much discussion, set sometime in the 3-4th century BCE, although Goldman points out that archetype of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* could be as early as the 7th century BCE.⁷

1 Richman, *Many Rāmāyaṇas*.

2 Sahitya Akademi Inventory: Arabic, Assamese, Bengali, Brazilian, Burmese, Chinese, Czech, Dorgi, Egyptian, English, French, German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kannada, Kashmiri, Khmer, Konkani, Laotian, Latin, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Norwegian, Oriya, Persian, Philippines, Polish, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Russian, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Swedish, Tamil, Telugu, Turkish, Thai, Urdu, Ukrainian, and Uzbek. Krishnamoorthy, *A Critical Inventory of Rāmāyaṇa Studies in the World*, Volumes I, II. To this list might also be added: Apabhramsa, Awadhi, Balinese, Brajhasa, Javanese, Karbi, Kawi, Khamati, Khotanese, Malaysian, Maranao, Mongolian, Pali, Prakrit, Punjabi, Santali, Sundanese, Tagalong, Tibetan and Vietnamese; along with languages of translation: Hungarian, Spanish and Portuguese. In this regard, See Kam, *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia*, 286-287.

3 Ramanujan, "Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas", 22-49.

4 Krishnamoorthy, *A Critical Inventory of Rāmāyaṇa Studies in the World*, Volume 1, xv.

5 Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 12.

6 Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 29.

7 Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 23.

The *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* starts with an explanation of the source of the story, that being a response by a senior sage, Nārada, to Vālmīki's questions: "Is there a man in the world today who is truly virtuous? Who is there who is mighty and yet knows both what is right and how to act upon it? Who always speaks the truth and holds firmly to his vows?"⁸ Nārada responds by telling him about Rama and gives a condensed version of the entire Rama saga. Vālmīki then hears the lament of a bird that has been shot by a hunter and in his grief, invents the poetic form of expression, which he calls *śloka*, after *śoka*, grief. Thereby, Vālmīki is said to be the first poet, *Ādikavi*, and the author of the first ornate poem, *Ādikāvya*.⁹ Brahma then visits Vālmīki and instructs him to write out the entire 24,000 line tale, *Rāmāyaṇa*, based on what he had heard from Nārada, after which Vālmīki relates the tale to twin brothers living in his ashram, who are in fact the sons of Rama, who then go and relate the tale to Rama.¹⁰

Notwithstanding this introduction that is part of the narrative, it is said that Vālmīki likely compiled and wrote out what existed in folk tales and legends that had been transmitted orally for generations.¹¹ While many accept that Rama was a historical person and Ayodhya a kingdom,¹² others have questioned this, noting that there is "not a shred of evidence other than the idealized, exaggerated, and clearly largely imaginary accounts of the poem itself."¹³

It is interesting to note that nearly all the seemingly countless subsequent renditions and versions of the Rama saga that follow are in some sort of verse or poetic form based on local convention and custom. This is perhaps because the transmission of the tale, both before and after its formal composition, was in oral form by traveling bards who entertained the local people with poetry and music. This form of transmission also likely accounts for the seemingly countless variations and embellishments as the tellers would try to enliven the story for their listeners and adapt them for local tastes.¹⁴ With respect to the numerous written texts that have been copied down through the ages, "...it is no wonder that later poets and even educated copyists added their little bits in order to embellish the text or to project their pet philosophical and religious views in such a work of enduring nature."¹⁵

However, it is generally agreed that the entire narrative of *Rāmāyaṇa* should not be attributed to Vālmīki. This 'original' version contains seven sections, or *kāṇḍas*, the first and last of which are considered to be of later origin and thus of different authorship.¹⁶ In addition, the oldest written versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* that exist date only to 1020, although there is reference to a *Rāmāyaṇa* codex in a pre-Angkorian Sanskrit inscription dated 600.¹⁷ To complicate matters, there have been

8 Goldman, The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 121.

9 Krishnamoorthy, A Critical Inventory of *Rāmāyaṇa* Studies in the World, Volume 1, xx.

10 Goldman, The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 127-129, 132-134.

11 Rajagopalachari, *Ramayana*.

12 Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 12; Sankala, *The Ramayana in Historical Perspective*.

13 Goldman, The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 28.

14 Goldman, The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 82-83; Sundaram, *Kamba Ramayana*, xvi.

15 Krishnamoorthy, A Critical Inventory of *Rāmāyaṇa* Studies in the World, Volume 1, xxv.

16 Goldman, The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 15.

17 Goldman, The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, 83.

two main lines of transmission of the narrative, termed the Northern and Southern Recensions, with the Northern being further distinguished into Northeastern, Northwestern and Western Recensions.¹⁸ John Brockington devised an “evolution of the epic”, splitting its growth into five stages, from its initial oral stage, to growth and addition of the middle five *kāṇḍas*, then the addition of the first and last *kāṇḍas* several hundred years later, and the further development of the narrative when it split into the regional recensions.¹⁹

All of these recensions, additions, and commentaries were examined between 1960 and 1975 by the experts at the Oriental Institute, Baroda to compile what is considered the “Critical Edition”.²⁰ This Critical Edition has served as the basis of a translation project headed by Goldman. To date, English translations of six of the seven *kāṇḍas* have been published.²¹ Goldman, et.al’s massive undertaking, consuming more than thirty years now, presents a line-by-line translation with copious footnotes and extensive introductions. For example, the sixth and longest *kāṇḍa*, the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, which encompasses much of the war between Rama and Ravana, consists of 1,689 pages in two volumes, the second volume of which is nearly 1,000 pages of footnotes and explanation.

The connection between the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and the Thai renditions of the Rama story appears not to have been well known and established until the time of Rama VI.²² As will be discussed later, he clearly identified the connection between the two texts, stating: “After examining the Ramayana versions of Hindu completely, I think that Ramakien used the Sanskrit version as its basis.”²³ Subsequently, a number of researchers have studied the relationship between the two texts in greater detail. Of more recent scholars, the most oft-cited research in this regard is that of Somporn Singto who wrote a Master’s Thesis entitled “The Relationship Between the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki and the Ramakian [*sic*] of King Rama I.” Somporn compared the two texts in detail and concluded that while *Rama I Ramakien* has its origins in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, there are many differences, making it clear that the Thai rendition is not merely a translation of the Sanskrit version.²⁴

Vernacular and Local Indian Versions of the Rama Saga

Some of the most significant and influential versions of the Rama tale in India are those composed in local languages that are better understood by the people. One can suppose that the erudite and scholarly Sanskrit version of Vālmīki was too distant

¹⁸ Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 8.

¹⁹ Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 307-327; Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 13.

²⁰ For a detail discussion of the process and manuscripts used in this process, see Shah, “Rāmāyaṇa Manuscripts of Different Versions”.

²¹ Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume I, *Bālakāṇḍa*; Pollock, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume II, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*; Pollock, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume III, *Aranyakāṇḍa*; Lefebvre, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume IV, *Kiṣkindhakāṇḍa*; Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume V, *Sundarakāṇḍa*; Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume VI, *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, Parts 1 and 2. The final volume, *Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, is forthcoming in Dec 2016.

²² Sathiankoset, *Upakon Ramakien*, 16.

²³ Rama VI, *Origin of Ramakien*, 125.

²⁴ Somporn, “The Relationship Between the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki and the Ramakian of King Rama I”.

and difficult for most people to grasp, but that a version in their own language, of which there are hundreds in India, would be more accessible and understandable. “Sanskrit...had little functional value for the common man...Sanskrit epics like the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata hardly enjoyed universal appeal because of their strongly elitist character.”²⁵ This perhaps explains why some of these versions are far more popular and widely read than the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Goldman states “in some cases...works derived from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are still regarded as among the greatest pieces in the literary traditions of important languages.”²⁶ P.S. Sundaram sums this idea up by saying:

“...they are far from translations or even transcreations, being independent works drawing on the immemorial myth from different sources and shot through with religious, philosophical, theological and literary influences of their time and regional culture.”²⁷

Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas

Ramcharitmanas, or “the lake of the deeds of Ram”,²⁸ the Hindu language version composed by Gosvami Tulsidas in the 16th century, “the unofficial poet-laureate of India,”²⁹ is perhaps the most well-known versions of the Rama saga in India, certainly among the majority Hindu speaking population, and has inspired a large number of other poets to write various versions of the Rama story.³⁰ Brockington points out that it is likely Tulsidas not only looked to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, but also other sources for his inspiration, including other sacred Sanskrit texts, the Vedas and Puranas, as well as other versions of the Rama story.³¹ This probably explains the fact that Tulsidas’ poem was “...in no sense a Hindi translation, nor even a version of the Sanskrit epic...he wished to interpret his hero after his own fashion.”³²

While Tulsidas retains the traditional seven *kāṇḍa* format, there is a different emphasis on the virtues and ideal qualities of Rama, with no ambiguity as to him being an incarnation of Vishnu, perfect in all aspects and thus a divine being to be venerated and worshipped. This makes the work of Tulsidas far and away a much more religious narrative than the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.

Described as being “sublime, divine and full of epical qualities” that must be read to understand Hinduism,³³ many Hindus considering *Ramcharitmanas* a holy narrative, the way the Bible is considered by Christians, even sometimes calling it the ‘the Bible of north India’ and read or refer to the text on a regular basis.³⁴ Macfie points out that “few books are more widely known or have exercised a greater

25 Mukherjee, “From Vālmīki to Kṛttivāsa”, 47.

26 Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume I, Bālakāṇḍa, 40.

27 Sundaram, *Kamba Ramayana*, xviii.

28 Macfie, *The Ramayana of Tulsidas*, xvii.

29 Kumar, “Tulasidas’s Ramacharitmanasa”, 291.

30 Bhagwan Das Tiwari, “Hindi Versions of the Ramayana”, 196.

31 Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 279; see also, Prasad, “Sri Ramacharitmanasa”, 278.

32 Macfie, *The Ramayana of Tulsidas*, xv.

33 Prasad, “Sri Ramacharitmanasa”, 276.

34 Bose, *The Rāmāyaṇa Culture, Text Performance and Iconography*, 85

influence...the poet was wiser than he knew when he insisted on writing his book in the vernacular.”³⁵

Kamba Ramayana of Kamban

The *Kamba Ramayana*, also called *Irāmāvatāram*, ‘the Descent of Rāma’,³⁶ composed by Kamban in the local Tamil language of Southern India, was possibly the earliest of the versions of the Rama saga in the “various living languages of India”,³⁷ dated between the 7th to the 12th century.³⁸ Such regionalization in India is highlighted by Richman:

In Tamil Nadu, in contrast, relatively few people would even know a few verses of *Rāmcharitmānas*. Instead, those familiar with Tamil literary tradition would claim Kamban’s *Irāmāvatāram* (c. twelfth century) as the most significant account of Rama. They might even consider offensive the idea the Tulsidas has more than regional significance, since the Hindi language that endears Tulsidas to North Indians is often seen as a liability in Tamil Nadu, which boasts its own “classical” telling of Rama’s story.³⁹

Although Kamban acknowledges Vālmīki as one of his primary sources, the *Kamba Ramayana* contains just six of the traditional seven *kāṇḍas*, with the last *kāṇḍa* not included, his work is clearly not a mere translation of Vālmīki, with “...significant differences between the two in tone, texture, underlying philosophical and aesthetic assumptions and revealing departures in the storyline and salience of characterization.”⁴⁰ Ramanujan points out that that Kampan “...not only makes full use of his predecessor Vālmīki’s materials but folds in many regional fold traditions. It is often through him that they then become part of the other *Rāmāyaṇas*.”⁴¹

As with *Ramcharitmanas* of Tulsidas, Rama is the god Vishnu incarnated. Accordingly, the characterization of Rama, with little show of human emotions, either overly joyous or despondent, follows as he is portrayed by Vālmīki, albeit still with a vestige of humanness, and thus not perfect in all aspects as Rama is portrayed by Tulsidas.⁴² However, unlike *Ramcharitmanas*, Kamban’s *Irāmāvatāram* is not as popular and has not become a devotional or ritual narrative, with only a few passages becoming part of the everyday life of regular people.⁴³

Sundaram also points out that Kamban’s ‘reading’, as he characterizes it, is full of poetic excesses and elaborate imagery, including detailed descriptions of the countryside and landscape.⁴⁴ This feature, as well as many other scenes and themes that correspond, is perhaps one of the aspects that have led many to compare this

35 Macfie, *The Ramayana of Tulsidas*, xvii.

36 Narayanan, “The Ramayana and its Muslim Interpreters”, 265.

37 Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 269.

38 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Kamba- Rāmāyaṇa*, ix; Sundaram, *Kamba Ramayana*, xxiii.

39 Richman, “Questioning and Multiplicity Within The Rāmāyaṇa Tradition”, 9.

40 Sundaram, *Kamba Ramayana*, xxiii.

41 Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas”, 31.

42 Sundaram, *Kamba Ramayana*, xxx.

43 Narayanan, “The Ramayana and its Muslim Interpreters”, 266, 280.

44 Sundaram, *Kamba Ramayana*, xxxiv.

telling, and other Tamil versions, of the Rama story to that of the Rama story in Thai.⁴⁵ However, since the focus of this study is not on comparative literature, the details of such similarities will be left to later research.

Vasudha Narayanan, in his article “The Ramayana and its Muslim Interpreter”, explains how Kamban’s work has been embraced by Tamil-speaking Muslim scholars in South India, even joining in annual celebrations. His article highlights an interesting cross-religious aspect of the Rama story, due in part to the fact that Kamban’s work has not assumed a level of sacredness as has Tulsidas.⁴⁶ This perhaps has a parallel in the way Thai Buddhist have embraced this Hindic-identified story.

Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttibāsa

Another influential adaptation of the Rama story in a regional language is that of the Bengali version from North India by Kṛttibāsa in the 15th century,⁴⁷ “said by literary historians to be the most popular single book in all of premodern Bengal” and which has retained its popularity to today with many copies produced in acts of meritorious duty.⁴⁸ Kṛttibāsa, himself, is said to have characterized his work to be “accessible to the masses”, as well as emphasizing that just by uttering the name Rama, one can obtain salvation, clearly portraying Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu.⁴⁹ The modern versions have many divergences from Vālmīki, albeit keeping the same basic story structure, and many interpolations from its original composition, including the incorporation of a significant amount of folk-tale material, making the current version “a tapestry of the collective consciousness of the Bengali speaking peoples of eastern India the records their changing beliefs and practices.”⁵⁰ One such addition is the story of Mahi Ravana, who is a son of Ravana in the underworld, which some have said could likely be the genesis of the Maiyarab episode in *Rama I Ramakien*, and can also be found in the Malay and Javanese renditions.⁵¹

An interesting aspect of the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the way it has been treated, is that the very long narrative is full of individual episodes “...fitting for public performance and consumption in detachable segments...the units within the framework tend to be discrete and able to be independently presented and manipulated without varying the overall nutritive structure of the text”.⁵² This is very similar to the nature of *Rama I Ramakien*, as well as that of the composition of Rama

45 Sathiankoset, Upakon Ramakien, 141-142; Singaravelu, “A Comparative Study of the Sanskrit, Tamil, Thai and Malay Versions of the Story of Rama”, 142; Swami Satyananda Puri, *The Ramakirti*, 10.

46 Narayanan, “The Ramayana and its Muslim Interpreters”.

47 Bose, *The Rāmāyaṇa Culture, Text Performance and Iconography*, 3; Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 276-278.

48 Stewart, “Kṛttibāsa’s Apophatic Critique of Rāma’s Kingship”; Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 30.

49 Mukherjee, “From Vālmīki to Kṛttivāsa”, 48-49.

50 Bose, *The Rāmāyaṇa Culture, Text Performance and Iconography*, 3.

51 Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 278.

52 Stewart, “Kṛttibāsa’s Apophatic Critique of Rāma’s Kingship”, 245.

II, which has many episodes and scenes that can act independent and are thus suitable for individual performance.

Kashmiri Ramayana

Another regional telling of the Rama story of literary and religious importance is a 19th century work in the Kashmiri language. As is usual with some of the regional and more obscure versions, the name of the author and title is sometimes confusing. Two translators of the work provide different names and composers, although they both appear to be referring to the same piece: G.A. Grierson gives the name of the author as Divākara Prakāśa Bhaṭṭa and merely calls the work *The Kashmiri Ramayana*; while Shanti Lal Nagar, who has translated many versions of the Rama story into English, gives the title of *Rāmāvatāracarita* and the composer as Prakāśa Rāma Kuryagrāmī.⁵³

Both Grierson and Shanti Lal Nagar point out how the Kashmir language is used in the composition, with Grierson almost equating the work to a dictionary of the Kashmir language, which he was compiling while he was also working on his translation of the work.⁵⁴ Shanti Lal Nagar notes that this work is largely based on local traditions, noting the geographical and social isolation of the Kashmir region, and, although following the outlines laid down by Vālmīki, contains an extra, eighth *kāṇḍa* about the sons of Rama. Shanti Lal Nagar points out that this narrative is both a work of poetic excellence, as well as the addition of many devotional aspects, songs and prayers, sometimes to the detriment of the story. Shanti Lal Nagar also notes that the natural environment of Kashmir played an important role in the composition, much as can be found in *Rama I Ramakien*, stating:

This aspect is so predominant, that after going through this work, one would feel unhesitatingly that it is not only composed by a Kashmiri but also while living in the beautiful and divine environment of Kashmir...there are numerous references relating to the melting of the snow, besides the mention of several flower and plants, which are grown in Kashmir alone...⁵⁵

Other Versions and Renditions

In addition to the major versions and renditions described above, there are many, many more tellings of the Rama story in the Indian subcontinent, too numerous to list in total. The following are a few of the more significant and noteworthy works:

- *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is a composition in Sanskrit by an unknown composer. Said to be from sometime after the 13-14th century, the work is a devotional text. The composition elaborates on the religious implications of the Rama story, albeit following the general outline of Vālmīki in the usual seven *kāṇḍas* of 4,200 verses, based on a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati about the divinity of Rama.⁵⁶ Swami

⁵³ Grierson, *The Kashmiri Ramayana*, xi; Shanti Lal Nagar, *Rāmāvatāracarita*, x.

⁵⁴ Grierson, *The Kashmiri Ramayana*, xi-xii.

⁵⁵ Shanti Lal Nagar, *Rāmāvatāracarita*, xi.

⁵⁶ Rai Bahadur Lala Baij Nath, *The Adhyatma Ramayana*, 379.

Tapasyananda, who calls this text the “spiritual version of the Rama Saga”, notes “the Adhyātma Ramayana must have powerfully influenced the Ramayanas that came afterwards in regional languages. Though they all took Vālmīki’s great tale as the main source, the spiritual turn given to it by Adhyātma Ramayana is reflected very strongly in the Ramayana of Tulsidas.”⁵⁷

- *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa*, another devotional text composed in Sanskrit, is attributed to Vālmīki. However, Shanti Lal Nagar points out that this is unlikely since the form of poetry does not compare to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as the mention of events from later periods being included, and it is more likely a work from around the 14th century. In somewhat of a departure from the usual format, this composition has 10 *kāṇḍas*.⁵⁸
- *Bhanu Bhakta Rāmāyaṇa* was composed in the 19th century in Nepalese by Bhanu Bhakta, a noted poet of Nepalese language. The work contains the usual seven *kāṇḍas*.⁵⁹
- *Bhaṭṭikāvya – Bhatti’s Poem, The Death of Rāvana* is a poem from the 7th century composed by Bhatti as both a telling of the Rama story and as a “comprehensive exemplification of Sanskrit grammar in use and a good introduction to the science (*śāstra*) of poetics and rhetoric (*alaṃkāra*, lit. ornament).”⁶⁰ The purpose of this work was to teach Sanskrit by way of a subject that would have been familiar to its readers. While generally following the traditional story line, the poem is split into 22 *kāṇḍas*. It is this text that was used as the basis for part of the oldest version of the Rama legend found in Indonesia, which will be discussed in the next section.
- *Giradhara Rāmāyaṇa* was composed by Giradhara in the 1855 in the Gujarati language, an Indo-Aryan language native to Gujarat in northwestern India. Shanti Lal Nagar notes that, although Krishna, and thus *Mahabharata*, was more popular in Gujarat, there were at least 18 works based on the Rama story composed in the Gujarati language starting in the 14th century, of which *Giradhara Rāmāyaṇa* is considered to be the best and most popular. This work has the usual seven *kāṇḍas*, with 299 chapters in over 19,000 verses, but is based on not only Vālmīki, but also other Sanskrit texts, as well as Tulsidas. Shanti Lal Nagar states: “the most important aspect of Giradhara’s work is that he has occasionally provided the comparative study of the events in *Rāmāyaṇa* based on those events in other works, which makes the subject quite unique and authentic.”⁶¹
- *Jagamohana Rāmāyaṇa*, composed by Balarama in the 16th century, is considered “...the oldest, most popular and most influential version of

57 Swami Tapasyananda, *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, vi, viii.

58 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* attributed to the Great Sage Vālmīki.

59 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Bhānu Bhakta Rāmāyaṇa* (Nepalese).

60 Bhatti, *Bhatti’s Poem*, xix.

61 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Giradhara Rāmāyaṇa*, xxi.

the epic in Oriya”, the local language of the region of Orissa in Eastern India.⁶²

- *Mantra Rāmāyaṇam*, composed by Nilakantha, a Sanskrit scholar of the 17th century from Maharashtra, a state in western India where Mumbai (Bombay) is located. In this work, the poet has projected a collection of Vedic hymns that are indirectly connected with Rama, thus making it a sort of commentary on the Vedic origin of the Rama story.⁶³
- *Mādhava Kandalī Rāmāyaṇa*, a work largely composed by Mādhava Kandalī in the 14th century in Assamese, an Eastern Indo-Aryan language used in Assam, northeastern India, with parts added later in the 16th century. This rendition generally follows the flow of Vālmīki, albeit a vastly condensed, “paraphrased” version, being about a fifth of the length of Vālmīki’s work, and deviates at certain stages.⁶⁴ Shanti Lal Nagar notes that this work is an excellent example of a poetic composition in Assamese.⁶⁵ W.L Smith also details many other versions in Assamese written after *Mādhava Kandalī Rāmāyaṇa*.⁶⁶
- *Śrī Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa*, from the 13th century, composed in the Telugu language, another Dravidian dialect spoken mainly in Andhra Pradesh region of India. The authorship is somewhat contested, but most say it was Goṇa Buddhareddy, and mostly follows that of Vālmīki, albeit with only six *kāṇḍas*. Shanti Lal Nagar lists six more works based on the Rama story in Telugu.⁶⁷
- *Torvey Rāmāyaṇa* by Torvey Narahari (Kumāra Vālmīki), a work of the 15th century, in the Kannada language, a Dravidian dialect from south India. This work is based primarily on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, but with only six *kāṇḍas*. Shanti Lal Nagar lists another 28 works based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* composed in the Kannada language.⁶⁸

Non-Hindu Adaptations

Although the Rama saga, as traditionally known, is generally considered a Hindu-identified tale, the elements of the story have been adopted and adapted by other religions, particularly Buddhism and Jainism. In addition, as the story entered other areas and societies, it also was adapted to suit local customs and religious beliefs, such as Islam and Christianity.

62 Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 32.

63 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Mantra Rāmāyaṇam*.

64 Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 27, 41.

65 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Mādhava Kandalī Rāmāyaṇa*.

66 Smith, *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India*, 28-30.

67 Shanti Lal Nagar, *Śrī Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa*.

68 Torvey, *Torvey Rāmāyaṇa*.

Dasaratha Jataka

A version of the Rama story that is wholly Buddhist in nature is the *Dasaratha Jataka*, one of the 550 Pali canonical birth stories of the Buddha. The telling is simple and straightforward, focused just on the exile of Rama without the abduction and battle elements.⁶⁹

There has been considerable scholarship and research into whether the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Dasaratha Jataka* is older. Rai Saheb D. Sen concludes that the *Dasaratha Jataka* must be older for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is its simplified nature, but also certain allusions in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.⁷⁰ Goldman refutes this: “There can be no doubt, however, that on the basis of the best historical and literary evidence available to us, the *Dasaratha Jataka* is substantially later than the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and that it is both inspired by and derived from it.”⁷¹ Brockington seems to equivocate: “the *Dasaratha Jataka* gives a version of the Rama story which appears more modern than the Ramayana but which may go back to a separate source.”⁷² In any event, the *Dasaratha Jataka*, in which Rama is the Bodhisattva, is a story demonstrating the principle of self-control, for instance, portraying Rama maintaining a calm and reasoned demeanor upon hearing of the death of his father, Dasaratha. Richard Gombrich argues that perhaps the *Dasaratha Jataka* was composed as an answer to the Hindu *Rāmāyaṇa*, in which Rama laments uncontrollably upon hearing of the death of his father.⁷³

Jain Rāmāyaṇas

Another important expansion of the Rama story to non-Hindic religions was in connection with its adoption by Jainism, a religious faith in India contemporary to Buddhism and Hinduism. Shanti Lal Nagar states in the preface to his translation of a Jain version that there are, in fact, many pieces of literature related to Rama in Jainism, of which he lists 15.⁷⁴ The most noteworthy are the two earliest versions composed in the 1-5th centuries CE, of which many of the other versions are generally related: *Paiṃmacariya* by Vimalasuri and *Vasudevahiṇḍi* by Sanghadasa. Both written in Prakrit, these versions are generally indebted to and follow the storyline of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, albeit with fewer *kāṇḍas* and adaptations.⁷⁵

V. M. Kulkarni notes how the composer of *Paiṃmacariya* proclaims that prior works about Rama, without mentioning the author, although it is clear he is referring to Vālmīki, “...are most certainly lies; he thinks that the absurdities which are related regarding the life of Rāma, Rāvaṇa and others are not worthy of belief, and that the poets who composed Rāmāyaṇa were liars.”⁷⁶ Kulkarni also states that the Jain

69 Sen, Bengali Ramayanas, 14-15.

70 Sen, Bengali Ramayanas, 4-9.

71 Goldman, The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, Volume I, Bālakāṇḍa, 32.

72 Brockington, Righteous Rama, 260.

73 Gombrich, “The Vessantara Jataka, The Ramayana and the Dasaratha Jataka”, 435.

74 Shanti Lal Nagar, Jain Rāmāyaṇa-Paumacaryu, vii-viii. See also, Shah, “Rāmāyaṇa in Jaina Tradition”.

75 Brockington, Righteous Rama, 266; Shanti Lal Nagar, Jain Rāmāyaṇa-Paumacaryu, viii; Kulkarni, “The Origin and Development of the Rāma Story in Jaina Literature”, 193, 196.

76 Kulkarni, “The Origin and Development of the Rāma Story in Jaina Literature”, 197.

Rāmāyaṇas were written to “...glorify the Dharma of the Jains and teach the people Jain doctrines and criticise the Brahmanical Dharma.”⁷⁷ In this regard, Brockington points out that in keeping with the core tenets of Jainism, the character and actions of some of the main characters was adapted, making all the main characters devout Jainas, with less stress on Rama’s superhuman aspects and make the monkey and *asura* characters more benevolent. For instance, Rama is never shown killing, even animals, thus the most famous of scenes when he kills the golden deer is eliminated and his brother, Lakshmana, is the one who kills Ravana. As well, these versions take a more rationalist approach, revising many of the unbelievable aspects and elevating the moral character of many of the key actors.⁷⁸ However, Kapadia points out that the Jain still consider Rama one of their Gods and accord him due veneration, although they do not accord him divine status.⁷⁹

As with many of the versions, adaptations to local elements are included, thus “*Paumacariya* is filled with references to Jaina places of pilgrimage, stories about Jaina monks, and Jaina homilies and legends,”⁸⁰ generally giving the text a Jaina atmosphere for “propagating Jaina views, ideals and doctrines.”⁸¹ Brockington notes an interesting aspect of the *Vasudevahiṇḍi*, in the increased prominence of Hanuman, and Ramanujan notes that “the monkeys are not monkeys but a clan of celestials,”⁸² elements that have a parallel in the Thai renditions of the Rama story.

Rama Story in Southeast Asia

Given that sailors and merchants in the area of Southeast Asia, many of whom were from the Indian subcontinent, had to spend time waiting for goods and the appropriate winds to sail, it seems likely there was some sort of entertainment to keep them amused during their leisure time. Such entertainment would certainly have included recitation or performance of some form of the Rama story that they would have brought with them from India. It is in this way that the earliest transmission of the Rama legend likely made its way out of its place of origin and on to foreign lands: “...the earliest stream of the Rāma saga flowed toward South-east Asia with the priestly class, the Brahmin and the Kṣatriya adventurers, traders and others, who sailed down the course of the river Ganges and the coastal belt of the Bay of Bengal.”⁸³

Many have noted the wide range of transmission evidenced by the many forms the legends took as they moved with the travelers:

...the fact that the Rama tales which journeyed to Southeast Asia ranged from the most difficult Sanskrit texts to oral folk tales indicate that the agents involved in the transmission process came from

77 Kulkarni, “The Origin and Development of the Rāma Story in Jaina Literature”, 304.

78 Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 266-267; Kulkarni, “The Origin and Development of the Rāma Story in Jaina Literature”, 199-200.

79 Kapadia, “The Rāmāyaṇa and the Jaina Writers”, 115; Kulkarni, “The Origin and Development of the Rāma Story in Jaina Literature”, 200.

80 Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas”, 35.

81 Kapadia, “The Rāmāyaṇa and the Jaina Writers”, 201.

82 Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 267; Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas”, 35.

83 Sarkar, “The Ramayana in South-east Asia”, 207.

different levels of Indian society. The scholarly brought the literary Sanskrit tradition while the less learned would have participated in the journey of the oral tales, including those which were non-Vālmīkian.⁸⁴

Indonesia-Javanese

In Indonesia, one can generally categorize the Rama story into two groups: one based on Old Javanese, or the Kawi language, and one on the more modern Bahasa Indonesian language. While there are many versions, *Ramayana Kakawin* or *Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa (OJR)*,⁸⁵ is the best known in Old Javanese, and for those in Bahasa Indonesian, the best known of which is *Serat Rama*.⁸⁶

The oldest inscriptional evidence of the presence of the Rama story in Java is from the 8th century, with the first reference in an inscription of King Sanjaya dated 732 and subsequent inscriptions with familiar names from the Rama story.⁸⁷ In addition, an inscription from 907 makes reference to recitation and perhaps performance of the Rama story.⁸⁸

While it is not clear which narrative this inscription makes reference to, most researchers point to the *OJR*, although this was not necessarily the only ancient narrative that existed at that time.⁸⁹ While it has generally been accepted that the author will remain unknown, the dating of the *OJR* also has been a matter of much research by the most learned of scholars and the general consensus is that it should be dated to sometime around the 9-10th century.⁹⁰

The *OJR* has around 2,700 stanzas in 26 cantos, covering the whole thread of the story found in Vālmīki. While the source of the *OJR* is not totally clear, research has shown that about the 60% corresponds very closely with a Sanskrit poem called *Ravanavadha (The Death of Ravana)* or, as following its author, *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, the 7th century poem by Bhatti mentioned earlier.⁹¹ However, the second half of the *OJR* is perhaps from older or more local sources when “the poet of the *OJR* went his own way.”⁹² The author of the *OJR* “...seems deliberately to have taken upon himself the task of using the text for the illustration of Sanskrit rhetoric and prosody...”, employing a large variety of meters and embellishments.⁹³ The *OJR* is considered to be the ‘*adi-kakawin*’, the first and oldest of the ‘court poems’, and consequently, a prototype for all later versions having “...played a special role as a catalyst in various

84 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 198.

85 Kakawin is a genre of Old Javanese poetry of which the *OJR* is the oldest full-length work.

86 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*.

87 Sarkar, “The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia”, 106-107.

88 Sarkar, “The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia”, 105-106; Filliozat, “The Ramayana in South-east Asian Sanskrit Epigraphy and Iconography”, 196-197.

89 Acri, *From Laṅkā Eastward*, xiii.

90 Sarkar, “The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia”, 106-113; Bandem, “Ramayana and the Balinese Society”, 58; Pollock, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume II, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, 89.

91 Bhatti, *Bhatti’s Poem*.

92 Hooykaas, *The Old-Javanese Rāmāyaṇa*, 5-7; Sarkar, “The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia”, 108, 115.

93 Sarkar, “The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia”, 116.

domains of the cultural history of the Archipelago,”⁹⁴ although it is likely there were other poetic works that came before that have been lost.⁹⁵

While generally following the story line of *Vālmīki*, one of the distinguishing features of the *OJR* is the higher status of Shiva, in which he holds the supreme position among the celestials. The connection between this feature and the use of the Rama saga at the Shiva shrine at Prambanan near Yogyakarta in present day Indonesia has been noted, as well as the relationship to kingship in Central Java at that time: “power and virtue in combination are the hall-marks of an ideal monarchical polity”.⁹⁶ This feature was also noted by Prince Dhani Nivat, a great lover of and frequent writer about the Rama story in Thailand, in making a connection between the Javanese Rama story and the Rama story in Thai.

However, the Rama story was not as important or used by the rulers as significantly as in other places in Southeast Asia, as opposed to what can be seen with the Rama narrative a Thai context as will be discussed in the Chapter 3:

“...it seems that the text of the Ramayana as such was not of special importance to the Javanese concept of kingship. The Ramayana was not claimed as a royal prerogative, and ritual court performances organized by the Islamic kings of the Mataram dynasty in order to legitimize their position used other texts...”⁹⁷

However, the rulers of many generations had a special attraction because the story “...provided a strong underpinning to the political concept of power, legitimacy and obedience,”⁹⁸ concepts that have been attributed to the Rama story in the Thai context as well.

The modern version of the Rama saga in Indonesia, *Serat Rama*, was written by a Muslim poet, Yasadipura, in the late 18th century. While it has a “recognizable family resemblance” to the Malay versions and progresses generally along the same story lines, it is without the same degree of Islamization – Rama retains his status as an incarnation of Vishnu – and has a close affinity with the *OJR* and the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.⁹⁹ The continued popularity of this version of the Rama story in Indonesia, particularly among the majority Muslim population, is that Rama is not “...a remote, miracle-working divine being, but...[he embodies]...the qualities of a perfect human being and of an ideal ruler,”¹⁰⁰ very similar to how the story is treated in Thailand.

The Rama Saga in Bali

In Bali, the only region of Indonesia where the population is primarily Hindu, the *OJR* remains the most popular version of the Rama saga, where it has retained a level of sanctity and religious significance and “...is a standard source of material on moral and right conduct in Balinese society.”¹⁰¹ Even today, the *OJR* is chanted in

94 Acri, *From Laṅkā Eastward*, xii.

95 Hooykaas, *The Old-Javanese Rāmāyaṇa*, 5.

96 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 92.

97 Bandem, “*Ramayana and the Balinese Society*”, 93.

98 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 202.

99 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 138-139, 198-199.

100 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 199.

101 Bandem, “*Ramayana and the Balinese Society*”, 57.

ceremonies related to rites of passage and is often performed in a variety of ways: “In Bali in particular, the reading and listening to the story of Rama...has always been conducted in relation to religious affairs. Other expressions of arts derived from it...have always been associated with religious observances...”¹⁰²

Islamization

While in Bali the Rama story continues to be regarded with an air of sacredness, elsewhere in Indonesia, the story is regarded merely with a secular nature.¹⁰³ After the coming of Islam to Java, “...the story of Rama was not regarded as holy, though still cherished by the people, non-moslems as well as moslems, as a story filled with good teachings and example of good conduct.” However, over the centuries, the story has been adapted with certain Muslim concepts and sensibilities.¹⁰⁴ Even with the strong presence of Islam in Indonesia today, certain elements of the story are still considered important: “...the heroes and their enemies are given a symbolic interpretation, in line with esoteric Javanese-Islamic concepts. Thus the Ramayana can continue being performed and enjoyed...without causing mental problems for the more conscientious observers of Islam.”¹⁰⁵ Parallels can perhaps be seen in the similar way the Hindu-identified story has been adopted and adapted in the Buddhist dominated Thai society.

Temple Carvings and Depictions

The Rama story is depicted on stone relief carvings on the balustrade wall along the circumambulatory path on the larger Shiva (42 stone slab reliefs) and smaller Brahma (30 stone slab reliefs) shrines at the Prambanan temple complex, known locally as Lara Jonggrang. Prambanan is near the central Java city of Yogyakarta, the former royal seat of an 18th century sultanate, which is said to be the Old Javanese equivalent of Ayodhya in the Rama story.¹⁰⁶ Discovered by a Dutch engineer in 1797, and brought to popular attention by Stamford Raffles in 1823, the 240 major and minor temples in this complex were restored by Dutch archaeologists over many years, starting in 1885 with the Shiva temple and more recently with the Brahma and Vishnu temples.¹⁰⁷ Since no narrative, including the *OJR*, exactly matches the Prambanan carvings entirely, it is believed that perhaps another version, or versions, existed at the time, but any narrative of such has been lost.¹⁰⁸ Willem Sutterheim, who studied these reliefs and the Rama story in Java extensively, showing

102 Santoso, “The Glory of Rama’s Crown”, 325.

103 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 179.

104 Santoso, “The Glory of Rama’s Crown”, 325, 328-330.

105 Brakel, “Ramayana in Islamic Context”, 104.

106 Brakel, “Ramayana in Islamic Context”, 93; Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 32. The third shrine in this temple complex is dedicated to Vishnu and has carvings telling the story of Krishna, another of Vishnu’s incarnations. Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 32; Fontein, “Preliminary Notes on the Narrative Reliefs of Candi Brahmā and Candi Viṣṇu at Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan”.

107 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 32-33; Fontein, “Preliminary Notes on the Narrative Reliefs of Candi Brahmā and Candi Viṣṇu at Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan”.

108 Jordaen, *In Praise of Prambanan*, 90.

a relationship between the *OJR* and the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama*,¹⁰⁹ proposed an interesting theory as to the placement and orientation of the reliefs relating to the sun.¹¹⁰

The Rama story is also depicted in stone relief on 105 large-sized panels at the base of the 14-15th century temple, Candi Penataran, the state temple of the Majapahit kings, near Blitar, a largest temple complex in East Java.¹¹¹ Lokesh Chandra describes these carvings as having a “predominance of local style...[with]...only those scenes in which Hanuman and his simian army play a role.”¹¹² In this regard, Bandem notes “...the Penataran reliefs were carved in an almost two dimensional manner; their stylized shapes are prototypes of the present-day leather puppets of Bali.”¹¹³ Thus, a clear localization of style and content can be seen. Sutterheim first made the connection between the *OJR* and the reliefs at Penataran, but others have noted a strong element of *wayang* puppet performance with these carvings.¹¹⁴ It is interesting to note that, starting at sometime before the carvings were made at Penataran and continuing to present day Bali, Hanuman is one of the most popular characters.¹¹⁵ Given Hanuman’s popularity by the Thai, this perhaps shows a possible linkage between the Javanese Rama story and that found in Thailand.

These sets of reliefs, both at Prambanan and Penataran, bring to mind the Rama themed stone bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon in Bangkok, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. While it is unlikely the much later Bangkok reliefs were patterned after the Javanese ones, one can only wonder if they had similar purposes, given their similar layout and position in the respective temples.

Malaysia-Malay

The earliest traces of the migration of the Rama story to Southeast Asia is perhaps provided by Chinese annals from the Liang Dynasty (502-560) which refers to the kingdom of Lang-ya, identified as being on the Malay peninsula near modern day Pattani, and includes ‘veiled’ references to the Rama story.¹¹⁶ However, there are no inscriptions or stone carvings from that period to provide further evidence of the presence of the Rama story in the Malay area at that early date. Today, the Rama sage in Malaysia exists in essentially three forms: literary manuscripts, oral versions used by professional storytellers, and, perhaps the most popular and best known among the Malays, the folk versions used for *wayang* shadow puppet performances.

The Rama story appears to have touched the hearts and minds of the Malay people from an early period and references to characters is made in many Malay

109 Stutterheim, Rama-Legends and Rama Reliefs in Indonesia, 90-96; Fontein, “Preliminary Notes on the Narrative Reliefs of Candi Brahmā and Candi Viṣṇu at Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan”, 198.

110 Jordaen, In Praise of Prambanan, 171.

111 Bandem, “Ramayana and the Balinese Society”, 58-59; Saran, The Ramayana in Indonesia, 123-131.

112 Chandra, “Rāmāyaṇa, The Epic of Asia”, 650; Aciri, From Laṅkā Eastward, 219.

113 Bandem, “Ramayana and the Balinese Society”, 59; Kats, The Ramayana, as Sculptured in Reliefs in Javanese Temples, 18.

114 Saran, The Ramayana in Indonesia, 124.

115 Bandem, “Ramayana and the Balinese Society”, 57.

116 Sarkar, “The Ramayana in South-east Asia”, 104-106; Sarkar, “The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia”, 208.

historical works, including comparisons of the glory of the ruler to Rama,¹¹⁷ similar to what is seen in many pieces of Thai literature. In Malay, the best known version of the Rama story is *Hikayat Seri Rama (HSR)* by an unknown author, which "...was written in a newly created genre inspired by popular Arabic and Persians forms...[and, although]...the *hikayats* were in a written form, they were probably meant to be read aloud in public places."¹¹⁸

Literary Versions in Malay

There are three primary manuscripts of *HSR* that have been the subject of intense study by Malay literature and history scholars, although there are reported to be many more volumes in existence.¹¹⁹ These three are: (1) a 17th century manuscript housed at the Bodleian Library since 1633, edited and published by William Shellabear in 1915, which he notes is perhaps the oldest printed text in Malay script; (2) a text published by Sicco Ernst Willem Roorda van Eysinga in 1843, which he claimed was a translation into the Jawi script of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, a claim which was quickly refuted since it was clearly a localized story; and (3) a 15th century text called the Raffles Malay Manuscript No. 22, edited by R. O. Winstedt, which contains material not found in the other two manuscripts. This last text has clear elements of Islamisation, particular the colophon with a specific mention of the Koran. In his analysis of this text, Winstedt concludes that the "...close identity with the contents of one or other of those texts goes to show that all are derived from some older version of the Ramayana, the common source of all three." He goes on to note a possible Tamil source in the naming convention.¹²⁰ These literary versions, which likely originally emerged from oral transmission of tales by the many foreign travelers to the area,¹²¹ grew to great importance and are said to be "...regarded as the manifestation of the cultural ideals of the ruling elite in the traditional Malay society," and that since the Rama story and traditional Malay society shared many common elements, the saga was easily adopted, notwithstanding the difference in religion from Hindu to Islam.¹²²

As for the dating of the *HSR*, Alexander Zieseniss undertook a long and detailed study and concluded:

...the following judgement can be made concerning the *HSR*: it represents a popular form of the Rama saga which, seen from the point of view of time and content, is in every way post-epic, was carried by word of mouth to Indonesia between the 13th and 17th centuries, partly from Western and partly from Eastern India, exists in several versions from which Roorda van Eysinga to Maxwell show an increasing

117 Singaravelu, "The Literary Version of the Rama Story in Malay", 276.

118 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 135.

119 Hussein, "Ramayana in Malaysia", 142.

120 "Hikayat Sri Rama (in Malayu Script)"; Shellabear, "Hikayat Sri Rama, Introduction to the Text of the M.S. in the Bodleian Library at Oxford", 181; Winstedt, "An Undescribed Malay Version of the Ramayana", 65, 66.

121 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 136.

122 Singaravelu, "The Rāma Story in the Malay Tradition", 135.

degree of Indonesian levelling and alteration of the original saga postulated.¹²³

However, despite the suggestions of many regarding the connections with Javanese versions, Zieseniss concluded that the elements in the *HSR* "...do not suggest an Indonesian origin, rather do they indicate that we are dealing with Indian parable versions, the exact origin of which cannot be determined."¹²⁴

William Maxwell published an oral folk version called *Sri Rama* that he heard when stationed in Perak as a government official in the late 19th century, noting that this was but one of many oral versions that he had heard and recorded.¹²⁵ This account is said to have many Malay folk elements, localized settings and names, as well as strong Islamic influence.¹²⁶ H. Overbeck reported on another, undated, but perhaps more recent manuscript housed at the Berlin library called *Hikayat Maharaja Ravana*, which he considered a poorly executed copy of some prior manuscript. Winstedt also published another folk version that came from Patani.¹²⁷

Islamization

A significant defining element of the Rama story in Malay is the 'Islamization' that has occurred to the tale. It is quite clear that there was a concerted effort made to suit local religious sentiment, with references to Nabi Adam (the Prophet) and Allah,¹²⁸ a process that grew over time until "...the direct mention of Lord Visnu's reincarnation has been excised, leaving only certain traces of the original version."¹²⁹ This process of Islamization appears in the earliest texts, including the one at the Bodleian Library that is "...written in Arabic script in a vocabulary obviously shaped by the new Islamic civilisation...".¹³⁰ E. C. G. Barrett noted that "in all these versions the story of Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and Rāvaṇa an incarnation of some other supernatural being has been avoided by Muslim copyist, with varying degrees of effectiveness."¹³¹ However, others have noted that there are still traces of Hindu values and views that remain in the Malay version, particularly regarding Hindu teaching and philosophy of life.¹³²

123 Zieseniss, *The Rama Saga in Malaysia*, 187-188.

124 Zieseniss, *The Rama Saga in Malaysia*, 186.

125 Maxwell, "Sri Rama: A Malay Fairy Tale"; Maxwell, "Hikayat Sēri Rama". Maxwell makes an interesting observation in noting that the word 'Andaman', used for the sea and islands off the west coast of peninsular Malaysia and Thailand, is a corruption of 'Hanuman', in that the Andaman Islands are called 'Pulau Handuman' (the islands of Hanuman) in Malay. Maxwell, "Sri Rama: A Malay Fairy Tale", 88.

126 Singaravelu, "The Rāma Story in the Malay Tradition", 134.

127 Overbeck, "Hikayat Maharaja Ravana", 111; Winstedt, "An Undescribed Malay Version of the Ramayana", 62.

128 Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 136.

129 Singaravelu, "The Literary Version of the Rama Story in Malay", 279-281.

130 Hussein, "Ramayana in Malaysia", 143.

131 Barrett, "Further Light on Sir Richard Winstedt's 'Undescribed Malay Version of the Ramayana'", 532.

132 Mohamed, "The Malay Influence on Hikayat Seri Rama", 179-180.

Connections to the Rama Story in Thai

Many eminent Thai scholars who have studied the Rama story have identified numerous connections between the Malay and Thai renditions of the tale. Phraya Anumanratchathon noted in *Upakon Ramakien* the possible beginnings of the flirtatious nature of Hanuman in the Thai tellings might be traced to his characterization in the Malay version. As well, he pointed out the relationship with some of the names used in both versions.¹³³ As well, Dhani noted the similarity between *HSR* and some renditions in Thai.¹³⁴

Cambodia-Khmer

The presence of the Rama story in the area of present day Cambodia generally runs along three lines: inscriptions and stone carvings, both during and before the Angkor period (9-13th centuries); literary editions from the 16-18th century; and modern tellings and performance. Saveros Pou, one of the foremost Khmer linguist scholars and well-known researcher of the Rama story in Cambodia, points out:

...many people from the grass-roots...recomposed in their own fashion the never-tiring and long-lived story of Rām...as a result, the popular story of Rām has survived up to now in various forms, and they truly belong to folk-tradition.¹³⁵

Epigraphic Evidence and Stone Carvings

Sanskrit literature, which was popular with the Khmers since the early period, was likely appreciated both for its ethical and religious functions.¹³⁶ The earliest epigraphical evidence is a 7th century stele (K 359) from the Chenla period (c. 550-802) found at Prasat Ba An near Veal Kantel. This inscription, written by the sister of Bhavavarman I (r. 580-598), has been cited as some of the earliest evidence of written copies of the Rama story:¹³⁷

The inscription of the Prasat Ba An, near the village of Veal Kantel, province of Tonle Repou, just below the border of Laos, relates the erection of an image to Tribhuvaneshvara (Siva), accompanied by a figure of the Sun. The donation was made by a brahman savant, named Somasarman, husband of Bhavavarman's sister. Among the gifts made to the temple were a complete copy of the *Mahābhārata*, a copy of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and apparently a copy of the *Purāṇas*. Somasarman instituted daily readings of these works in a sanctuary, promised benedictions to those who participated in these readings and pronounced imprecations against those who damaged any of the precious volumes. This inscription is interesting as showing the extent

133 Sathiankoset, *Upakon Ramakien*, 18.

134 Dhani, *Collection of Writing of Prince Dhani Nivat*, 272, 276.

135 Pou, "The Concept of Avatāra in the Rāmāyaṇa Tradition of Cambodia", 81.

136 Sharan, *Studies in Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia*, 48-49.

137 Bizot, "The Reamker", 264; Sharan, *Studies in Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia*, 83, 236.

to which Indian influence had penetrated the country, even to this northern province at this early date.¹³⁸

In addition, there is the Pre Rup Stele Inscription (K 806) dated 961 found at the temple of Pre Rup built by Rajendravarman (r. 944-968) in the Angkor region that makes allusions to Puranic legends and mythology, including the *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹³⁹ Inscriptions from the 11th century that mention the *Rāmāyaṇa* include: K 598 of Prasat Trapan Run dated 1006 and K 744 from Prasat Barmeï dated 1078.¹⁴⁰ As well, one of the inscriptions of King Suryavarman I (r. 1006 to 1050) describes him as being “...highly interested in listening to the recitations of the sacred Hindu books such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*.”¹⁴¹

The popularity of the Rama narrative in visual narratives during the Angkor period can be seen by the many temples with carvings or statues depicting the story. Vittorio Roveda provides a fairly comprehensive listing of such carvings in his encyclopedic tome *Images of the Gods*,¹⁴² listing nearly 20 temple complexes that have some carvings from the Rama story. The oldest is perhaps a sculpture from the 10th century at Koh Ker (Prasat Chen) showing two monkeys fighting, likely the brothers, Sugriva and Valin, carved during the reign of Jayavarman IV (r. 921-941). At Banteay Srei, also conventionally dated from the 10th century, there are several reliefs with themes of Rama. However, the most prolific and extensive stone reliefs can be seen at Baphuon and Angkor Wat in Angkor Thom proper, and at Phnom Rung and Phimai in present day Thailand. It is unclear whether a pure Vālmīkian version was used as the source of these carvings. Given the wide dispersion of variations on the story found in India and other parts of Southeast Asia, particularly in the Malay-Javanese realm, it seems probable that some other renditions were utilised, although from when and where is unknown.¹⁴³

Roveda points out that the most popular scenes for depiction are the battle scenes, particularly for the larger scale depictions.¹⁴⁴ This is interesting to note, since, as we will see in Chapter 5, this was the most popular motif picked for depiction on the Thai lacquerware cabinets. Perhaps the dramatic conflict of fighting has been an enduring theme popular with artists and patrons since the earliest periods.

Literary Versions

While epigraphic evidence indicates that the Rama saga in Sanskrit, whether that of Vālmīki or some other version or rendition, was popular amongst the Khmer elite, it is possible that the general populace also enjoying a version in the Khmer language. At some point, whether at the time of Angkor or shortly thereafter, performance in the form of dance-drama or the shadow leather puppet theatre became

138 Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, 43.

139 Sharan, *Studies in Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia*, 104; Filliozat, “The Ramayana in South-east Asian Sanskrit Epigraphy and Iconography”, 195.

140 Filliozat, “The Ramayana in South-east Asian Sanskrit Epigraphy and Iconography”, 195-196.

141 Sharan, *Studies in Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia*, 232.

142 Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 114-143.

143 Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 184.

144 Roveda, *Images of the Gods*, 115.

popular. Roveda makes the connection between oral recitation and performance: “It is assumed that reciting, an oral activity, uttering and chanting, may have evolved into some form of dancing performance since...” dancers, singers and musicians are mentioned in many inscriptions from Angkor.¹⁴⁵ However, it is likely that only during periods of political and social stability, during which there were no wars being fought, and when the storytellers had acquired positions independent from the ruling class, along with writing skills, would the Rama legend have likely been written down. When this occurred is still unclear, as no manuscript older than the 16-17th century is existent.

The literary narrative in Khmer that is most well-known is called *Ramakerti* or *Reamker*, which was written in the 16-17th century by anonymous poets in the form of a dance-drama intended to be performed as it is divided into scenes, with some stage and musical direction provided. The existing narrative comes from a manuscript, *Rioeñ Rāmakert(i) (Reamker)*, published by the Institut Bouddhique of Phnom Penh in 1937. This text was compiled from two bundles of palm-leaf manuscripts, numbered 1-10 and 75-80. Pou, when she translated this text into French, labeled the two parts *Reamker I* and *Reamker II*.¹⁴⁶ The two parts are quite different, and since it does not appear that the intervening sections, i.e., 11-74, are really missing, most have accepted that these are two distinct manuscripts.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the second part bears such a striking resemblance in storyline and detail to the Thai rendition, especially *Rama I Ramakien*, that there must certainly be a relationship and connection between the two texts.

Reamker I was composed during a period when Buddhism was flourishing and the composers appear to have re-examined the narrative within a Buddhist context. The Buddhist and spiritual nature of *Reamker* is undeniable in the use of expressions characteristic of Buddhism, as well as inclusion of cosmological and philosophical aspects of Buddhism. The main traits of the Buddhization of the story were amply explained by Pou.¹⁴⁸ The most striking aspect is that Rama, while presented in his usual role as the incarnation of Vishnu, is also considered to be in the line of the Buddha,¹⁴⁹ and is identified as a Bodhisattva,¹⁵⁰ sometimes called ‘*tathāgat*’.¹⁵¹ Pou explains how *Reamker* was not simply another version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*; it was an entirely new version written by poets with deep Buddhist belief. In it, the conception of the world and of life are typically Buddhist, including the idea of impermanence, *aniccā*, the *samsaric* cycle of rebirth, and the Buddhist concept of *karma* and retribution of deeds.¹⁵² In this regard, Bizot points out “...the hybrid character of the beliefs...in all southeast Asia”,¹⁵³ thus, allowing for Rama to be both an incarnation of Vishnu in the Hindu sense and a Bodhisattva in a Buddhist sense.

145 Roveda, *The World of Khmer Mythology*, 66.

146 Jacob, *Reamker*, ix-xii; Pou, *Rāmakerti*; Pou, *Rāmakerti II*.

147 Jacob, *Reamker*, xii-xiii.

148 Pou, *Études Sur le Rāmakerti*, 77-97.

149 Jacob, *Reamker*, 22, 25.

150 Jacob, *Reamker*, 14.

151 Pou, *Rāmakerti*, 112, stanza 1796.

152 Pou, *Rāmakerti*, 89.

153 Bizot, “The Reamker”, 269-270.

Another of the oldest texts of Cambodian literature is a 17th century narrative called *Lpoek Angkor Vat (LAV)*, which translates as ‘*The Poem of Angkor Wat*’. Together with the early versions of *Reamker I*, they represent the only surviving classic literature of the Cambodian Middle Age (15-18th century). The importance of the *LAV* is the fact that the second part of the poem includes scenes of the Rama saga. The *LAV* briefly describes the mythic creation of Angkor and the sculptures that decorate Angkor Wat, rather than the building architecture. Roveda has argued that *LAV* may refer to the cutting of images for the leather puppets for the shadow theatre, the *Sbek Thom*, and was, in fact, taken from the libretto for the performance of the shadow puppet theatre.¹⁵⁴

Finally, there is a folk version of *Reamker*, called by Bizot, *Rāmaker, L’amour symbolique de Rām et Setā (Reamker, The Symbolic Love of Rama and Sita)*. The narrative of this *Reamker* by Mi Chak was published by Bizot in 1987 from an audio recording made in 1969 of the story narrated/chanted by the famous storyteller Ta Chak.¹⁵⁵ According to Roveda, this *Reamker* of Mi Chak is too close to the visual narrative illustrated on the gallery of the Silver Pagoda enclosure gallery of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh not to suggest a possible derivation from these mural paintings,¹⁵⁶ although Mi Chak is said to have gotten the story from ancient manuscripts at Angkor Wat South.¹⁵⁷ In fact, the analogy with the Phnom Penh murals is so close that Bizot used the photographs from the Silver Pagoda to illustrate the oral narrative.¹⁵⁸

Although there appears to be a gap in the presence of the Rama story from the end of the Angkorean era to the writing of the *LAV* or *Reamker I*, it is likely that the story continued to be narrated by traveling storytellers and in drama productions, such as the dance-drama of the *lkhon khol*. In this regard, Roveda notes:

...the roots of the early post-Angkorian narratives must lie in the recitatives of bards from the 13th century to the 16th century, coloured by local folklore and the inspiration of a live-performance under a starry sky of a rice-paddy in front of excited spectators and which were eventually written...¹⁵⁹

The Ritual Use and Performance of *Reamker*

Reamker has had an important ritualistic function in Cambodian culture and religion, and individual scenes have special significance. Roveda notes: “Specific episodes from the Rama story are frequently dramatized in ritual performances for the well-being of villages, and by extension, the Cambodian nation.”¹⁶⁰ In addition, an important contemporary exponent of the tale is the artist Chet Chan, who was trained

154 Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 190-191.

155 Bizot, *Rāmaker, L’amour symbolique de Rām et Setā*.

156 Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 188.

157 Bizot, “The *Reamker*”, 263.

158 Black and white photographs by R. Maury in 1957, now in the EFEO archives. Bizot, *Rāmaker, L’amour symbolique de Rām et Setā*, 62-64.

159 Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 190.

160 Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 197.

in traditional painting at the School of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh in the early 1960s and continues to teach traditional painting on silk at that school.¹⁶¹

Similar to the Rama story in a Thai context, the moral and ethical righteousness that Rama stands for are the virtues that Cambodian kings have tried to emulate and attain. In this regard, the association with this tale is clearly visible through the depiction of the Rama narrative on the murals decorating the walls of the Silver Pagoda within the Royal Palace compound in Phnom Penh. In more recent times, the ceiling of the Khmer Throne Room was also painted with selected scenes of Rama's tale.¹⁶²

Depictions of the Rama Story in Cambodia

There are only two major painted narratives of the Rama story in Khmer art, the murals of the Silver Pagoda in Phnom Penh and those in the vihara of Wat Bo in Siem Reap. The mural paintings along the gallery of the Silver Pagoda were painted at the end of the 19th century by order of King Norodom by the best artist available at the time, the *Okñā* Tep Nimit Mak. The layout of the murals appears to be quite similar to that of the Wat Phra Kaeo in Bangkok, leading one to suspect that the Phnom Penh murals were patterned after those in Bangkok.

The paintings at Wat Bo in Siem Reap, near the ancient Angkor monuments, is an interesting mix of artistic styles and narrative depiction that has been fully documented by Roveda for the first time in *In the Shadow of Rama*.¹⁶³ The paintings are unusually located on the walls *inside* the main vihara in the temple, although outside the consecrated space designated by *sema* markers on a raised platform inside the vihara. After analyzing the murals, there appears to be some close relationship with *Rama I Ramakien*, indicating that this narrative was used as one source for the paintings, albeit with a degree of localization added to the story. While this might seem unusual for a temple located in Cambodia, it should be noted that at the time of execution of the murals, this area was under control of Bangkok, and thus was likely influenced by Thai artisans. Roveda also notes the strong connection between these paintings and the shadow puppet theatre, *Sbek Thom* of Wat Bo.¹⁶⁴

An interesting aspect of these murals, as well as connection with the lacquerware cabinets that are the subject of this study, is the prominence given Intharachit (Indrajit) and the battles with Phra Ram (Rama) and Phra Lak (Lakshmana). As will be discussed later, there is one mural showing Intharachit nursing at the breast of his mother, a plot variation that is not found in the formal Thai texts of the Rama story, but appears in some depictions. Also, the mural sequence ends with the Death of Intharachit, including showing the iconic element of Ongkhot catching Intharachit's head on a tray, although in these murals, Phra Ram, instead of Phra Lak, shoots the arrow that kills Intharachit.¹⁶⁵ As described in Chapter 5, this scene is the most reproduced scene on the Rama Cabinets.

161 Daravuth, *The Reamker*, 123-151.

162 Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 196.

163 Roveda, *In the Shadow of Rama*, 83-147.

164 Roveda, *In the Shadow of Rama*, 149-153.

165 See Figs. 372 and 374 in Roveda, *In the Shadow of Rama*, 143.

In addition to these two temples, there are many other temples in Cambodia, particularly in the Battambang area, where images from the Rama story can be found, albeit generally from a later period.¹⁶⁶ Included in these are some interesting stucco reliefs at Wat Kdol in Battambang. Roveda notes that the textual source of these depictions is not clear, but points out that given that this area of Cambodia was under the control of the Thai for long periods, influence from *Rama I Ramakien* is quite likely. The location and layout of these stucco reliefs is quite similar to those at Wat Phra Chetaphon in Bangkok and Prambanan and Penataran in Indonesia, providing another similar case of use of the Rama themed depictions.

Relationship to the Rama story in Thailand

There are many who have considered the Khmer version of the Rama story to be merely a subsidiary of the Thai rendition, which has received much more attention from scholars and has generally been given more prominence. This idea has been shown to be not valid by Khmer literary and linguistic experts, including Pou and others. Pou has proposed that *Reamker I* and the Rama story in Thailand perhaps have similar roots, but developed along different lines, with both having influence on the more modern tellings in Cambodia.¹⁶⁷

In this regard, it is interesting to note the similarity between the Khmer designation of the Rama story, *Ramakerti*, and the Thai designation, *Ramakien*. If one were to spell out the word in Thai completely, without changing the vocalization or the negated letters, it would be something like ‘*Ramakiarti*’, very close to the Khmer, *Ramakerti*. This perhaps shows a connection between the Rama traditions in the two cultures.

Also, Pou has pointed out the linguistic relationship between the words for the dramatic performance of the Rama story in Cambodia, *lkhon khol* and the name for the masked drama in Thai, *khon*.¹⁶⁸ Pou, with reference to George Coedès, claims that the word *khol* “...is none but the Khmer word for ‘a species of monkey, his antics; anything burlesque’. *Lkhon khol*, therefore, can be understood as ‘Theatre of monkeys’...”.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the connection between the two words makes sense in that the monkey characters are very important in the performance of the Rama story in both Thailand and Cambodia.

Laos-Laotian

There are generally three versions of the Rama story that can be found in Laos today: the most popular and wide spread, *Phra Lak Phra Lam*; the less popular *Phommachak*; and a more obscure version entitled *Gvāy Dvórahī*. It is interesting to note there appears to be a significant degree of connection between the Lao versions

¹⁶⁶ Roveda, *Buddhist Painting in Cambodia*, 193.

¹⁶⁷ Pou, “*Rāmakerti – the Khmer (or Cambodian) Rāmāyaṇa*”, 241; Pou, “*Ramakertian Studies*”, 257.

¹⁶⁸ In Thai, the final ‘l’ in *khol* would be pronounced with an ‘n’ sound. Although now the Thai word for *khon* [โขนน] is spelled following the pronunciation with a final ‘naw nu [น] (n)’ consonant, it is possible the original spelling may have been closer to the Khmer.

¹⁶⁹ Pou, “*Ramakertian Studies*”, 231, Fn. 13.

and those of the surrounding areas, showing the large degree of interaction and exchange between the people of the region.

Phra Lak Phra Lam

The best known and most popular version of the Rama saga in Laos is called *Phra Lak Phra Lam*. In 1996, Sachchidanand Sahai published an English translation of this version of the story based on six 19-20th century manuscripts he had collected from around Vientiane and other parts of Laos and Northeast Thailand.¹⁷⁰ Sahai asserts that "...the present text was developed in 1850 from a smaller nucleus, either from a written text composed in an earlier period or directly from an oral tradition."¹⁷¹ He goes on to note that the Rama story is only one part of the narrative, with a description of local Lao places, customs and beliefs a major part of the narrative,¹⁷² noting that "the Lao author appears to have elaborated his narrative in order to describe the milieu in which he lived," particularly with respect to the geographical setting and locations identified.¹⁷³ Kamala Ratnam notes:

‘Pha Lak Pha Lam’...portrays Rama as a mighty king, exercising considerable control over neighboring territories....a true encyclopaedia of life in Laos. Since diversified knowledge in other books was not available, the Pha Lak Pha Lam became a veritable storehouse of Lao life, culture and habits, customs and manners, flora and fauna, geography and history of its men and animals.¹⁷⁴

As will be seen in the next chapter, this was done in the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien* as well.

While the author of the narrative is not clear – some attributing it to someone named Buddhaghosacaraya – Sahai says the writer should be someone living in the kingdom of Lan-Xang.¹⁷⁵ In any event, the story of *Phra Lak Phra Lam* is presented in the general format of a *jātaka* tale, albeit a non-canonical one, and therefore, is sometimes called the *Rāma Jātaka*.¹⁷⁶ Along the lines of a typical *jātaka*, the narrative opens with the Buddha in the Jetavana monastery, with the classic line "Thus I have heard." Then the narrative goes on: "When the Buddha heard their request, he took the *Brah Lāmmaḥjātók* (*the Rāma Jātaka*) to preach to the Brethren"¹⁷⁷ and at the end the Buddha states the he was once born as Rama.¹⁷⁸ By

170 Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Volumes 1 and 2.

171 Dhani, in his article on the Rama Jataka, states that a senior monk "...an authority on Lao philology and literature...[told him]...that the work was probably written during the golden age of Lanxang literature under King Setthathiraj (1548-1571)... ." Dhani, "The Rama Jataka", 22.

172 Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 1, 2.

173 Sahai, "Indo-Chinese Geography as Described in the Phra Lak Phra Lam", 221.

174 Kamala, "The Ramayana in Laos", 262-264.

175 Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 1, 2; Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 298.

176 Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 1, 10. Both Sahai and Dhani make note of the fact that the Rama Jātaka has little in common, and thus should be distinguished from the Dasaratha Jātaka. Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 1, 11; Dhani, "The Rama Jataka", 2.

177 Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 1, 43-44.

178 Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 2, 326.

this way, the Rama story was made a “...sacred text to be preserved and heard from generation to generation for the propagation of the Buddhist faith” and is often recited, along with the Vessantara Jataka, at religious gatherings. Sahai also points out that the *Rama Jātaka* was intended to teach many aspects of Buddhism, as well as the Lao/Thai belief system and other aspects of life in Laos at the time.¹⁷⁹ Niyada Laosunthon notes that the Lao version of the story is the only one in which Rama is considered both a Bodhisattva and a national hero.¹⁸⁰

Brockington makes note of the fact that *Phra Lak Phra Lam* appears to be indebted to the Thai rendition and can be acquainted with the Javanese, Khmer and Malay versions as well.¹⁸¹ Dhani also makes a strong connection between the Lao and Thai versions when he compares the text of a manuscript that he obtained from Roi Et province in Northeast Thailand with *Rama I Ramakien* and *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, concluding:

...the foregoing analysis has shown how closely the *Rama Jataka* resembles the Thai *Ramakien* in its main details and in the extra episodes not found in the classical *Ramayana* of Vālmīki. This is an important fact to bear in mind for it supplies one of the essential missing links in the process of development of the Thai version...¹⁸²

There are a number of existing manuscripts of *Phra Lak Phra Lam*. The Vientiane version, supported by texts, as well as temple-paintings, is considered an original recension composed during the first half of the 19th century, but copied much later. None of the six manuscripts seen by Sahai seem to be earlier than 1931.

Another manuscript that has been published was one found at Wat Kang Tha in Vientiane by Vo Thu Tinh,¹⁸³ which was apparently used to illustrate 33 murals on the inside walls of image hall at Wat Oup Moung in Vientiane, painted by Thit Panh, a Lao artist, in 1938.¹⁸⁴ While many of the episodes in the murals follow the narrative of *Phra Lak Phra Lam*, other scenes appear to be taken from the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, *Gvāy Dvōrabhī*, the *Phommachak*, and even the Thai rendition as seen in some of the inscriptions. Sahai calls these paintings “...a unique specimen of Lao folk-art...Thit Panh hasvividly painted the Lao people, their costumes and ornaments, houses and household articles.”¹⁸⁵

In 2000, the image hall at Wat Oup Moung, and the murals inside were demolished to build a new hall. Under the direction of Drs. Catherine Raymond and Alan Potkin of Northern Illinois University, along with Dr. Bountieng Siripaphan, Director of the Lao PDR Faculty of Fine Arts, the entire hall, architecture and murals, was digitally recorded and then the murals were restored to the new hall, essentially

¹⁷⁹ Sahai, *The Rama Jataka in Laos, A Study of Phra Lak Phra Lam*, Vol. 1, 11, 12.

¹⁸⁰ Niyada, *Phra Ram Chadok*, Parts 1-2, 93.

¹⁸¹ Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 299.

¹⁸² Dhani, “The Rama Jataka”, 21.

¹⁸³ Vo Thu Tinh, *Phra Lak Phra Lam, Le Ramayana Lao*; Vo Thu Tinh, *Phra Lak-Phra Lam, A Previous Life of the Buddha*.

¹⁸⁴ Sahai, *Ramayana in Laos, A Study in the Gvāy Dvōrabhī*, 75.

¹⁸⁵ Sahai, *Ramayana in Laos, A Study in the Gvāy Dvōrabhī*, 81.

replicating the original paintings. As well, Potkin found a manuscript at Wat Oup Moung that supports the mural paintings.¹⁸⁶

In addition to the newly restored murals at Wat Oup Moung, there are a number of images from the Rama story at Wat That Luang, Vientiane in a number of places in the temple complex, including in the form of celestial door guardians on some of the doors, as carved bas reliefs and in painted scenes.

In Luang Prabang, there are quite a number of temples where depictions of the Rama story can be found.¹⁸⁷ These include:

- Wat Pa Ke, where the Luang Prabang version found at the Royal Capital can be seen painted on the walls of the temple.¹⁸⁸
- Wat May, which do not depict *Phra Lak Phra Lam*, but either *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* or the Khmer *Ramakerti*, or even the Thai rendition.
- Wat Xieng Thong, which was erected by the last Laotian king to shelter the royal funeral furniture, the depictions are close to the Vālmīki tradition, with some inspired by the *Ramakerti* or *Rama I Ramakien*.¹⁸⁹
- Wat Manorom.
- Wat Sensoukharam.
- Wat Visounnarath.
- Wat Aham Outama.

Phommachak

Phommachak is an adaptation of the Rama story by Buddhist monks for religious purposes. While not as popular as *Phra Lak Phra Lam*, the story takes on a similar form as a *jātaka* tale relating a previous life of the Buddha.¹⁹⁰ Ohno Toru has labeled this as the “Muongsing” version and in his detailed research concluded that the “Muongsing version is quite peculiar in comparison with the Luangphrabang and Vientiane versions. It contains episodes sharing with Lanka Xihe of Yunnan and the Burmese *Rama Thiri* version of the Rama story.”¹⁹¹

Gvāy Dvōrabhī

Sahai translated into English an undated palm leaf manuscript written in Yuan script and dialect, prevalent in northern Laos, found in 1972 in the collection of the Royal Palace, Luang Prabang, of what the king of Laos termed a “minor version”, and which Sahai labeled “an independent” version, of the Rama story entitled *Gvāy Dvōrabhī*.¹⁹² Sahai claims this to be the only copy of this version existent, albeit it with many gaps and missing parts.

¹⁸⁶ Nadir, “Digitally Replicating The Lost Phralak-Phralam Murals”.

¹⁸⁷ All see on personal visits by the researcher in 2005.

¹⁸⁸ Kamala, “The Ramayana in Laos”, 262; Sarkar, “The Ramayana in South-east Asia”, 213.

¹⁸⁹ Giteau, “Note sur des sculptures sur bois de Luang Prabang représentant des scènes du Rāmāyana”, 66.

¹⁹⁰ Kamala, “The Ramayana in Laos”, 265.

¹⁹¹ Ohno, Burmese Ramayana, 34.

¹⁹² Sahai, Ramayana in Laos, A Study in the Gvāy Dvōrabhī, 2.

Sahai explains that the title of the story, *Gvāy Dvórabhī*, which makes reference to tale of the buffalo Thoraphi (in Thai), Dundubhi (in Vālmīki), is only a small part of the narrative, but shows the popularity of this episode in Laos and Thailand, including legends of the burial spot of the bones of the buffalo and a mountain named after him.¹⁹³ Sahai shows how this version has undergone intense localization including the use of local settings and motifs. While linked to the other Laotian versions, this version is unique with many innovative elements. He concludes by stating: “a closer view of the transformations and modifications in this version suggest that the story had circulated for a considerable time in oral tradition before it was given its present form.”¹⁹⁴

Myanmar-Burmese

There is evidence that the Rama story was known in the area of present day Myanmar at least from the Pagan period (11-13th century) since there are stone figures *in situ* of Rama as the incarnation of Vishnu in the Hindu temple, Nat-Hlaung-Gyaung. During this period, there is evidence in the form of a stone inscription of King Kyanzittha (r. 1084-1112) linking the power of the rulers with Rama.¹⁹⁵ As well, at the Abeyadana Temple of King Kyansittha’s period, a figure of Rama riding Hanuman can be seen. King Kyansittha himself claimed descent from Vishnu and asserted that he was a close relative of Rama in two of his Mon inscriptions, one from Mya Kan, Bagan the other from the Kyaik Thalan Pagoda near Thaton.¹⁹⁶

Around a stupa called Maha Lawka Marazein in Monywa district there are 347 glazed terracotta tiles with scenes from the Rama story.¹⁹⁷ The Pagoda was built by the Head of the Buddhist Sasana in Myanmar, the Second Maungthaung Thathanabaing Sayadaw U Neyya in 1849. All of the figures, including the royalty, ministers, soldiers, and musicians, are depicted on the sculptures in dress from the early Konbaung Period when dramatic performances were first presented.¹⁹⁸

Literary Versions

With respect to extant literary works, there are nine different versions of the Rama story that can be found in Myanmar, all of which were transcribed in some form or another in late half of the 19th century.¹⁹⁹

1. *Rama Vatthu*: two recently discovered palm leaf manuscripts – one found in a monastery in Pagan and one in Yangon – estimated to date

193 Sahai, *Ramayana in Laos, A Study in the Gvāy Dvórabhī*, 3.

194 Sahai, *Ramayana in Laos, A Study in the Gvāy Dvórabhī*, 33.

195 Thein Han, “*Ramayana in Burmese Literature and Arts*”, 138.

196 U Tthaw Kaung, “*The Ramayana Drama in Myanmar*”, 137.

197 Ohno, “*Burmese, Laotian and Yunnan Versions of Rama Story*”, 31.

198 U Tthaw Kaung, “*The Ramayana Drama in Myanmar*”, 144.

199 Ohno, *Burmese Ramayana*, 1-5; Ohno, “*Burmese, Laotian and Yunnan Versions of Rama Story*”, 32-36; U Tthaw Kaung, “*The Ramayana Drama in Myanmar*”, 139-140; Thein Han, “*Ramayana in Burmese Literature and Arts*”. ‘Yagan’ and ‘thagyin’ are forms of verse; ‘vatthu’ is a form of prose composition; ‘pyazat’ is a form of dramatic performance used at festivals or in ceremonies using masks that may have originated from Thai khon. Ohno, *Burmese Ramayana*, 11; Ohno, “*Burmese, Laotian and Yunnan Versions of Rama Story*”, 31-32.

back to the 17th century, which would make this the oldest version in Myanmar. This prose work, in which Rama is identified as a Bodhisattva, was translated into English by Ohno Toru, who compared the Moungsing version from Laos with a version found in Yunnan province, China,²⁰⁰ and *Rama Vatthu* version in Myanmar and concluded they “...are basically identical...[such that]...it will be reasonable to regard the three versions...to be composed of a single group, separated from the other vernacular Rama stories of Southeast Asia... .”²⁰¹ Ohno also compared *Rama Vatthu* to *Rama I Ramakien* and concluded that “...there was great divergences between RAMA VATTHU of Burma and RAMAKIEN of Thai...[and thus]...was never translated directly from RAMAKIEN of Thai...[although perhaps]...was at least influenced...by the Ayuthiya version of Thai Rama story... .”²⁰² *Rama Vatthu* has been characterized as a simple story, in abridged form that has accepted by the Burmese such that “...Rama Vatthu is considered to represent the traditional Burmese version.”²⁰³

2. *Rama Yagan*: Considered the most prominent version of the Rama story in Burmese literature, this version was composed by U Toe in 1784, although the narrative is incomplete because of the author’s untimely death before he could finish the composition.
3. *Maha Rama Vatthu*: composed by an unknown author in the late 18th or early 19th century, is said to be “a mere enlargement of the Rama Vatthu.”²⁰⁴ This version, the most complete prose version consisting of seven chapters, was transcribed from the original palm leaf manuscript from the British Library by U Tet Tut in 1877 and later published by the Burma Research Society in 1969. There are several scenes very similar to the Rama story in Thai, including the episode of Benyakai assuming the form of a dead Sita that is not found in other versions of the Rama story in Myanmar.
4. *Rama Thagyin*: believed to be the oldest surviving narrative in Myanmar, was composed by U Aung Phyo, a popular reciter of ballads, in 1775, with content quite similar to *Rama Vatthu*.
5. *Pondaw Rama Pyazat*: written in verse by U Ku in 1880, consists of just two chapters patterned after *Rama Yagan*.
6. *Thiri Rama*: a mixture of prose and verse for dramatic performance that was transcribed by Nemyo Nataka Kyawguang in 1891 from an original manuscript dated 1789. The original was believed to have

200 “The Yunnanse Ramayana is known under the title of Lanka Xihe, signifying ‘The Heads of Lanka’ among the Tai-Lu people living mainly in Sipsongpanna District, Yunnan province, China. It was translated from Tai-Lu language into Chinese by Dao Xing Ping and Yan Wen Bian under the supervision of Yang Zhong Lu and published by Yunnan Peoples Publishing co in 1981. It is composed of twenty chapters...consisting of 237 pages in total.” Ohno, *Burmese Ramayana*, 33.

201 Ohno, *Burmese Ramayana*, 43.

202 Ohno, *Burmese Ramayana*, 66.

203 Thein Han, “*Ramayana in Burmese Literature and Arts*”, 141.

204 Thein Han, “*Ramayana in Burmese Literature and Arts*”, 141.

been created from the Thai version by a commission of high-ranking royalty, poets and officials created by order of the Crown Prince, the eldest son of King Bodawpaya (1782-1819).²⁰⁵ There are two existing manuscripts at the National Library in Myanmar and one at the Universities Central Library in Yangon. Certain episodes can be linked to the Bengali Ramayana of Kṛttivāsa. U Thein Han compared *Thiri Rama* (now printed as *Yama Pya-zat-taw-gyi*) with *Rama I Ramakien* and found *Thiri Rama* to be a different work. He goes on to note that this may have been because he used *Rama I Ramakien*, whereas the Thai version used for the translation came from an earlier version from the Ayutthaya period that is now lost.²⁰⁶

7. *Rama Thonmyo Zat Vatthu*: a mixture of prose and verse for dramatic performance. There are two editions: one by Saya Htwe published in 1904 designated as a *jātaka* tale and one published in 1935.
8. *Alaung-daw Rama Thagyin*: composed in verse by Saya Htun in the Arakanese dialect in 1905, can be found in Arakan State in western Myanmar today. This story can be associated with *Jātaka* No. 461, the *Datthaya-hta* (Dasaratha) *Jātaka*, with Rama as a bodhisattva.²⁰⁷
9. *Pondaw Rama Lakkhana Yodaya Zat Vatthu*: a mixture of prose and verse for dramatic performance written by U Maung Gyi in 1910, is said to have been derived from a Thai version of the Rama story because part of the title, ‘*Yodaya Zattawgyi*’, translates as ‘*Great Jataka of Ayutthaya*’. It might be noted that, given the fact that *Rama I Ramakien* is not styled as a *jātaka* in any form, the Thai version may have been one taken from Ayutthaya after its defeat by the Burmese in 1767.

Thai Connections

Although music, song and dancing has been a part of Myanmar culture from the Pyu period (c. 2nd BCE to c. mid-11th CE), court drama developed quite late, only in the late 18th century during the Konbaung Period (1752 to 1885), starting with the introduction of the Rama story by Thai artistes who were brought back after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. The Burmese courtiers who heard the music and songs had the Siamese help them incorporate these into a classical music repertoire. Accordingly, there is no doubt that as far as the dramatic performance is concerned, Myanmar scholars all agree that the Rama dance drama was obtained from Thai sources.²⁰⁸ U Htin Aung notes:

...many of the Burmese scholars themselves were against any substantial changes in the presentation of the play at their court. They were for borrowing from, and imitation of, the Siamese play, but they held that the model must be kept unchanged and intact... Therefore, the scenes (of the *Rama* play) were presented in the same sequence as in

205 U Tthaw Kaung, “The Ramayana Drama in Myanmar”, 142; TMK, *Thiri Rama*, 3.

206 Thein Han, “Ramayana in Burmese Literature and Arts”, 143.

207 U Tthaw Kaung, “The Ramayana Drama in Myanmar”, 138.

208 Thein Han, “Ramayana in Burmese Literature and Arts”, 140-142.

the original, the characters were the same, and the story remained the same.²⁰⁹

In current times, the Rama story is still performed in Myanmar, of which string puppet performance are particularly popular, especially with tourists. In an interesting recent development, the story was modified and reinterpreted into a contemporary novel entitled *Lin--gar Di Pa Chit Thu* by Chit Oo Nyo. Wathanyoo Faktong notes:

Through a postcolonial perspective, the novel critiques the British-Myanmar colonial power relations by characterizing Ravana as the protagonist who represents Myanmar natives' struggles against colonialism while appointing the role of the colonial powers to the Rama character. This anti-colonialist rewriting of *Ramayana* is achieved by turning upside down the traditional writing approach of the story, through which Ravana is the antagonist whereas Rama and his followers are the protagonists.²¹⁰

Vietnam-Cham

Of all the mainland Southeast Asian societies, Vietnam appears to have the least long-term development of the Rama legend, with Vietnamese notably not one of the languages listed by the Sahitya Akademi or Kam.²¹¹ However, some of the oldest evidence of the presence of the Rama story in Southeast Asia can be found in several inscriptions found in the area of present day Vietnam.

The oldest is said to be from the 3rd century CE which includes a quotation of a line from *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.²¹² Another is from a Champa period temple located at Tra-Kieu, in which both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the incarnations of Vishnu are referenced.²¹³ This temple appears to be unique as well, in that it is one of the few temples dedicated to Vālmīki, as mentioned in a 7th century Champa inscription at a temple in which the image of Vālmīki was installed.²¹⁴ The temple's founder, King Praksadharman Vikrantavarman (r. 653-686), the son of a Cambodian princess, was a follower of Vishnu and is said to have been indebted to Khmer culture given his attachment to the Rama story and thus his dedication to Vālmīki. As well, there are two 10th century bas-reliefs depicting the Rama story, one in My Son A1 style relief from Quang Nam and one in Tra Kieu style, as well as one from the 12-13th centuries from Binh Dinh province.²¹⁵

With respect to Cham literature, one of the five poems that represents popular cultural heritage is the Cham version of the Rama story, *Pram Dit Pram Lak*. The

209 Htin Aung, *Burmese Drama*, 45.

210 Wathanyoo, "When Ravana Is a Hero", 1.

211 Krishnamoorthy, *A Critical Inventory of Ramayana Studies in the World*, Volume II; Kam, *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia*, 286-287.

212 Filliozat, "The Ramayana in South-east Asian Sanskrit Epigraphy and Iconography", 192-193.

213 Brockington, *Righteous Rama*, 287; Mus, "Études indiennes et indo-chinoises, l'Inscription à Vālmīki de Prakāṣadharmā".

214 Sarkar, "The Migration of the Rāmāyaṇa Story to Indonesia", 106.

215 Guillon, *Cham Art*: 121-122, 178-179.

existing texts of this work come from Panduranga, the ancient capital of the southern state of Champa, along with another work entitled *Damnuy Po Keidai Mukerasih* (the tale of the ascetic king, Dasaratha, father of Rama). Gerard Moussay, who has studied these texts, found similarities with the Malay *Hikayat Sri Rama*, although the title appears to have some connection with the Khmer or Lao versions. Since there are no written texts remaining from that period, Geoffrey Marrison concludes by stating: “We have in fact what appears to be a folk tradition rather than an established literary one: perhaps we should look to the Cambodian dance-drama...as the source of the Cham work.”²¹⁶

Philippines

“In the backyards of the collective unconscious of the Philippines are repeated resonances of the epic of Rama,”²¹⁷ the farthest place in Southeast Asia that the Rama story has traveled.²¹⁸ Here, the story exists in a prose version called *Maharadia Lawana* (Maharaja Ravana) in the Maranaw script and language spoken on parts of the southern island of Mindanao.²¹⁹

Juan R. Francisco has written extensively on this version of the Rama story, translating the narrative in his work “Maharadia Lawana”, published in *Asian Studies* in 1969. Francisco describes the setting where this story grew: “Lanao del Sur, the land where the folktale was nourished, may be best described as a part of the volcanic highlands of Mindanao. It forms the western portion of these highlands... .”²²⁰ He goes on to explain that before Islam came, this area was subject to early contact by Indian and Chinese traders, thus the possible transmission of the Rama story, although the tale has been “...reduced to almost microscopic size in the *Maharadia Lawana*.”²²¹

Given the folk aspect and relatively obscure nature of this work, assigning a date has proven to be difficult and Francisco provides more a range of development, rather than a definitive date: “...it seems that the piece of literature may have reached its present setting sometime between the middle of the 17th century and the early 19th”²²²

Some have noted the connections between the Javanese and Malay folk versions and *Maharaja Ravana*,²²³ while Kam points out that “...while some motifs may have come from Malay and Javanese traditions, the elements have evolved and changed so much between the mid-17th and early 19th centuries that the story can be considered as an independent tradition.”²²⁴ In this regard, Francisco gives a detailed comparison of many elements of *Maharaja Ravana* with the Malay versions and the

216 Marrison, “The Chams and Their Literature”, 49.

217 Chandra, “Rāmāyaṇa, The Epic of Asia”, 652.

218 Brockington, Righteous Rama, 305-306.

219 Interestingly, Ravana has only eight heads in this version, as opposed to the usual ten in most other renditions. Francisco, “The Ramayana in the Philippines”, 155.

220 Francisco, “Maharadia Lawana”, 188.

221 Francisco, “Maharadia Lawana”, 202.

222 Francisco, “Maharadia Lawana”, 218.

223 Brockington, Righteous Rama, 305-306. It might be noted that Maranaw in the same language family as Malay and Javanese.

224 Kam, Ramayana in the Arts of Asia, 8.

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, pointing out many similarities and differences, noting “...the range of very significant Maranaw elements in the literature is itself an indication that the story has floated in Maranaw society for quite some time, and that it would have taken that long to assume an entirely Maranaw character and image.”²²⁵ However, one aspect of similarity with the Malay versions is that both are not serious religious or moral works.²²⁶

Conclusion

From this survey of the versions and renditions of the Rama story in South and Southeast Asia, we can see the wide spread and diverse absorption of the saga, both in the place of its birth in India and throughout Southeast Asia. With respect to Southeast Asia, we can see there is a relationship between the many tellings of the Rama story in the various cultures and localities of the region. In some cases, such as Javanese/Malay and Khmer/Thai, the relationship appears to be quite strong, while in others, it is more tentative.

With respect to the Rama story in a Thai context and the many versions present in the area in and around present day Thailand, Santosh N. Desai, in *Hinduism in Thai Life*, states that it “the Thai story might have been formed out of the material on Rama’s life which was prevalent in South-east Asia itself.”²²⁷ Dhani makes the argument that the version used by the Khmer at Angkor, having come through the Javanese, is the most likely conduit between Indian versions and the Rama story in a Thai context. He states that the origin was “the old Javanese versions which doubtless inspired the Khmer versions, from which the Thai State of Ayudhya [*sic*] inherited its tale of Rama.” In addition, he notes the supremacy of Phra Isuan (Shiva) in *Rama I Ramakien* as further proof since the Khmer were Saivites.²²⁸ Maurizio Peleggi makes the point that “courtly culture in the Ayutthaya and early Bangkok period was molded in the Indic stamp derived from the empire of Angkor. Its main features ... a Hindu mythology, versified in the court epic Ramakien and performed in court spectacles such as the *khorn* [*sic*] (a masked performance) and the *lakorn* (a danced drama)”²²⁹

Therefore, we can see that there are numerous opinions as to the origins of *Ramakien* and little definitive proof as to which opinion is true. The next chapter will explore the social and cultural role and roots of the Rama story in Thailand in greater depth, as well as describing its literary and artistic presence in Thailand.

²²⁵ Francisco, “Maharadia Lawana”, 218.

²²⁶ Francisco, “Maharadia Lawana”, 188.

²²⁷ Desai, *Hinduism in Thai Life*, 112.

²²⁸ Dhani, “Review of Books – The Ramakirti”, 173, 174.

²²⁹ Peleggi, *Thailand, the Worldly Kingdom*, 47.

Chapter 3: The Rama Story in a Thai Context – A Reflection of and Reflection on Thai Culture and Society

“To appreciate Thai literature and to know the Thai language at its best, therefore, is to know something of the Ramakian [*sic*].”¹

As can be seen from the survey of the Rama story in South and Southeast Asia, this piece of literature has been absorbed by and had influence on nearly every culture and society where it has been introduced. In this regard, Thai-identified societies and culture can be included, from ancient times to the present. Nearly every writer on Thai literature proclaims that the Rama story in Thai, particularly *Rama I Ramakien*, is the most important piece of Thai literature.

The Rama story, in general, and Rama I’s rendition specifically, have had a great influence on Thai society in many forms and aspects. It is generally acknowledged and understood that the rendition of the Rama tale compiled, created and composed under the direction of Rama I in 1797 is the most complete and comprehensive narrative of the Rama related stories in Thai. This version, once it had been set down as a royal composition, has dominated performance, depiction and representation of the Rama narrative in Thailand.

However, the situation with respect to the Rama story in Thai society is much more complex than merely Rama I’s version. There are many more versions extant in other regions of Thailand, and many versions that existed before Rama I directed the composition of the narrative. In fact, the existence of the Rama story can be traced back to the very beginning of what is considered formal Thai history starting with the Sukhothai period, showing its long association with and influence on Thai-identified societies.

The significance of the Rama story in Thailand can also be seen by the impact on nearly every aspect of Thai culture, as well as how Thai culture has conversely impacted the Thai renditions of the Rama story. Furthermore, a review of Thai literature through the ages reveals the depth this tale has touched the hearts and minds of Thai people as can be seen by the many references to aspects and characters from the Rama story that have been made in a large number of literary works composed over hundreds of years.

A Truly Thai Tale

While it is clear that the basic outline and plot of the Rama story known in Thailand today can be linked to the Indian Subcontinent, tracing the origins and path by which the tale arrived here is not so clear, full of differing opinions, conjecture and conflicting evidence. Swami Satyananda Puri makes this point clear by stating that the “Ramakirti [*Ramakien*] carries in its body Ramayanic tales popular in very many

¹ Anuman Rajadhon, *Essays on Thai Folklore*, 56.

countries...[which]...undoubtedly shows that the passage along which the story of Rama entered Thailand lay through many a different country.”²

As Chapter 2 has detailed, the origin of the Rama story in India itself is also subject to debate and wide diversity of opinion, although, as noted, most point to the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* as the oldest, and thus often considered the original. In any event, most researchers today accept that the Rama story in Thai was not taken directly from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.³ Many have tried to show some direct connection with different versions, most particularly from southern India. S. Singaravelu makes an argument, based on a comparative analysis of certain passages and motifs, for the close relationship between the Tamil poetic version, *Rāmāvatāram* of Kamban’s *Ramayana* and *Rama I Ramakien*.⁴ Garrett Kam also concludes in *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia*, that the “...Tamil tradition probably played an important role in the royal literary effort, for the Thai epic has many features in common with southern Indian ideas”⁵

Others have indicated there is a less direct connection between the Indian versions, Tamil or otherwise, and the Thai Rama stories, arguing that the path taken was likely more circuitous. Santosh N. Desai, in *Hinduism in Thai Life*, states that it “...is not certain whether the Thai story came directly from India, or whether it is based on various South-east Asian versions ... the Thai story might have been formed out of the material on Rama’s life which was prevalent in South-east Asia itself.”⁶

As previously noted, Prince Dhani Nivat makes the argument that the version used by the Khmer at Angkor, having come through the Javanese, is the most likely conduit from the Indian versions. In addition, as previously stated, he notes the supremacy of Phra Isuan (Shiva) in *Rama I Ramakien* as further proof since the Khmer were Saivites.⁷ After analyzing other texts and writings, he concludes that he was “... more convinced that the Rama story of Thai did not come from Ramayana of Valmiki directly.”⁸

With respect to an understanding of the Indian origin and roots of the Rama story, it would seem that this was not clearly recognized in Thai literary and learned circles until perhaps Rama VI undertook a study and wrote the *Origin of Ramakien* in 1913 about the connection with *Ramayana*.⁹ He is apparently the first to do somewhat serious analysis of this kind, which perhaps indicates the thoroughly Thai nature of the local story such that others before did not recognize any non-Thai nature of the tale.

2 Swami Satyananda Puri, *The Ramakirti*, 8.

3 See: Desai, *Hinduism in Thai Life*, 82; Dhani, “The Shadow-Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play”, 27.

4 Singaravelu, “A Comparative Study of the Sanskrit, Tamil, Thai and Malay Versions of the Story of Rama”.

5 Kam, *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia*, 7.

6 Desai, *Hinduism in Thai Life*, 112.

7 Dhani, “Review of Books – The Ramakirti”, 174.

8 Dhani, *Review of Panji Tales or Inao, Rama Tales and Programs from Khon and Dramas*, 6.

9 *Ramakien of King Rama II and Origin of Ramakien by King Rama VI*.

Somporn Singto, in her Master's Thesis "The Relationship Between the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki and the Ramakian of King Rama I"¹⁰ and Mattani Rattanin in her two part article, "รามายณะเปรียบเทียบทางวรรณคดี (An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana)"¹¹ both provide detailed analyses comparing the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* with *Rama I Ramakien*. In describing how the tale was possibly transmitted and why it was changed, Mattani explains:

...only the essences of the story was adopted from Valmiki or other Indian versions, which was transmitted orally, since the written versions were in Sanskrit or some other language that only the highly educated could understand, and when related in the local language, where it would be added to and local beliefs, religious ideas and culture would be added... .¹²

Somporn and Mattani go on to provide many examples of how *Rama I Ramakien* differs from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. These include the primary fact the Rama story in the Indian Subcontinent, both that of Vālmīki and many other texts in vernacular languages, most particularly Tulsidas' *Rāmacartiamānsa*, are religious and philosophical texts, and are often read on a daily basis for moral education. The Rama story in a Thai context, on the other hand, is an adventure story, albeit with imbedded moral lessons – "*Ramakien* makes it very clear at the end this is just a tale for enjoyment sake, and not to be taken as anything real, unlike Vālmīki."¹³

Somporn and Mattani also compare the nature of the characters in each narrative, pointing out the enhanced role of Thotsakan (Rāvaṇa) in *Rama I Ramakien*, where he is a much more rounded character, with 'good' and 'bad' qualities. With respect to Phra Ram (Rāma), Mattani states:

In *Ramakien*, Phra Ram is the example of a perfect, great Thai king, always acting within the ethics of royal rule. When he will do something, he first calls a meeting of his advisors, but always retains the ultimate authority and power over the army and issues clear orders and the wanon army has ultimate loyalty, unlike in Indian versions where they will gossip about Rama behind his back until Hanuman has to warn them many times.¹⁴

Mattani also provides a comparison of some of the characters: Phra Lak/Lakṣmaṇa, where he is portrayed more as an equal to Phra Ram/Rama in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, rather than as a figure subordinate to the fighting ability of his elder brother in *Rama I Ramakien*; Kumphakan/Kumbhakarna, who is more humble and devoted to truth and honesty in *Rama I Ramakien*; and Hanuman, who has a devote and chaste nature in almost all renditions of the Rama story other than in Thai,

10 Somporn, "The Relationship Between the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki and the Ramakian of King Rama I".

11 Mattani, "An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana, Parts 1 and 2".

12 Mattani, "An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana, Part 1", 118.

13 Mattani, "An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana, Part 1", 128.

14 Mattani, "An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana, Part 2", 128.

where his flirtatious and sometimes naughty personality makes him the most beloved of characters for Thai audiences.

In addition to the many difference between *Rama I Ramakien* and the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* in terms of focus and intent, the narrative itself, with respect to scenes and events is quite different, with many episodes in the Thai rendition not found in any other texts. An obvious starting point of this difference is the way *Rama I Ramakien* begins, with the founding of Ayuthaya and Longka.¹⁵ In fact, the first 300 pages of the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien* deal with the origin of many of the main characters, in essence, setting up the scene for the main action that will follow in what might be considered a sort of ‘preamble’. This is not found in other versions in India, or other Southeast Asian renditions.

In addition, there are many scenes that can generally only be found in *Rama I Ramakien* and are generally not seen in other tellings of the Rama story. A few examples include:

- “Nang Loi”, in which Benyakai, the niece of Thotsakan takes the form of a dead Nang Sida floating up the river to try to trick Phra Ram into abandoning his war campaign.¹⁶
- “Suphanamatcha”, where the mermaid daughter of Thotsakan tries to disrupt the building of the causeway that will bring Phra Ram and his monkey army to Longka. This episode also includes the amorous exploits of Hanuman with Suphanamatcha and the subsequent birth of their son, Matchanu, who uniquely has a monkey body and fish tail.¹⁷
- “The Mokkahasak Spear of Kumphakan”, in which Kumphakan, the younger brother of Thotsakan, strikes Phra Lak, rendering him unconscious, necessitating Hanuman to go gather the herbal remedy, where he famously has to use his tail to gather up the medical plants. This episode is linked to local legends in several part of present day Thailand.¹⁸
- “Phrommat Arrow of Inthorachit”, in which Intharachit, the son of Thotsakan, transforms to be Phra In riding his elephant, Erawan, then shooting Phra Lak and the monkey army with his Phrommat Arrow.¹⁹
- The second war fought between Phra Phrot and Phra Satarut, the younger brothers of Phra Ram, against Chakkrawat, his family and friends, much of which mirrors the war fought between Phra Ram and Thotsakan.²⁰
- “Thao Unarat”, where Phra Ram fights the *asura*, Thao Unarat, subduing him by pinning him to a rock in a cave with a kind of reed grass.²¹ Dhani says that “...it is likely this come from local tales taken to mix in. For example, Yak Kokkhanak...(Thao Unarat), the local

15 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 1, 2-16.

16 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 2, 192-213.

17 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 2, 227-236.

18 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 2, 364-394.

19 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 2, 482-506.

20 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 4, 1-293.

21 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol 4, 481-492.

people in ancient times in the area of Mount Si Phrachan near Khok Krathiam in Lopburi Province, still affirm that he lives in a cave on the mountain.”²²

Dhani also wrote of some of the difference between *Rama I Ramakien* and the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* that show the unique nature of the Thai rendition:

Our story of Ramakien is very long as well. However, it is not the same as Ramayana since Ramayana is made long with dialogue of each side when they come out to fight or performing their duties. In our rendition, the characters do not have that much dialogue as in Ramayana, but is made long by explanation of how each sides prepares for fighting, the manner of the fight and the results of the fight... .²³

From the above, we can see that while the Rama story in Thai has links to the Indic renditions of the Rama tale in the Indian Subcontinent, the connection is merely in the basic outline and some of the general themes of the story, with some similar characters and episodes. The Thai art historian, Jean Boisselier, had this assessment: “...the chronicle of Rāma finally acquired in Thailand a character that may properly be described as Thai...the mode of life and action, the customs and behaviour have become specifically Thai.”²⁴

Therefore, we can see that there are numerous opinions as to the origins of the Rama story in Thai, with the veracity and soundness of each view subject to debate. This leads one to conclude that perhaps there are any number of sources, each having some influence, although some stronger than others. However, it is also very clear that the Rama story in Thai, especially the version of Rama I, has its own character and flavor. It is also clear that the Rama story in Thailand that we all know and admire today evolved into *Rama I Ramakien* from a long and rich history and has become a unique telling that is “truly Thai” with a clear imprint of “Thainess”. This will be made clearer by the following discussion of how Thai culture is both represented in and represented by the Rama story in Thai, particularly *Rama I Ramakien*. Before that discussion, a literary history of the Rama tale in Thai will be provided, along with a review of the use of the Rama theme in other literature for comparison or representational purposes.

Literary History of the Rama Story in Thai

Sukhothai (13-14th Century)

While there are no written texts of the Rama story remaining from the Sukhothai period, it seems evident that the Rama story must have been well-known in this first Thai-identified organized polity. The usual evidence for this is the use of ‘Rama’ to form the name of the most famous of the Sukhothai kings, King **Ramkamhaeng** (Rama the Brave), who ruled from 1277 to 1317. Also, the full name

²² Dhani, Collection of Writing of Prince Dhani Nivat, 247.

²³ Dhani, Collection of Writing of Prince Dhani Nivat, 236

²⁴ Boisselier, Thai Painting, 187-188.

of another Sukhothai ruler, Mahādharmarājā I (r. 1346/7-1368/74?), contained a reference to Rama – Brañā Śrī Sūryavaṃśa **Rāma** Mahādharmarājādhirāja.²⁵

In addition, there are references to the Rama story in at least four stone inscriptions from that period, as discussed below. The most oft-cited of these is the mention of Phra Ram Cave in the Sukhothai Inscription No. 1,²⁶ but other inscriptions indicate an association with Rama and knowledge of the Rama story.

Ayutthaya (1351 to 1767)

Although it is frequently said that all the literary texts were destroyed or lost when Ayutthaya fell to the Burmese in 1767, there are many manuscripts, including those of the Rama story, remaining from the Ayutthaya era (1351 to 1767). Indication that the Rama story was well known during this period is evidenced by the many texts from that time and by the many references to episodes or characters from the story in other literature, as detailed later.

Scripts and Verses

There have been various printings of parts of the Rama story over the years, many for cremation volumes and other commemorative publications. However, more recently, several volumes have been printed by the Fine Arts Department and others containing compilations of scripts and verses of the Rama story from the Ayutthaya period.

Compilation of Ramakien Verses

In 2003, the Fine Arts Department printed *Compilation of Ramakien Verses* in two volumes containing various scripts and verses of the Rama story, many from the Ayutthaya era.²⁷ The published volumes contain various verses, most with unidentified authors and dates, along with compositions by Rama II and Rama VI. Many of the pieces were composed for performance by the *nang yai* shadow puppet theater, consisting of *chabang kap* and *yani kap*.²⁸ The short pieces include preludes and verses extolling chariots or describing the troops. There are also some longer pieces of full episodes. A comparison of the elements and events of the episodes shows many differences from that of *Rama I Ramakien*, which would be an interesting subject for study, albeit beyond the scope of this dissertation.

A Ramakien Dance Drama from the Ayutthaya Period

A *Ramakien Dance Drama from the Ayutthaya Period* was published by the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Center in 1997.²⁹ This is a publication of an undated manuscript donated to the National Library in 1913 by Phra

25 Griswold, “The Epigraphy of Mahādharmarājā I of Sukhodaya”, 71.

26 The Inscription of King Ramkamhaeng the Great, 42.

27 *Compilation of Ramakien Verses*, Volume 1; *Compilation of Ramakien Verses*, Volume 2.

28 *Chabang kap* [ฉับง หารย] are verses of 16 syllables, split into three parts, the first and third lines having six syllables and the second having four syllables and *yani kap* [ยานี หารย] are verses of 11 syllables, split into two parts, the first having 5 syllables, the second having six syllables.

29 Sujit, *A Ramakien Dance Drama from the Ayutthaya Period*.

Khru Si [พระครูศรี] that was originally classified by the library as being a royal composition of King Taksin of the Thonburi period. However, Ki Yupho, in a publication about the Taksin composition, analyzed the original manuscript, the poetic style and some of the words used and concluded that they must be older than the Thonburi period, likely produced for a private theater company for *khon* or *nang yai* performance.³⁰ It is possible there were other matching volumes since the existing one only covers the scenes from when Phra Ram gathers the troops as he prepares to march on Longka to when he sends Ongkhot as an envoy to Longka before the fighting starts. As well, the narrative appears to end abruptly in what seems to be mid-scene.

In this dance drama script there are approximately 2,000 lines of verse in 85 stanzas, composed in the *klon* meter. This is considerably shorter than the similar scenes in *Rama I Ramakien*, where the same episodes are covered in more than 6,000 lines of verse. However, there are a few different scenes and some scenes missing, such as no episode of Nang Loi in the Ayutthaya volume, even though we know such an episode existed during that period.³¹

Also, as part of the verses, there are references to certain events that occurred at an earlier point in the story, indicating that such earlier scenes and episodes must have existed and been known at that time. For example:

- references to Hanuman being cursed by Phra Uma;
- recalling how Phali and Sukhrip straightened Mount Meru and then Phali stole Nang Dara;
- Phra Ram obtaining the breast cloth of Nang Sida and the ring from Jatayu that he gives to Hanuman to take to Nang Sida;
- a recounting of the abduction of Sida, using a golden deer as the deception and the deer calling out in Phra Ram's voice in the message that Ongkhot takes to Thotsakan;
- later references by Thotsakan to Phra Ram shooting Phali.

An element of note regarding these verses is the designation of Phra Ram as being a Bodhisattva, referring to him as “Phra Phuttapong [พระพุทธพงษ์]” at least 10 times,³² in addition to his being an incarnation of Phra Narai. This is similar to how he is portrayed in the Khmer, Lao and Burmese versions, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Other Works Using the Rama Story

During the reign of King Narai, considered by some Thai literary historians as “the ‘Golden Age’ of Thai indigenous literature,”³³ there were quite a number of pieces written that use the Rama story as a theme, indicating perhaps a particular popularity during that period:

30 Ki Yupho, *Ramakien by the King of Thonburi*, 152-156.

31 See *Compilation of Ramakien Verses*, Volume 2, 64-76.

32 Sujit, *A Ramakien Dance Drama from the Ayutthaya Period*, 6, 14, 41, 50, 67, 68, 74, 76, 80, 84, 85.

33 Wenk, *Thai Literature, An Introduction*, 7.

- โคร่งพาลีสอนน้อง [*Khrong Phali Son Nong*] (*Phali Teaches His Younger*) – a work containing 32 stanzas of four lines, based on the well-known scene from the Rama story when Phali, who has just been shot by Phra Ram and is about to die, instructs his younger brother, Sukhrip, and his son, Ongkhot, about the proper behavior they should have as subjects and ruler.³⁴ While these verses are said to be from the time of King Narai, some even attribute them to him personally, although Klaus Wenk in his study of the various versions of Phali teaching his younger brother, points out that this attribution may be more tradition than reality.³⁵
- โคลงทศรถสอนพระราม [*Khlong Thotsarot Son Phra Ram*] (*Thotsarot Teaches Phra Ram*) – similar to *Phali Teaches His Younger*, this 12 stanza, 48 line poem is also based on a scene from the Rama story when Thotsarot is about to turn over the realm to Phra Ram and he instructs him in the proper behavior of a ruler. This piece is also attributed to King Narai personally.³⁶
- ราชापิลापคำฉันท์ [*Racha Philap Kham Chan*] (*Verses of Royal Lament*) or sometimes titled, นีราศษีดา [*Nirat Sida*] – is a composition attributed to Phra Horathibodi [พระโหราธิบดี], which could have been either a person or a position, that describes the lamenting sorrow of Phra Ram as he starts his search for Nang Sida after she has been abducted by Thotsakan. The verses are written in various types of verse meter, such as *chabang* [ฉับัง] *surangkhanā* [สุรางคณา] and *malini* [มาลินี], and are an early example, if not the first, of the *nirat* genre of compositions.³⁷
- The piece begins with Phra Ram and Phra Lak starting off to search for Nang Sida, with Phra Ram lamenting for her along the way, including expressing his suspicions about which celestial being has abducted her. He asks flocks of birds and animals to help bring him news. He then comes upon an egret and peacock who are talking about a woman who has been secretly abducted by another person. The peacock reprimands her husband who had abandoned her allowing such an evil event to occur. Phra Ram becomes angry and declares that he will kill both birds with his arrow, but regains his senses because he knows there will be some retribution for such an act, and they proceed along the way. Next, they meet a monkey that has the breast cloth that Nang Sida had left with them. Then Phra Lak executes an *asura* who is chanting under a palm tree making the forest dark everywhere. After that, they meet a regal bird that offers them the ring of Nang Sida, and informs

34 Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 133-134, 139; Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 113-123.

35 Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 28.

36 Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 133-134, 140.

37 Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 194. *Nirat* is a genre where the poet relates a travel adventure and often compares what he sees to his longing for his great love left behind. For more information, see Sunthorn Phu, *Journey to Muang Klaeng*, 192-211.

them of the events of how he tried to obstruct Thotsakan when he was taking the lady away until he was grievously injured. Phra Ram laments further when he hears this news of Nang Sida. After he shoots his arrow to cremate to body of the bird, the two proceed until they stop to rest under the shade of tree, where the verses end.

- It is interesting to see some of the parallels and differences between the details in *Racha Philap Kham Chan* with the later *Rama I Ramakien*, including the breast cloth and ring offered by the monkey and the royal bird. Interestingly, the inclusion of the egret and peacock, albeit with some differences, can be seen in the Khmer version of the Rama story, showing a possible connection between the two Rama traditions.

Thonburi (1767-1782 CE)

Even though the Thonburi kingdom ran for only 15 years, historians consider it a separate historical period. There was only one ruler during that time, King Taksin, who spent much of his time at war fighting, particularly during the early part of the reign. Notwithstanding, there were a number of pieces of literature written during that time that show the prominence of the Rama story, the most important of which is verses written by Taksin himself.

Taksin Ramakien

King Taksin is said to have personally composed, or at least closely overseen, a number of scenes from the Rama story (*Taksin Ramakien*). These verses are preserved in what is considered their original state in four, gold lettered, black paper folded manuscripts at the National Library of Thailand in Bangkok. In addition, there is one recently discovered manuscript in the National Library in Berlin, Germany, which matches in appearance and orthography with the Bangkok manuscripts, and thus is most likely part of the same manuscript set. They all have a stated date of composition of 1770, albeit copied in final form in 1780.³⁸

The ‘first’ volume, so designated by the National Library, although this designation appears somewhat arbitrary as it refers to a later part of the story, is the episode of Phra Mongkut, the son of Phra Ram. This scene, which is not connected to the others in the *Taksin Ramakien* series, includes the release of the *Uppakan* horse and the capture and subsequent rescue of Phra Mongkut by his brother, Phra Lop.

If we put the manuscripts in traditional story sequence, then the next would be the Berlin manuscript, which contains what has previously been considered the missing initial part of the episode of Wirunchambang, when Wirunchambang goes out to fight Phra Ram and concludes with Phra Ram sending Hanuman after Wirunchambang who has escaped. The third manuscript – what has been called the second Bangkok volume – is the scenes of Hanuman wooing Nang Wanarin, capturing Wirunchambang and then moving to the scene of Thao Maliwarat coming to render judgement. The next volume covers Maliwarat rendering his judgement until

³⁸ National Library of Thailand: Nos. 530-533, Bundle 118, Cabinet 114; National Library, Berlin: No. 333. Two of the manuscripts, No. 531 and 532, specifically identify the contents as “Ramakien”, spelled [รามเกียรติ์], without the final negated ‘taw-tao’ and short ‘e’ vowel [ดี].

Thotsakan returns to Longka. The last volume is the episode of Thotsakan strengthening and then using his Kabinphat Spear on Phra Lak, ending when Hanuman goes to find the cure and ties the hair of Thotsakan and Nang Montho. These four manuscripts are clearly connected because at the end of the first three there is a designation “Phra Samut 1, continued on 2 [พระสมุด ๑, หน้า ๒]”, “2, continued on 3 [๒, หน้า ๓]” and “Samut 3, continued on 4 [สมุด ๓, หน้า ๔]”.

The fact that Taksin, the ruler during that period, found time during his many war campaigns to compose several verses of the story attests to its importance. On one hand, it seems unlikely that Taksin created these verses without some prior stories of reference, which indicates that such episodes must have been known in Ayutthaya, even though there are no written texts containing such scenes. On the other hand, there is an indication that Taksin may have learned of some versions of the Rama story while on one of his war campaigns in the south and brought ideas back that were used in his own composition. This attests to the long-term and widespread presence of the Rama story in the area of present day Thailand, even the southern parts.³⁹ An interesting side note to these verses is a model depicting scenes from the Rama story at Phra Racha Wang Derm (Thonburi Palace), the site of the palace of King Taksin inside what is today the Royal Thai Navy Headquarters on the west side of the Chao Phraya River near Wat Arun.⁴⁰

Although these verses are not as well known today, Dhani notes the “...version of the *Ramakien* from the pen of the King of Thonburi is a fact long since known and admitted in Thai literary circles”⁴¹ Yupho, in the previously mentioned volume, compared some of the sections with the composition of Rama I and found many similarities in language.⁴² This perhaps indicates that the verses were known and used by the composers of Rama I’s rendition attesting to a link between the Ayutthaya and/or Southern versions and that of *Rama I Ramakien*.

Yupho analyzed the language and diction used in the verses and concluded that they likely reflect the nature and character of the composer, Taksin, this being one who is “...straight forward, favored quickness and speed... brave, courageous, resolute... [but with]...morality of high virtue and merit... .”⁴³ Ratre Jaturas, in a MA thesis, concluded that Taksin decided to compose these Ramakien verses as a sort of proxy of himself, intending to show his thoughts and ideas about governance and himself as a great fighter.⁴⁴ This makes one wonder whether Taksin chose the Rama story as his subject matter because he identified with, or wanted to be identified with, Phra Ram as the great warrior and moral ruler, a common trait attributed to Thai rulers.

39 Ki Yupho, *Ramakien by the King of Thonburi*, 157.

40 Observed during a personal visit on 10 Jan 2007.

41 Dhani, “Review of Books-The Ramakien of King of Thonburi”, 81.

42 Ki Yupho, *Ramakien by the King of Thonburi*, 161-170.

43 Ki Yupho, *Ramakien by the King of Thonburi*, 178.

44 Ratre, “The Competence of King Thonburi in Writing Ramakien”, 89.

Rattanakosin (1782 to Present)

King Rama I (r. 1782-1809)

It is at the start of the Rattanakosin period, 1782 to present, under Rama I, the first ruler of the present Chakri dynasty, that the Rama story took its full form as we know it today. Rama I directed the composition, or perhaps compilation and re-composition, of a complete rendition of the Rama saga as part of his extensive efforts at reconstruction after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 and the establishment of a new capital and dynasty. While some historians have tried to attribute political and other motives to Rama I's efforts,⁴⁵ others have seen it purely as a literary and artistic endeavor to preserve the Rama tradition: "The Ramakirti [*Ramakien*] to the Thai is noble and heroic literature which imparts aesthetic enjoyment and provides themes for the fine arts."⁴⁶ This is perhaps reinforced by the oft-quoted stanza at the end of *Rama I Ramakien* which states:

That this Ramakien, a royal composition
His Majesty's diligent record of a mystical supposition.⁴⁷

Rama I is well-known for his efforts at restoration of many aspects of Thai society, including in the area of arts and literature. Many of his efforts were in the early part of his reign, well before his work on the Rama story. In fact, *Rama I Ramakien* was not completed until 1797, fifteen years after he took the crown and long after his power and control of the state was well-established. Therefore, one might question the veracity of any political motives of this effort and attribute it more to an effort, as with other monarchs, to highlight his accomplishments by identifying with Rama as the righteous king and protector of the realm.

While many have presumed that Rama I had the Rama story written to honor the Emerald Buddha image installed at Wat Phra Kaeo,⁴⁸ Niyada has expressed the opinion that the narrative was really a celebratory offering for the newly composed Tripitaka:

In the royal chronicles, around the time of the composition was completed in 1797, there was the commemoration of the Phra Mondop at Wat Phra Kaeo that was rebuilt to replace the Phra Monthiantham Hall that burnt down in 1788. Accordingly, it is likely that Ramakien was composed as a celebratory offering for the Phra Mondop and the Tripitaka.⁴⁹

In this regard, it might be noted that there is a mother-of-pearl cabinet in the Phra Mondop at Wat Phra Kaeo holding the *Tripitaka* that has figures from the Rama story around the base.⁵⁰

45 Wyatt, "The 'Subtle Revolution' of King Rama I of Siam", 34-35; Srisurang, "Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien", 1; Kittisak, "Ramakien in Modern Performance", 6-7.

46 Desai, *Hinduism in Thai Life*, 83.

47 "อันพระราชนิพนธ์รามเกียรติ์ ทรงเพียรตามเรื่องนิยายไสย". *Ramakien of King Rama I*, Volume 4, 582.

48 Reynolds, "Ramayana, Rama Jataka, and Ramakien", 58.

49 Niyada, *Restoration of Arts during the Reign of King Rama I*, 185.

50 Busaya, *His Majesty King Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke Maha Raj*, 112-119.

Given the relative dearth of prior written texts, particularly complete versions, it is uncertain what sources were used to construct *Rama I Ramakien*. David Wyatt asserts that there was a “systematic collection” of all available material relating to the Rama story.⁵¹ While J.M. Cadet points out that it “...is not easy to estimate the extent to which Rama I drew on vernacular versions of the story handed down through the courts of the Mon and Khmer of Ayudhia [*sic*] and Bangkok, and to what extent he was obligated to return to contemporary Indian sources.”⁵² As noted earlier, Singaravelu makes an argument that certain Tamil folktales were adopted into *Rama I Ramakien*, thus indicated access to Tamil folk tradition.⁵³

In any event, Rama I’s version is the most complete rendition of the Rama story in Thai that we have today, running more than 53,300 verses, without chapter or section breaks, with a recent printed edition covering 2,300 pages in four volumes.⁵⁴ The original manuscripts of this composition are housed at the National Library in two sets of *samut khoi*. Rama I is said to have utilized members of the royal household and accomplished poets of the day to gather and organize all the material, with Rama I making corrections and changes and perhaps writing a few verses himself. However, there is no indication of who the composers were, either as a committee or for individual sections.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, while they apparently took great pains to make the composition read as one complete work, a careful analysis of the language and diction indicates differences between various sections, an interesting topic for further research. Rama V explained:

Ramakien is a text composed during the reign of Phra Phuttha Yot Fa [Rama I] that organized and improved on the old verses that Khun Luang Tak had changed and revised in a confused manner, adding and searching for lost editions when the old capital [Ayutthaya] fell and they became lost and scattered. This composition of Ramakien, an assembly of learned men from the royal bureau, those who could remember various of the old episodes, organized and improved upon them. When they were done and offered the text, this would be called a ‘royal composition’.⁵⁶

King Rama II (r. 1809-1824)

Next to Rama I’s edition, the next most complete rendition of the Rama story in Thai is the dance-drama edition written by King Rama II, finished in 1815 (*Rama II Ramakien*).⁵⁷ It appears that one of the possible motives of Rama II, who was quite adept at literary composition, was to create a piece that was more suitable for dramatic presentation. While the Rama I rendition is the most complete, its very length and detail make it less adaptable to performance. Therefore, Rama II wrote a

⁵¹ Wyatt, “Subtle Revolution”, 34.

⁵² Cadet, *The Ramakien*, 32.

⁵³ Singaravelu, “The Episode of Maiyarab in the Thai Rāmakīen”, 25.

⁵⁴ *Ramakien of King Rama I*, Volumes 1-4.

⁵⁵ Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 270.

⁵⁶ *Compilation of Various Royal Writings of King Rama V*, 135.

⁵⁷ *Ramakien of King Rama II*.

version aimed at being performed, and is in fact, the basis used for most performances today.⁵⁸

While *Rama II Ramakien*, which is really two texts that do not necessarily continue from one to the other, follows the narrative plot and sequence of Rama I, the narrative does not cover the complete tale, consisting of only some 14,300 verses. The first part of the narrative starts well into the story at the point where Phra Ram sends Hanuman off in search of Nang Sida after she has been abducted by Thotsakan, skipping the first 25% of the tale covered by *Rama I Ramakien*, including the important scenes of Phra Ram's exile and the abduction of Nang Sida by Thotsakan. The second part skips completely the second war in which Phra Ram's brothers, Phra Phrot and Phra Satarut, go to fight, and instead picks up the story when Phra Ram exiles Nang Sida until they are finally reconciled.

Rama II Ramakien is generally a more streamlined narrative, eliminating or condensing many scenes and episodes included in the Rama I rendition. As an indication, in the recent printing of each, *Rama I Ramakien* covers in 1,673 pages,⁵⁹ what *Rama II Ramakien* does in 693 pages.⁶⁰ *Rama II Ramakien* was printed in complete form for the first time in 1913, nearly 100 years after the original writing, sponsored by Rama VI to be distributed in commemoration of the opening of Chitralada Palace.⁶¹ Given the long time lag, and the seemingly strange point to the start of the story and abrupt endings, almost in mid-scene, one wonders if there were other episodes composed that have been lost, perhaps in some foreign collection waiting to be discovered similar to the long-lost volume of *Taksin Ramakien*.

Rama VI noted that a prior printing in 1899 by Bangkok Prasitthikan Co [บางกอกประสิทธิ์การบริษัทสมา] of just the first part of the work, was incomplete and contained many errors, thus not befitting the honor due such an important royal composition. He particularly praised this work, noting in the preface to the first publication that he picked this composition because (1) the work was a great example of the use of Thai language; (2) the composition was important to the nation in order to counter foreign criticism that Thai people had no significant literature tradition; (3) the story was loved and cherished by Thai people, such that it was enjoyed continuously and not just put on the shelves and left unread; and (4) there was beautiful and melodic versification.⁶²

In addition to the long dance drama verses that Rama II wrote, he also composed some single episodes in *chabang kap* and *yani kap* meter, including the episodes of *Nang Loi* and *Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow*.⁶³ Ki Yupho indicates that Rama II took the verses from the Ayutthaya period to compose scene from *Nang Loi*, revising and expanding them. In his volume on *Taksin Ramakien*, Ki Yupho compares the two, showing the more sophisticated and lyrical composition of Rama II.⁶⁴ Interestingly, these *Nang Loi* verses are much longer than for the same

58 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vol. 1, Introduction, 7.

59 Ramakien of King Rama I, Vols. 2-4.

60 Ramakien of King Rama II.

61 Vella, Chaiyo!, 237-238.

62 Ramakien of King Rama II, 15-16.

63 Compilation of Ramakien Verses, Volume 1, 27-32, 44-55.

64 Ki Yupho, Ramakien by the King of Thonburi, 133-148.

part of the episode in *Rama II Ramakien*, running 68 *chabang kap* lines versus just 14 lines of *klon* verse.

King Rama III (r. 1824-1851)

While Rama III did not write any verses related to the Rama story, he was a great sponsor of the restoration and building efforts, mostly at Buddhist temples, that used the Rama story in the design. As described in Chapter 6, the temples he renovated or sponsored include Wat Phra Kaeo, Wat Phra Chetaphun and Wat Suthat, all showing abundant use of Rama images.

At Wat Phra Chetaphun, a number of inscriptions were installed regarding the Rama story when the temple was renovated under Rama III's direction. One such inscription, located on the inner wall of the pavilion in front of the *Phra Maha Chedi* [พระมหาเจดีย์], is *Chan Phali Son Nong* [ฉันท์พาลีสอนน้อง], a piece of 34 stanzas in different types of *chan* meter.⁶⁵

Another set of 13 inscriptions was installed in the *Sala Thit* pavilions surrounding the *Phra Mondop* at Wat Phra Chetaphun. These inscriptions describe the mural paintings that adorned the walls inside the pavilions showing certain episodes from *Rama I Ramakien*. While these inscriptions have now deteriorated, in 1981 Niyada transcribed and published them.⁶⁶

As well, there are short, four line inscriptions of *klong* verse beneath the 152 bas-relief stone carvings that surround the *ubosot* at Wat Phra Chetaphun giving short descriptions of the carvings, along with two inscriptions without carvings,. Although many of the inscriptions have faded, they have all been recorded in a manuscript kept at the National Library, along with having been printed in a number of volumes.⁶⁷

Two texts of *Phali Son Nong* were composed during the reign of Rama III. One includes 175 lines of *klon* meter by Phra Maha Yotsa [พระมหายศธา], a relatively obscure author said to be either a monk or a minor palace official. The second is a narrative that is related to the first, with no author indicated, but dated at the latest 1821. This piece has 139 lines of *klon* meter.⁶⁸

King Rama IV (r. 1851-1868)

King Rama IV wrote a few short verses based on the Rama story in the form of dance dramas for inner court performance. These include พระรามเดินดง [*Phra Ram Doen Dong*] (*Rama Wandering In the Forest*) and เบิกโรจนาราน์ปราบหนทุก [*Boek Rong Narai Prap Nonthuk*] (*Prelude to Narai Vanquishes Nonthuk*).⁶⁹ Kittisak Kerdarunsuksri notes the possible motives for Rama IV to have picked these episodes as subjects:

One of King Mongkut's policies to promote the notion of a glorious country was to revive the court performances, which had been banned during the previous reign. In doing this, he deliberately

⁶⁵ Niyada, Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Chetaphon, 597; Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 27-28.

⁶⁶ Niyada, Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Chetaphon, 554-579.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Niyada, *The Ramakien Bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon*.

⁶⁸ Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 29-31, 136-159.

⁶⁹ Royal Composition of King Rama IV, *Ramakien*.

selected certain episodes from the Ramakien for recomposition for the repertoires of his royal troupe...He for example rewrote the episode of *Phra Ram Doen Dong* (Rama wandering in the forest). This episode noticeably echoed his own renunciation of his right to the throne and his retirement from worldly pleasure to enter an ecclesiastical life...He also recomposed the episode of *Narai Prap Nonthuk* (God Vishnu defeating the demon Nonthuk) as a separate prelude performance of *bot boek rong*. It was plausible that his intention of producing this episode as a short prelude was to modernize traditional performing arts to attract his audiences, foreigners who were not familiar with a long and slow-pace performance of traditional kind in particular. 70

Another *Phali Son Nong* narrative cited by Wenk in his work, *Phali Teaches the Young*, is contained in a composition entitled ลิลิตพงศาวดารเหนือ [*Lilit Phongsawadan Nuea*] (*Lilit of Northern Chronicles*) by Somdet Krom Phraya Pavares Variyalongkorn [สมเด็จพระยาปวเรศวริยาลงกรณ์], the eighth Supreme Patriarch of Thailand. The work of 38, four line stanzas, claims the piece was written for *khon* performance, but Wenk says that it might have been to pay homage to Rama IV in Bangkok.⁷¹

King Rama V (r. 1868-1910)

King Rama V, while not writing any performance pieces, directed the composition of poetic verses describing each mural painting that were inscribed on stone tablets opposite the corresponding murals decorating the galleries of Wat Phra Kaeo, with Rama V composing eight of the verses himself.⁷² These verses became a favorite for inclusion in cremation volumes, of which many are still available.⁷³

In addition, Wenk attributes another of the *Phali Teaches the Young* poems to an unknown author, but often referred to by his title Phra Thammasat [พระธรรมสาตร], presumed to have served in the court of Rama V. This piece, titled กำกอลอนสุภาษิต เรื่องพาลีสอนน้อง [*Kam Klon Suphasit Rueang Phali Son Nong*] (*Phali Teaches His Younger Brother Proverb Verses*), has 295 lines in various meters and is the longest of the poems of this subject.⁷⁴ This author also wrote a similar type work, พิเภกสอน

70 Kittisak, "Ramakien in Modern Performance", 2. In this regard, Singaravelu provides a composition date of 1825, when Rama IV was ordained as a monk, although it is not clear if this refers to just one of the pieces or both. Singaravelu, "The Rāma Story in the Thai Cultural Tradition", 56. If so, Kittisak's supposition about the reason for Rama IV to compose the first episode is put into context.

71 Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 29, 124-135. Lilit [ลิลิต] is a type of meter that combines verse with rhythmic prose.

72 Verses for the Scenes of Ramakien, Volume 1, 10; Panels 90 and 94 in Ramakien Verses, part 3, 163-168; 187-192; Panels 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, and 107 in Ramakien Verses, part 4, 7-42.

73 See for example: Ramakien Verses; Ramakien Verses, part 2; Ramakien Verses, part 3; Ramakien Verses, part 4; Ramakien Verses from the engravings along the galleries at Wat Phra Kaeo, Part 5 to the end.

74 Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 31, 160-185.

เบญจกาย [*Phiphek Son Benyakai*] (*Phiphek Teaches Benyakai*), albeit shorter at only 170 lines.⁷⁵

King Rama VI (r. 1910-1925)

In 1910, Rama VI wrote a number of episodes for *khon* performance based on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, rather than the existing Rama related texts in Thai, eliminating some episodes and changing the names and nature of some of the characters to follow *Vālmīki*.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the intention of Rama VI, a close comparison of his narrative with *Rama I Ramakien* and the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* shows that at certain places he devises his own plot and in others he follows *Rama I Ramakien*. For instance, after Hanuman has burned Longka and the fire is still stuck to his tail, in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Hanuman douses the fire in the ocean, while in *Rama I Ramakien* he puts his tail in his mouth; Rama VI says he uses his saliva, along the lines of Rama I. Another example is the inclusion of Ongkhot going as an envoy to Longka, where he breaks down the gate and then curls up his tail so he can sit on the same height as Thotsakan, all of which are elements not found in *Vālmīki*, but are popular images in the Thai renditions.⁷⁷ It is also interesting to note that there are several indications that Rama VI used the Southern Recession of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* as the basis of his work. For example, when Phra Ram and Phra Lak cross over the causeway to Longka, they ride on the shoulders of Hanuman and Ongkhot, respectively.⁷⁸ In the critical edition of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Rama (Phra Ram) and Lakṣmana (Phra Lak) walk across the causeway;⁷⁹ but in Goldman, et.al's translation, a footnote states that the Southern Recession has Rama ride on the shoulders of Hanuman and Lakṣmana on Angada (Ongkhot).⁸⁰ This apparent use of the Southern Recession of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* by Rama VI would appear to reinforce the connection with South India that has been often emphasised by researchers when discussing the origins of the Rama story in Thai.

As previously mentioned, to commemorate the opening of Chitralada Palace, Rama VI, sponsored the first complete published edition of *Rama II Ramakien*,⁸¹ which included his long dissertation บ่อเกิดแห่งรามเกียรติ์ [*Bo Koet Haeng Ramakien*] (*The Origin of Ramakien*). This work sets forth his opinions about the source and origins of the Rama story in Thai, one of the first written pieces on this subject.⁸² An interesting aspect of this work, despite some apparent irregularities in the assertions, is that it appears to be the first time a clear connection was made between the Rama stories in Thailand and India, particularly *Vālmīki*'s version. This work set the stage for further, more in depth analysis by the eminent Thai scholars Sathiankoset (Phraya Anumanratchathon) and Nakhaprathip (Phra Saraprasoet), as

75 “Klon Proverb Verses of Phali Teaches His Younger and Phiphek Teaches Benyakai”.

76 *Ramakien, Lyrics and Verses*, written by King Rama VI.

77 *Ramakien, Lyrics and Verses*, written by King Rama VI, 49, 130.

78 *Ramakien, Lyrics and Verses*, written by King Rama VI, 103.

79 Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume VI: *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, Part: 1, 156.

80 Goldman, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Volume VI: *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, Part: 2, 622-623.

81 Vella, *Chaiyo!*, 237-238.

82 *Ramakien of King Rama II*, 706-818.

well as Prince Dhani Nivat.⁸³ In addition, Wenk tentatively attributed another of the *Phali Teaches His Young* compositions to the pen of Rama VI, albeit under the pseudonym Peroma [เปโรมา]. This piece is a relatively short work of only 21 stanzas in *chan* meter.⁸⁴

***Narai Sip Bang* – The Incarnations of Phra Narai**

There have been a number of works written in Thai about the incarnations of Phra Narai (Vishnu). While these generally track the incarnations of Vishnu traditionally cited in Indian sources, each work has a slightly different list and order, although all the Thai sources list Phra Ram as the tenth, and final, incarnation, whereas he is generally the seventh of ten incarnations in the India versions. One of the oldest of these works might be a manuscript that Niyada Lausunthorn has written about, and asserts is perhaps one of the sources for parts of *Rama I Ramakien*.⁸⁵ This manuscript is housed at the National Library in Bangkok and is interestingly labeled “20 Incarnations of Narai” on the cover.⁸⁶ Niyada surmises that this may be because, in addition to the usual ten incarnations, there are two more incarnations that are detailed, thus making 12 in total. Niyada also details the similarities and differences between the telling of Phra Narai’s incarnation as Phra Ram in this work and in *Rama I Ramakien*.⁸⁷

In addition to this work, in 1923, Rama VI wrote a verse version of the Incarnations of Narai – ลิลิต นารายณ์สิบปาง [*Lilit Narai Sip Bang*] (*Lilit Verses of the Ten Incarnations of Narai*). Rama VI used an English language book, *Hindu Mythology* by J.W. Wilkins, which makes his list of incarnations somewhat different from those typically set forth in Thai sources, and closer to certain Hindu renditions, including the ninth incarnation as the Buddha. However, perhaps given the influence and prominence of the Rama story in Thai, the Rama incarnation is many times longer and more detailed than the other incarnations.⁸⁸

The other works detailing the incarnations of Phra Narai in Thai that are typically referenced include:⁸⁹

- ฉบับโรงพิมพ์หลวง [*Rong Phim Luang Edition*], first printed in 1869 and inscribed on marble tablets at Wat Phra Kaeo.
- ฉบับโรงพิมพ์วชิรรินทร์ [*Rong Phim Walcheren Edition*], first printed in 1869 by Walcheren Printing House.

83 See, Sathiankoset, Upakon Ramakien; Sathiankoset, Anthology of Phra Ram Stories and Thoughts on Literature; Nakhapraphip, Glossary of Names in Ramakien and the Life and Works of Nakhapraphip; Dhani, Collection of Writing of Prince Dhani Nivat.

84 Wenk, *Phali Teaches the Young*, 32; 200-202.

85 Niyada, “Twenty Incarnations of Narai: The Origin of Ramakien”; Niyada, *The Legend of Vishnu’s Twenty Avatars and its Influence on Thai Culture*.

86 Notwithstanding the cover which states “นารายณ์ ๒๐ ปาง [Narai 20 Bang]”, in the catalogue of the National Library, this work is labeled, “นารายณ์ ๑๐ ปาง เล่ม ๔ เลขที่ ๔ ตู้ ๑๑๓ มัดที่ ๗๑ [Narai 10 Incarnations, volume 4, No. 4, cabinet 113, bundle 71]”. Niyada, “Twenty Incarnations of Narai: The Origin of Ramakien”, 44.

87 Niyada, *The Legend of Vishnu’s Twenty Avatars and its Influence on Thai Culture*, 61-73.

88 Rama VI, *Lilit Verses of the Ten Incarnations of Narai*, 151-353.

89 Niyada, *The Legend of Vishnu’s Twenty Avatars and its Influence on Thai Culture*, 29-34; Prachak, *Ten Incarnations of Narai*, 4 editions, 14.

- ฉบับคุณหญิงเลื่อนฤทธิ [Khunying Lueanrit Edition], first printed in 1923 and then in 1956 for the 60th birthday of Khunying Lueanrit.

Modern Prose Versions

A number of modern prose editions of the Rama story have been released in recent years. The most complete and well-known is the edition written by ‘Premseri’, a pen name for Seri Premruethai.⁹⁰ His version, which runs about 650 pages, follows the complete Rama I narrative and, while written in prose, incorporates numerous passages in verse from the original narrative.

Another relatively complete prose version is that written by Nitda Hongwiwat to accompany a publication of the mural paintings at Wat Phra Kaeo.⁹¹ In this work, the story accompanies detailed descriptions of many of the murals. Nitda also published a more condensed version to be used mainly as a teaching tool, with Thai and English summaries, covering 48 of the most significant murals.⁹² All of these editions follow the *Rama I Ramakien* narrative.

In addition, a number of annotated prose versions are available, including: Phlai Noi, *Ramakien, The Common Version*; Malini Phaloprakan, ed., *Ramakien*; and Kowit Tangtrongchit, *Extolling Ramakien*. As well, a useful pocket guide to all the characters in *Ramakien*, of which over 650 are identified, is available.⁹³ All of these versions follow that of *Rama I Ramakien*.

Cartoons

One genre that indicates continuing popularity of the Rama story, especially among young people, is the publication of cartoon versions of episodes of the Rama story. Publishers continually issue new editions of the well-known episodes in comic book form. As evidence of the popularity of using the Rama story as a basis of cartoon productions, a simple search at the Naiin website shows more than 40 such volumes available for sale. This is significantly greater than cartoon books of other classical Thai literature, such as *Khun Chang, Khun Phaen*, for which there are 5 for sale, *Phra Aphai Mani*, with 9, and *Inao*, with just 3 such cartoon books offered.⁹⁴ A list of some of these cartoon publications includes:

- A 30 booklet series drawn by Fen Studio entitled รามเกียรติ์ ฉบับ รามาวตาร (*Ramakien – The Incarnation of Rama*), which follows the storyline of *Rama I Ramakien*, but with the characters drawn in Indian style, including Thotsakan with only one head.⁹⁵

90 Premseri, *Ramakien*.

91 Nitda, *Ramakien with Mural Paintings From the Galleries at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha*.

92 Nitda, *The Story of Ramakien, From the Mural Paintings along the Galleries of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha*.

93 Phlai Noi, *Ramakien, The Popular Version*; Malini, *Ramakien*; Kowit, *Extolling Ramakien*; Ruenruethai, *Glossary of Names in Ramakien*.

94 Searched on 9 Sep 2016 <<http://www.naiin.com/>>.

95 Fen Studio, *Ramakien – The Incarnation of Rama, Vols 1-30*.

- A three volume series drawn by Chakkarin Ruangket called *รามเกียรติ์* (*The Book Master*) (*Ramakien* (The Book Master)), illustrated with a Japanese manga style.⁹⁶
- Two series drawn by Na Pope Sawbai, also in Japanese manga style that appear more fierce and perhaps targeted at an older teenage audience. One covers the battle with Kumphakan (three volumes) and one is of the battle with Maiyarap (six volumes).⁹⁷
- A sixteen volume series by Athit Bunchindasap that is drawn in a simpler, more Thai style that appears to be aimed at younger children.⁹⁸
- A recently issued series comprising two volumes to date illustrated by Rattana Kodchanat, who has drawn a wide range of cartoon series, which is in a more realistic and serious style that mixes Thai and Indian motifs in the drawings.⁹⁹

While this is just a quick and simple survey, it indicates that for standard classical Thai literature, the Rama story has been reproduced in publications aimed at a younger audience much more than other texts, which is perhaps a testament to its continued popularity and appeal to the general Thai audience.

English Renditions

There are a limited number of translations of *Rama I Ramakien* into English, all abridged prose versions. The oldest appears to be that written by Swami Satyananda Puri first published in 1940, although recently republished.¹⁰⁰ Manich Jumsai also wrote a short version published in 1965.¹⁰¹ Both of these versions are quite condensed with the Swami Satyananda and Manich reducing Rama I's 2,300 pages down to 142 and 98 pages, respectively.

Several more English versions have been subsequently published, with the most complete being that of Ray M. Olssen, which runs 423 pages.¹⁰² Olsen's version was not translated directly from the original, but was based on a German translation made by Christian Velder,¹⁰³ and thus has some oddities and peculiar elements. Olsen's translation, although it is the most complete English rendition, is abridged and necessarily lacks the detail and richness of the Thai versions and, upon release, received quite critical reviews. Cadet, in a review of the book, says that Olsen's translation is "the most severe drubbing the Ramakien has received – at least since the Chalermnit summary [Manich version] ...," pointing out errors and mistranslations, of which there are many.¹⁰⁴

96 Chakkarin, *Ramakien* (The Book Master), Vols 1-3.

97 Napopnn, *Ramakiant*, The Miracle Wars, Battle of Kumphakan, 1-3; Na Pope Saobai, *Ramayana*, The Miracle Wars, Battle of Maiyarap, 1-6.

98 Athit, *Ramakien: The Beginning*, Assault on Longka, War with Thotsakan, Phra Ram Rules.

99 Rattana, *Ramakien*, The Beginning; Rattana, *Ramakien*, The Great War.

100 Swami Satyananda Puri, *The Ramakirti*.

101 Manich, *Thai Ramayana*, as Written by King Rama I.

102 Olssen, *The Ramakien*, A Prose Translation of the Thai Ramayana.

103 Velder, *Der Kampf der Götter und Dämonen*.

104 Cadet, "Book Review – The Ramakien", 163.

Cadet undertook his own telling of the story based on the bas-reliefs that surround the *ubosot* at Wat Phra Chetaphun.¹⁰⁵ His volume gives the history of the bas-reliefs along with a narrative of the story. Dhani, while noting a number of errors in interpretation, praised the work as being “distinguished by its beautiful rhetoric.”¹⁰⁶ Finally, there is an English translation of *Rama I Ramakien*,¹⁰⁷ which follows the pattern of the Olsen version, making it relatively complete, but not necessarily true to the Rama I version.

Regional Versions

In addition to the versions of the Rama story that are associated with the royal courts and central Thailand, there are a number of renditions of the Rama story in vernacular or local languages that be found in the regional parts of present day Thailand. Given the local and folk-tale nature of these renditions, many of which have long oral traditions, it is not entirely clear of their origins and when or where they were originally created.

Perhaps the most prominent of these renditions are those from the northeast part of Thailand: *Phra Lak-Phra Lam* and the *Rama Jātaka*. As well, there are a number of renditions from the northern part of Thailand: *Horaman* and *Phrommachak*. Finally, there are several versions in other areas of the country that are generally associated with performance of the story, particularly shadow puppet performances – *nang yai*.

Siraporn Thitathan, in her Master’s Thesis entitled “Ramakien: a study in tale transmission”, points out that while all these renditions have the same basic story as their core and many similar characters, there is considerable variation in plot lines and focus, most being much more concise than that of *Rama I Ramakien*. These differences can generally be attributed to local traditional customs and beliefs making the texts quite different from each other.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, we can see that, while *Rama I Ramakien* is certainly the best known version of the Rama story today, as well as being the longest and most complete piece of literature in Thai that has the Rama story as its theme, there are many other works from before and after Rama I. This certainly shows the importance of the Rama story from long ago until the present day. However, we can also see that after *Rama I Ramakien* was composed, that version became the most influential and dominant narrative used for subsequent versions, such as that of Rama II, and for most prose and translated editions. As well, Rama I’s narrative is the one used most often used for depictions in mural paintings, bas reliefs and, as we will see, on the lacquerware cabinets.

105 Cadet, *The Ramakien*.

106 Dhani, “Book Review – Ramakien”, 389.

107 Meechai, *Ramakien, The Thai Ramayana*.

108 Siraporn, “Ramakien: a study in tale transmission”.

The Rama Story Referenced in Other Thai Literature

In addition to the works cited above that specifically use the Rama story as part of the narrative, literary compositions can be found during all periods of Thai history that include references to characters or situations from the Rama story, even using the word ‘*Ramakien*’ specifically. Srisurang states: “One finds also allusions from the Ramakien in subsequent literary works... .”¹⁰⁹ A review of readily available pieces of classical and traditional Thai literature indicates that there are more than 50 works with some reference or allusion to the Rama story. These range from stone inscriptions from the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods to compositions by the famous mid-Rattanakosin period poet, Sunthorn Phu, as well as many references in the popular work, *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*. While a complete listing of the works and quotations is perhaps beyond the scope of this research, below is a listing of some of the works that show the presence of the Rama story, along with works that use the power and protection of Phra Ram as a comparison, elements that support the findings of this study.

Sukhothai Period

Stone Inscriptions

As previously mentioned, there are allusions to the Rama story in at least four stone inscriptions dated from the Sukhothai period. In addition to the previously mentioned reference to Phra Ram Cave in Sukhothai Inscription No. 1, other Sukhothai inscriptions include:

- No. 2-“King Lödaiya of Sukhodaya and His Contemporaries”, circa 1345: This inscription, which includes the biography of an important monk at that time – the Mahāthera Śrīśraddhārājacūlāmuni, or Śrīśraddha – discusses the reconstruction of a significant Buddhist monument in Sukhothai, and contains three reference to Rama: one identifies a temple that uses the name of Rama – Rāmamahāvihāra. The other makes reference to the identification of Śrīśraddha with Rama, including both his early intention to “become an avatāra of the god Viṣṇu” and later that he has become “an avatāra of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu).¹¹⁰
- No. 11-“The Epigraphy of Mahādharmaṛājā I of Sukhodaya”, circa 1357: This inscription makes a reference to a temple using the Rama name – “Rāma-āvasa, ‘Rāma’s abode’.”¹¹¹ There is also a reference to the name of Ayutthaya at that time – Ayodyā Sri Rāmadebanagara – of which Griswold explains that the word ‘Rāmadebanagara’ means “the city of Rāma”.¹¹² This shows a clear connection with the Rama story and that there was perhaps a much closer identification with Rama in Ayutthaya that time.

¹⁰⁹ Srisurang, *The Indian Influence on Thai Culture in the Thai Ramayana*, 15.

¹¹⁰ Griswold, “King Lödaiya of Sukhodaya and His Contemporaries - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 10”, 81-82.

¹¹¹ Griswold, “The Epigraphy of Mahādharmaṛājā I of Sukhodaya - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 11, Part I”, 114.

¹¹² Griswold, “King Lödaiya of Sukhodaya and His Contemporaries - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 10”, 143.

- No. XLV-“The Pact Between Sukhodaya and Nan”, 1393: Griswold explains that the part of the inscription that makes reference to Rama could be a description of mural paintings or to “additional supernatural witnesses to the oath” that would have taken place as part of the pact that is the main subject of the inscription.¹¹³ If the reference is to a mural painting, this raises interesting possibilities that there were such paintings at that early date. If to a “supernatural witnesses”, this is an early indication of the tradition in calling on the power and protection of Phra Ram.

The numerous references to Phra Ram in the inscriptions from Sukhothai would seem to indicate that the Rama story must have had some level of recognition and importance during that time. While some of the references are merely to the name of a temple or monument, we can see an early identification between the ruler or important persons and Rama. As well, there is evidence of the recognition of the protective aspect of Rama. These aspects and the level of importance grew significantly during the later periods, starting in the Ayutthaya kingdom.

Ayutthaya Period (1351-1767)

Early Ayutthaya Period

The earliest evidence in literature during the Ayutthaya period is a reference to characters from the Rama story in the verses for the *โองการแช่งน้ำ* [*Ongkan Chaeng Nam*] (Royal Water Oath). These verses were composed during the reign of Ramathibodi I, and are said to be among the oldest pieces of Thai literature existent. The closing verse proclaims: “The ten faced asura ruler help observe / Phra Ram, Phra Lak... .”¹¹⁴ This closing verse, thus, calls for Thotsakan (the ten faced *asura* ruler), Phra Ram and Phra Lak to come to be witnesses, along with others deities and powerful personages, for the ceremony. This would seem to indicate a high level of recognition of their power and protective qualities.

Another early piece is Inscription No. XXXVIII-“A Law Dedicated by the King of Ayudhyā in 1397 AD”. In this inscription, the righteous duty and desire of the king to bring peace and order to the world is compared to such efforts of Rama, here called Braññā Rāmarāja.¹¹⁵

Another work from the early Ayutthaya period, *กฎมณเฑียรบาล* [*Kot Mon Thian Ban*] (*Palace Law of Ayutthaya*), makes two references to the Rama story in connection with the description of a ceremony called Intharaphisek [*พิธีอินทราภิเษก*]. The first reference states that during a 21 day ceremony, there would be a reenactment of the Churning of the Milk Ocean, an episode from the Puranas in which deities

113 Griswold, “The Pact Between Sukhodaya and Nān - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 3”, 86: “On the whole it sounds like a description of the mural paintings in a relic chamber or temple, perhaps those in the vihāra or chapel where the inscription was installed. Alternatively it might be a list of additional supernatural witnesses to the oath.”

114 Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 54-55: “สิบหน้าเจ้าอสุรช่วยดู / พระรามพระลักษมณ์ชักรอก”.

115 Griswold, “A Law Dedicated by the King of Ayudhyā in 1397 A.D. – Epigraphic and Historical Studies, Number 4”, 120-121, 130-131.

churn the milk ocean by have a *naga* wrap around Mount Meru to be pulled by *asura* and monkeys to create many powerful substances, including the nectar of immortality. During this performance, some royal pages would dress up as “Phali, Sukhrip and Mahachomphu and their monkey retinue.” At the end of the ceremony, there was entertainment for one month, including “...erection of a *kumphhan* (giant)...and court retainers as monkeys crawling inside the ears, eyes, nose and mouth.”¹¹⁶ This appears to refer to a scene from the Rama story when the monkey army attacks Kumphakan, the brother of Thotsakan. Although in the Rama I version Kumphakan is not necessarily described as being gigantic, in other version, including perhaps those in existence during the Ayutthaya period, he is considered as such. In this regard, a stone carving at Prasat Hin Phnom Rung shows such a scene.¹¹⁷

Another piece, ลิลิตยวนพ่าย [*Lilit Yuan Phai*] (*Lilit Defeat of the Yuan*), was created during the reign of Boromatriloakanat or Ramathibodi II by an unknown composer(s). The composition is a eulogy of the king regarding the victory of Ayutthaya over Lanna (Chiang Mai), called ‘yuan’ in this work, during the reign of Boromatriloakanat. In this piece, which some have called a ‘military epic’ and is said could be the oldest work of pure literature in Thai,¹¹⁸ there are a number of verses that use the might and prowess of Phra Ram using his bow to overcoming Thotsakan as comparison.¹¹⁹

King Narai Period (r. 1656-1688)

During the reign of King Narai, the production of literature was particularly abundant. There are a number of pieces from that period that mention or use the Rama story in analogy, including:

คำสรวลศรีปราชญ์ [*Kham Suan Si Prat*] (*Lament of the Great Sage*) – is said to have been composed by a person named ‘Si Prat [ศรีปราชญ์]’,¹²⁰ who some claim was one of the four most renown poets in the court at that time.¹²¹ This work makes reference to the episode from the Rama story when the causeway to Langka is built. One of early poems to use the *nirat* genre, the sadness of Si Phat is compared to the sadness of Phra Ram as he instructs the monkeys to build the causeway so he can continue his quest to recover Nang Sida, but also emphasises Phra Rama’s power and prowess in being able to eliminate Thotsakan in order to be reunited with Nang Sida.¹²²

116 Winai, Palace Law, Royal Anniversary Version, 168, 170.

117 Roveda, Images of the Gods, 133.

118 Presentation by Chris Baker on 17 March 2016 at the Siam Society.

119 Plueang, The History of Thai Literature for Students, 85-86; Prakong, “Heroism and Epic Verse-Form”, 203-204 – Prakong also notes a similar piece of 15th century Lanna literature entitled Thao Cheung Epic, which “...favourably compares Thao Cheung’s heroic deeds and valour with those of Rama...the author has employed a powerful comparative narration to present a highly credible image of his hero.”

120 Although others have said this may just be a title or position in the court. Plueang, The History of Thai Literature for Students, 142.

121 Wenk, Thai Literature, 8.

122 Plueang, The History of Thai Literature for Students, 158.

อนิรุทธคำฉันท์ [*Anirut Kam Chan*] (*Anirut Verses*) – a love story based on a tale from the Puranas, was also composed by Si Prat.¹²³ The story involves Krishna, another incarnation of Vishnu, and the love adventures of his son. In this piece, there is one reference to the prowess of Phra Ram from an early episode in the Rama story when he killed Khon the brother of Thotsakan.¹²⁴

Late Ayutthaya Period

ปุ่นโผนวาทคำฉันท์ [*Pun No Wat Kham Chan*] (*Verses of Pun No Wat Kham Chan*) – composed by Phra Mahanak Wat Tha Sai [พระมหานาควัดท่าทราย] during the late Ayutthaya period in the reign of Borommakot. This piece of 306 stanzas describes a journey with King Borommakot to a festival to pay homage to Phra Buddhabat in Saraburi. One verse makes reference to a shadow puppet performance of the episode of Maiyarap, a character from one of the episodes of the Rama story, indicating that this episode existed at that earlier period. In addition there are references to two bow-carrying lords and the *wanon* (monkeys), which is likely a reference to the typical opening sequences to the shadow puppet theater with the scene of the white and black monkey fighting.¹²⁵

Thonburi Period (1768-1782)

There also two poetic compositions from the Thonburi period that mention Phra Ram. The first is โคลงยอพระเกียรติพระเจ้ากรุงธนบุรี [*Klong Phra Kiat Phra Chao Krung Thonburi*] (*Verses in Homage to the Ruler of Thonburi*), composed by Nai Suan Mahatlek [นายสวนมหาตเล็ก] in 1771. This work compares the fighting ability of the king to that of Phra Ram.¹²⁶ The other piece is นิราศพระยามหานุภาพไปเมืองจีน [*Nirat Phraya Maha Nuphap Pai Mueang Chin*] (*Nirat of Phraya Maha Nuphap Going to China*), composed by Phraya Maha Nuphap [พระยามหานุภาพ] in 1782, which makes a comparison to the might of “Narai Ram [นารายณ์ราม]”.¹²⁷

Rattanakosin Period (1782-Present)

โคลงสรรเสริญพระเกียรติ พระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธยอดฟ้าจุฬาโลกย์ [*Klong Sansoen Phra Kiat Phra Bat Somdet Phra Phutta Yot Fa*] (*Verses in Homage to King Rama I*) – written by a person with the title of Phra Chamniwohan [พระชำนาญโหวหาร], is an undated composition, although it is said that the piece could likely have been composed during the time of Rama I, or shortly thereafter. There are several verses that make reference to the power and prowess of Phra Ram, as well as references to Phra Lak and Hanuman. There is even one verse that makes direct reference to the mural paintings of *Rama I Ramakien* along the Gallery of Wat Phra Kaeo: “The

123 Plueang, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 148; Wenk, *Thai Literature*, 8-9.

124 “Anirut Verses”. See also, Cholada, “The Thai Tale of Aniruddha”.

125 “Pun No Wat Kham Chan”.

126 “Verses in Homage to the Ruler of Thonburi”.

127 “Nirat of Phraya Maha Nuphap Going to China”.

gallery that completely surrounds / the *vihan* / Drawn the story of Ram, the incarnated one / to the end.”¹²⁸

นิพพานวังหน้า [*Nipphan Wang Na*] was composed by Princess Kamphutchat [พระองค์เจ้ากัมพูชฉัตร] (1786-??), the daughter of Crown Prince Surasih, the younger brother of Rama I, and an accomplished poet. She wrote this piece when she went to attend to her father when he was sick, and used numerous comparisons of her father’s greatness to the might and power of Rama, again referred to as “Narai Ram”.¹²⁹

โคลงนิราศพระยาตรัง [*Klong Nirat Phraya Trang*] (*Nirat Verses of Phraya Trang*) was composed by Phraya Trang [พระยาตรัง], who was originally from the southern areas and lived during the reigns of Rama I and II, although the dates and place of birth are unknown. This work of 126 stanzas makes reference in stanza 115 to the might of Phra Ram using his bow to overcome Thotsakan and recover Nang Sida.¹³⁰

โคลงนิราศจะเข็งเทรา [*Khlong Nirat Chachoengsao*] (*Nirat Verses of Chachoengsao*) was composed by Prince Dinakorn [พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ พระองค์เจ้าทินกร กรมหลวงภูวเนตรนรินทรฤทธิ์], a son of Rama II. In this work there is mention of the might of Phra Ram, as well as the separation of Phra Ram and Nang Sida.¹³¹

โคลงนิราศสมเด็จพระยาเดชาดิศรเสด็จไปทัพเวียงจันทน์ [*Khlong Nirat Somdet Krom Phraya Decha Dison Sadet Pai Thap Wiang Chan*] (*Nirat Verses of Prince Decha Dison Going with Troops to Vientiane*) was written by another son of Rama II, Prince Decha Dison [สมเด็จพระยาเดชาดิศร] (1793-1859).¹³² The composition uses the might and glory of Phra Ram and his troops for comparison.¹³³

Other Literature

โคลงนิราศพระพิพิธสาลี [*Khlong Nirat Phra Phiphit Sali*] (*Nirat Verses of Phra Phiphit Sali*), or sometimes called โคลงนิราศชุมพร [*Klong Nirat Chumphon*], of an unknown date, was composed by Phra Phiphit Sali [พระพิพิธสาลี]. The poem mentions the might and glory of Phra Narai (Vishnu) [วิษณุ] and Phra Ram.¹³⁴

Khun Chang Khun Phaen

There are many references to characters and situations in the Rama story in the classic and popular piece of Thai literature, เรื่องขุนช้างขุนแผน [*Khun Chang Khun Phaen*]. A couple of citations that make specific reference to Phra Ram’s prowess include:¹³⁵

128 Chamniwohan, Verses in Homage to King Rama I, 56.

129 “Nipphan Wang Na”.

130 Plueang, The History of Thai Literature for Students, 457-458; Somporn, “Ramakien and Thai Culture”, 36; “Nirat Verses of Phraya Trang”.

131 “Nirat Verses of Chachoengsao”.

132 Plueang, The History of Thai Literature for Students, 493)

¹³³ Somporn, “Ramakien and Thai Culture”, 36-37; “Nirat Verses of Prince Decha Dison Going with Troops to Vientiane”.

134 “Nirat Verses of Phra Phiphit Sali”.

135 The chapter headings and English quotations below are taken from The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen, Siam’s Great Folk Epic of Love and War, as translated and edited by Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit.

- Chapter 7: Phlai Kaeo Marries Phim

Phlai Kaeo nuzzled her and smiled passionately. He caressed Phim as his heart flooded with love. He kissed her hair – elated, giggling, and carried away.

Hugging and stroking, he told a tale. Lord **Ram**, the avatar, followed **Sida** into the depths of the forest, crossed the ocean to Lanka island, and devastated a whole clan of giant demons.¹³⁶

- Chapter 10: Phlai Kaeo Gets Laothong

I’ve already looked it up in the manual. It says that this year you’ll have a partner. Your horoscope falls on the beautiful **Sida**, after she’s been kidnapped by the-ten faced giant when **Ram** follows, attacks fearlessly and brings her back.¹³⁷

As we can see from these many examples of references to Phra Narai or Phra Ram, the Rama story must have been quite well known, especially during the time of King Narai in the Ayutthaya period and later. We can also see that the references in the many pieces of literature that use Phra Ram in some comparative context focuses primarily on two aspects: Phra Ram’s great love and lament for Nang Sida and Phra Ram as the mighty warrior/protector. It is this latter aspect that is important in the symbolic element of the depictions of the Rama story, as will be discussed in more detail later.

Influence of the Rama Story on Thai Society

As previously mentioned, those who have written about the Rama story in a Thai context typically proclaim that *Rama I Ramakien* is the most important and significant piece of Thai literature. In this regard, an interesting observation is that on the “Thai Literature” web page for Northern Illinois University, which has a Center for Southeast Asian Studies, the only reference under “Classical Literature” is to “รามเกียรติ์ (*Ramakian*) [*sic*]”.¹³⁸

Furthermore, nearly everyone who writes about the Thai renditions of the Rama story notes its importance to Thai society. From the name of Thai rulers, foods and plants, to the formation of local legends and beliefs, and its use in ceremonies and education, the Rama story has touched nearly all aspects of Thai culture, tradition and society. This has been true since the tale first entered the region up until today with its

¹³⁶ Baker, *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, 166.

¹³⁷ Baker, *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, 208. A footnote explains “This is from a form of divination known as the Three-Tiered Umbrella, ถังสามชั้น, chat sam chan. Legendary episodes, mainly from the Ramakian, the Thai version of the Ramayana, are assigned to the cells of a 3x3 diagram. A man starts at Ram and counts clockwise for his age less one year. A woman starts from Sida and counts the same anti-clockwise. In the resulting square, the inner, middle, or outer position is chosen depending on whether the subject’s birth month is 5–8, 9–12, or 1–4 respectively. Each of these positions corresponds to a certain literary episode. In this case, the position is probably the outer 4 in the middle-lower square for Sida, which corresponds to age seventeen for Laothong. This corresponds to the time when Sida was released from her captivity by Thotsakan (the ‘ten-faced giant’) in Lanka and returned to her husband, Ram. It is considered a very good portent.” See, Quaritch Wales, *Divination in Thailand*, 36-39.

¹³⁸ “Thai Literature วรรณคดีไทย”.

continued popularity in Thailand. Below are some areas in which the Rama story has had an impact on Thai culture and society.

Names of Rulers

Alexander Griswold points out “the name ‘Rāma’ is too common among Southeast Asian royalty.”¹³⁹ This is certainly true of the rulers of the Thai-identified kingdoms, with one of the first and oft-noted connections between Thai society and the Rama story being the incorporation of some reference to Rama or Phra Narai (Vishnu) in the names adopted by the royal rulers. The most famous of the rulers in the Sukhothai realm is a prime example of this, King **Ramkamhaeng** [รามคำแหง] (r. 1279–1298). As well, the full name of Mahathammaracha I (Lüthai) (r. 1346/7-1368/74?), was “Brañā Śrī Sūryavaṃśa **Rāma** Mahādharmarājādhirāja”.¹⁴⁰

This naming convention continued into the Ayutthaya era with the first three rulers: **Ramathibodi I** [พระรามธิบดีที่ 1] (r. 1351 to 1369), **Ramesuan** (Rama-Isvara) [พระรามেশ্বর] (r. 1369-1370, 1388-1395), Phra **Rama** Ratchathirat [พระรามราชาธิราช] (r. 1395-1409) and Phra Boromatrilocanat (originally Phra **Ramesuan**) [พระบรมไตรโลกนาถ (เดิมเป็นพระรามেশ্বর)] (r. 1448-1488). Then later, there was **Ramathibodi II** [พระรามธิบดีที่ 2] (r. 1473–1529) and King **Narai** [พระนารายณ์] (r. 1656 to 1688). Charnvit Kasetsiri states:

...[g]uidance for kings can be found in most of the classical literary epics such as the Mahabharata and the *Ramayana*. We can be certain that these two classical works were known in the early period of Ayudhya [*sic*], for the ... title used by Ayudhyan kings prove that the Indian epic Ramayana was highly regarded at the court of Ayudhya.¹⁴¹

In the Rattanakosin period, the very name of the ruling family, Chakri [จักรี], comes from a reference to one of his attributes of Phra Narai (Vishnu) (*chakra* - จักร). In fact, the first three rulers were referred to (in part) as “Somdet Phra Boromathammrik Maharachathirat Phrachao **Ramathibodi** [สมเด็จพระบรมธรรมมฤคมหाराชาธิราชพระเจ้ารามธิบดี]”.¹⁴² Further, one the alternate full names of Rama VI is “Phra Bat Somdet Phra **Ramathibodi** Si Sinthon Mahawachirawut Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua [พระบาทสมเด็จพระรามธิบดีศรีสุนทรมหาวิชราช พระมงกุฎเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว] and the full name of Rama VIII includes a reference to Rama – “Phra Bat Somdet Phra Poramentharamaha Ananda Mahidol Phra Atthama **Ramathibodindara**” [พระบาทสมเด็จพระปรเมนทรมหาอานันทมหิดลฯ พระอัฐมรามธิบดีนาทร]. Rama VI highlighted his recognition of the connection between the Thai kings and Rama by

139 Griswold, “The Epigraphy of Mahādharmarājā I of Sukhodaya - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 11, Part I”, 114.

140 Griswold, “The Epigraphy of Mahādharmarājā I of Sukhodaya - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 11, Part I”, 71.

141 Charnvit, *The Rise of Ayudhya*, 135.

142 Buntuean, *Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat*, 10; Niyada, *Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Chetaphon*, 54, 60.

choosing the ‘dynastic’ name ‘Ramathibodi’ in Thai, translated as ‘King Rama’ in English, to designate the kings in the Chakri dynasty.¹⁴³

Srisurang Poolthupya, a well-known scholar on Thai culture and the Rama story, notes that one of the reasons for such naming convention “...is that the king is divine like Rama in the Ramayana and the Ramakien and he must strive to be as good as Rama, the reincarnation of the god Vishnu. Therefore, the king must use his absolute power only for the benefit of his people, not for his own personal gain... .”¹⁴⁴ In *Rama I Ramakien*, Thotsakan articulates this with his dying words of instruction of Phiphek:

Mouth Five, you must uphold the royal ethics;	do not be corrupt like me.
Eliminate greed and avarice; be magnanimous	toward the soldiers and
common people. ¹⁴⁵	

Thus, we can see that throughout Thai history, from the first Thai-identified rulers, until the present day, the kings have adopted names that identify themselves with Rama. This shows the continued and long-lasting impact of the influence of the Rama story on the Thai royal institution and the close connection between the ruling monarch and identity with the image of Rama, which, as detailed in Chapter 7, is important to understanding the possible reason why the Rama story theme was chosen for use on the lacquerware cabinets.

Place Names

In addition to the adoption by the rulers of names associated with Phra Ram, there are also many examples of place names in present day Thailand that are associated with the Rama tale. Some of these are directly related to the Rama story and others are based on folk legends and local tales.

Phra Ram Cave

One of the oldest, and frequently referenced names, appears in the previously mentioned Sukhothai Inscription No. 1 – ‘Phra Ram Cave’. When he was crown prince, Rama VI went to visit this cave, along with the nearby Sida Cave, and described the cave in his travelogue, *Touring Muang Phra Ruang*. He reported that an inscription referred to in Inscription No. 1 was destroyed, but there was a Buddha image that the local people called ‘Phra Ram’. Rama VI was of the opinion that these caves had been used by monks in previous times.¹⁴⁶ The cave, also called ‘Chao Ram Cave [ถ้ำเจ้าราม]’, although difficult to access, is still a spot of veneration by the local people in Thung Saliam District, Sukhothai Province.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Vella, Chaiyo!, 136-137.

¹⁴⁴ Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 271.

¹⁴⁵ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 3, 400.

¹⁴⁶ Rama VI, *Touring Muang Phra Ruang*, 120-124.

¹⁴⁷ “Chao Ram Cave”.

Ayutthaya

The most oft-cited place name with a connection to the Rama story is the close resemblance of the name of the capital city at that time, Ayutthaya, with the principal city in the Rama story, Ayuthaya in the Thai versions, or Ayodhyā in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Charnvit, in *The Rise of Ayudhya*, notes that Uthong, the first ruler of Ayutthaya “imitated a celestial action by building Ayudhya. The name he chose for his city resembled that of the city of Ayodhya ruled by the hero Rama in the great epic *Ramayana*.”¹⁴⁸ In fact, Griswold indicates that the old spelling of the name of the city, before it was established as the capital, was closer to Ayodhya and later changed to Ayutthaya.¹⁴⁹

Wat Phra Ram

The Ayutthaya Chronicles make several references to a ‘Wat Phra Ram’ or ‘Phra Ram Monastery’. This first reference states that Wat Phra Ram was built in 1369 during the reign of Ramesuan, the second ruler of Ayutthaya.¹⁵⁰ At a later point, the chronicles state that during the reign of Boromthrailok (r. 1448-1488): “...on the cremation site for King Ramathibodi I, he who founded the Capital, the King had a holy monastery established, consisting of a great holy reliquary and a holy preaching hall, and he named it the Phra Ram Monastery.”¹⁵¹ The second reference perhaps indicates that a new temple was built on the site of the old one, or the old one was renovated and made bigger. In any event, this indicates that Wat Phra Ram had a fairly high level of importance during that period. Today, the site is in the historic area of the World Heritage Site of Ayutthaya, next to Phra Ram Marsh [บึงพระราม].

Lopburi Province

Somporn Singto notes that the people of Lopburi, which served as a second capital at the time of the Ayutthaya period during the reign of King Narai, have a strong belief in their connection with the Rama story.¹⁵² They believe that their city is the same city, Nopburi [นพบุรี], that Phra Ram gave to Hanuman to rule as a reward after the war against Thotsakan had been completed. Others note that the name could have been taken from the son of Phra Ram, Phra Lop [พระลบ].

In *Rama I Ramakien*, the city was located by Phra Ram by shooting an arrow and where it landed was where the city was built.¹⁵³ Srisurang states that “...in Lop Buri there are many folk tales...[in one]...where the earth turned white because of the heat of the arrow’s impact. This story explains the white earth which Lop Buri people use for making talcum powder.”¹⁵⁴ The place where the arrow landed is called

148 Charnvit, *The Rise of Ayudhya*, 71.

149 Griswold, “King Lōdaiya of Sukhodaya and His Contemporaries - Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 10”, 32, 37; Griswold, “A Law Dedicated by the King of Ayudhyā in 1397 A.D. – Epigraphic and Historical Studies, Number 4”, 131.

150 Cushman, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 11.

151 Cushman, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 16.

152 Somporn, “Ramakien and Thai Culture”, 37.

153 *Ramakien by Rama I*, Vol. 3, 521-531.

154 Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 271.

Phrommat Field (ทุ่งพรหมมาสดร์), so named for the arrow that Phra Ram shot, and there is even an Arrow Shrine (ศาลลูกศร) in Lopburi that is supposed to contain the arrow.¹⁵⁵ As well, there is a Lake Chup Son [ทะเลชุบศร, Arrow Immersing Lake] in the area that is related to the Rama story. This city is also well associated with monkeys, which are abundantly present in the old city center. There is even an annual festival to pay homage to the monkeys and give them food.

Chainat Province

In Chainat Province, there is a district, sub-district and mountain named ‘Sapphaya’ [อำเภอ, ตำบล, เขาสรรพยา], the same name as the mountain where Hanuman was sent to collect the special medicinal herbs *Sangkorani* [สังกรณ์] and *Trichawa* [ตรีชาวา] to cure Phra Lak after he had been struck by the Mokkahasak Spear of Kumphakan, the younger brother of Thotsakan.¹⁵⁶ The top of Mount Sapphaya is flat and smooth, which local legend relates was caused by the fact that Hanuman had to use his tail to sweep the mountain to catch the two herbs, which kept evading capture by Hanuman by running to the top when Hanuman was at the bottom, and going to the bottom when Hanuman was at the top.¹⁵⁷

In addition to Mount Sapphaya, there is a low-lying area in Chainat that is called Sapphaya Marsh (บึงสรรพยา). The legend regarding this area is related to the episode when Hanuman was tasked another time to collect medicinal herbs to cure Phra Lak and the rest of Phra Ram’s army who had been struck by the Phrommat Arrow of Intharachit. He could not find them, so he brought the entire mountain back.¹⁵⁸ The local legend, which is not part of the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*, is that the mountain was located in Nakorn Sawan and on the way back, in Chainat, Hanuman was tired, so he placed the mountain down so he could get a drink of water and when he went to pick it up again, it was too heavy, so he left a portion there. The place he put the mountain down is a low-lying area called Sapphaya Marsh and the part he left is called Mount Khayai [เขาขยาย].

There is also another interesting local legend relating to this episode that appears to conflate these two episodes:

...but some people say that when Hanuman was thirsty, he flew down, placing the mountain in the middle of a rice field and walked out asking for water from a small boy watching over some buffalo. However, the boy saw that Hanuman was a monkey and would not give him any water and also made fun of him. Hanuman was angry and went to drink from the river (Chao Phraya). While he was away, the mountain became stuck to the ground. When Hanuman had finished drinking, he returned, but could not lift up the mountain. So he called to Sangkorani and Trichawa as before and broke off the peak of the mountain to the south. The southern part of Mount Sapphaya is tilted down. The part he broke off he figured had the medicinal herbs that

¹⁵⁵ “Arrow Shrine”.

¹⁵⁶ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 2, 364-394.

¹⁵⁷ Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 271.

¹⁵⁸ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 2, 482-506. See also Appendix 1.

could cure any disease, but the people here were heartless – just asking for a bit of water, they would not give. So he cursed that the people born in that area would not be able to use the Sapphaya herbs to cure any illness (but those from other places would be able to use the herbs and their illness would go away) and he shook off some of his fur that became ‘laman [คืนละมาน]’ to stop those climbing up looking for Sapphaya herbs on the mountain...when Hanuman had laid down the curse, at first the local people called it ‘Mount Sap Ya’, but later, they called it Mount Sapphaya (Sap – Pa – Ya).¹⁵⁹

Saraburi Province

In Saraburi Province, Sunthorn Phu’s poem, *Nirat Phrabat* describes the legend of how Mount Khat [เขาขาด] (Broken Mountain) near Phra Buddhabat in Saraburi got its name.¹⁶⁰ The reason is because when Thotsakan abducted Nang Sida, the wheel of his chariot hit the mountain as he was escaping in fear of Phra Ram and broke off a part of the mountain.

Phali Caves

Both Chonburi and Phatthalung claim to be the site where the well-known episode of Phali fighting the buffalo, Thoraphi, took place. This is because the red earth around the mouth of caves is said to be caused by the blood of Thoraphi after he was killed by Phali.¹⁶¹

Other Local Place Names

In addition, there are many provinces, districts and sub-districts that have names that can be found in *Rama I Ramakien*. Along with Lopburi Province mentioned above, there is Buriram Province, the area governed by Kukhan, the hunter friend of Phra Ram. The following is a list of more examples of local places with names that can be related to the Rama story:

- Ram Village [บ้านราม], Nakorn Si Thammarat
- Wat Ram Worawet [วัดรามวรवास] and Ban Ram School [โรงเรียนบ้านราม] in Ram Rian Village [บ้านรามเรียม], Surin
- Dong Phra Ram Sub-district [ตำบลดงพระราม], Prachinburi
- Wat Sa Noen Phra Ram [วัดสระเนินพระราม], Mueang District, Chainat
- Khlong Phra Ram Village [บ้านคลองพระราม] and Wat Khlong Phra Ram, Samut Prakan
- Ramarat Village [บ้านรามราช], Nakorn Phanom
- Ram Sub-District [ตำบลราม], Surin
- Sida Village [บ้านสีดา], Sida Sub-district [ตำบลสีดา], Sida District [อำเภอสีดา] and Wat Phra Prang Sida [วัดพระปรางสีดา], Nakorn Ratchasima.
- *Hanuman Cave at Mount Chakan [ถ้ำหนุมาน เขาจักรจ]*, Sa Kaeo

¹⁵⁹ “Sapphaya Sub- district”. [Translation by the researcher.]

¹⁶⁰ Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 399.

¹⁶¹ Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 271-272.

Use of the Rama Story in Ceremonies

Many elements of the Rama story have been, and still are, part of many state and royal occasions. As previously mentioned, there are references to the use of the Rama story in royal ceremonies performed during the Ayutthaya period, such as part of certain water consecration rites and the Intharaphisek Ceremony.¹⁶² Also, there has traditionally been a *khon*, masked dance drama performance presented during the formal cremation ceremonies for royalty and important people, in addition to *khon* performances that usually lasting through the night typically held as part of the entertainment after the formal cremation. This tradition was continued in the royal cremation ceremonies in 2008 for Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana, the elder sister of Rama IX.

Beliefs

There are a number of beliefs held by some that are related to the Rama story:

From long ago, *Ramakien* was likely highly regarded by the local people as something real and sacred such that they had the belief that if someone were to make a drawing from *Ramakien* and did not pay respect to their teacher before, they would have some bad luck of some kind; if taking a painting or *khon* mask into the house.”¹⁶³

However, it should be noted that this belief was not shared by all, since Kukrit Pramoj, who was an experience performer and patron of *khon*, had a large collection of *khon* masks in his house on Soi Suan Plu.

There is also another believe that is related to the length of *Rama I Ramakien*. It is said that if someone were to be able to read *Rama I Ramakien* entirely within seven days and nights, there will be torrential rain for three days and nights.¹⁶⁴

Divination

H. G. Quaritch Wales, in his book, *Divination in Thailand*, explains one method of casting one’s horoscope that uses a three-by-three column chart called ‘The Three-staged Parasol’. The characters of Phra Ram, Phra Lak, Thotsakan, Nang Sida, Sadayu, Hanuman and Phiphek, along with King Bimbisara from the life story of the Buddha, are included in the chart. Each square is associated with some event from the Rama story, and thus by counting the squares using your age, the event upon which you end up will determine your immediate prospects. Examples from Quaritch Wales’s book include:

¹⁶² Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 54-55; Winai, *Palace Law, Royal Anniversary Version*, 168-170; Dhani, “The Shadow-Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play”, 27-28; Velder, “Notes on the Saga of Rama in Thailand”, 34.

¹⁶³ Sathiankoset, *Upakon Ramakien*, 155.

¹⁶⁴ Plueang Na Nakhon, *The History of Thai Literature for Students*, 271.

6 *Middle N.E.* Pipek meets Rāma. This is very lucky, top of the world. Desires will be met. Travel for trade will be profitable. If an official, will be promoted.

4 *Inner N.* Hanumān, when he exerted his strength. Good portent. The lords will give any rewards that you desire.

Quaritch Wales concludes by stating: “The most important point to note in the above is the attachment...to events in the much venerated *Rāmakien*, certainly a good reason for popular preference for such divination, as compared to astrology.” He also makes an interesting observation about Thotsakan: “The fact that Rāvana is regarded as somewhat of a hero, makes any temporary success of his rather a good omen.”¹⁶⁵

Tattoos and Amulets

Characters from the Rama story have long been popular themes for tattoos in Thailand. Rather than being considered a decorative item, as in the West, tattoos are often considered a sacred item applied for protection or to gain luck or power. There are many variations and forms of tattoos, with a variety of purposes and powers. Barend Terwiel notes that certain areas of the body are for certain figures, with the chest and upper arms reserved for characters from the Rama story, including Phra Ram, his sons, Phra Mongkut and Phra Lop, Ongkhot and Hanuman, typically holding a weapon.¹⁶⁶ The placement high on the body in such a prominent place perhaps reflects the importance and respect given to these characters. One of the most common tattoos includes Phra Ram holding a bow in the pose of shooting an arrow and the deer-headed rishi, Kalaikot.¹⁶⁷

However, the most popular figure is Hanuman, perhaps following his popularity and prominent role in the story. Typically, Hanuman is shown in a pose of showing off his might, with four or eight arms, holding a trident, breathing out the sun and the moon,¹⁶⁸ or in the pose of Holding Flag of Victory.¹⁶⁹ As for the power and purpose of the Hanuman tattoos, “the Hanuman yant, of which there are many variations, is said to help in finding a good job and currying favor with one’s boss. Hanuman has his limitation though – as leader in battle he is brilliant. As an administrator, he is useless. Devotees also seek out Hanuman for his charm powers.”¹⁷⁰ As well, “Hanuman makes one strong, wily and agile” and “Hanuman Holding Flag of Victory...also will cause guns to misfire.”¹⁷¹

It is interesting to note the apparent well-versed knowledge of the Rama story, particularly in the reference to Hanuman’s poor administrative abilities. This should be a reference to the part of *Rama I Ramakien* when Hanuman is unable, or unwilling,

165 See Quaritch Wales, *Divination in Thailand*, 36-40.

166 Terwiel, *Monks and Magic*, 83.

167 Vater, *Sacred skin*, 72, 106.

168 Vater, *Sacred skin*, 143, 144.

169 Cummings, *Sacred Tattoos of Thailand*, 187.

170 Vater, *Sacred skin*, 143.

171 Cummings, *Sacred Tattoos of Thailand*, 59, 187.

to govern over either Ayuthaya or Nopburi, the city purposely created by Phra Ram for Hanuman.¹⁷²

Along these same lines, there is a mineral stone named after Hanuman, หินเขี้ยวหนุมาน [*Hin Khiao Hanuman*] (Hanuman's Tooth), which is a type of quartz. This stone is often made into an amulet that is worn with the belief that it has certain protective properties against evil spirits and can bring good luck to the wearer.¹⁷³

The selection of these characters to use in the tattoos and amulets would appear to show that there is a recognized power and protective element attached to the various characters from the Rama story. This is a similar theme as seen in the use of such characters in many pieces of Thai literature, and which we will see is the possible basis for the use on the lacquerware cabinets.

Government Seals

Phra Ram riding in a royal chariot has been used in the seal of the Ministry of Transportation [กระทรวงคมนาคม] from the time this ministry was known as the Ministry of Public Works [กระทรวงโยธาธิการ] during the reign of Rama V.¹⁷⁴ This seal can be seen as one of ten seals from the government ministries that existed at that time of Rama V on the pediments around the gallery that surrounds the *ubosot*, central prayer hall at Wat Benchamabophit. The seal for the Ministry of Public Works showing Rama holding a bow riding in a royal chariot being pulled by a horse and charioteer can be seen on a pediment.¹⁷⁵

Language

There are many common idioms, similes and expressions in Thai that come from the Rama story. Somporn details a large number of these in her article "Ramakien and Thai Culture". A few examples are provided below.

'Ill-fated like Hanuman (ดวงชะตาหนุมาน)¹⁷⁶: This expression comes from the episode when Hanuman returns from having discovered where Nang Sida is being held after having been abducted by Thotsakan. When Hanuman relates to Phra Ram how, after he found Nang Sida, he took it upon himself to burn up Longka, Phra Ram gets angry, making it clear that Hanuman has exceeded his orders and thinks that Thotsakan might take revenge and kill Nang Sida. Before Hanuman had been dispatched on his mission, Phra Ram offered to give him whatever he was wearing if Hanuman was successful in his endeavor. It so happened that Hanuman returned just when Phra Ram was bathing, so, Phra Ram gave him his bathing cloth, both to keep his word and also to show his irritation. Hanuman then laments the meager reward for the hard work he performed.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² See Ramakien of Rama I, Vol 3, 521-531; 555-560.

¹⁷³ "Hanuman's Tooth".

¹⁷⁴ Anuman Rajadhon, *Royal Emblems and Positional Seals*, 40.

¹⁷⁵ Chatri, *Phra Phuttachinarat in the History of Absolute Monarchy*, 66.

¹⁷⁶ Somporn, "Ramakien and Thai Culture", 33-34; Srisurang, "The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture", 272.

¹⁷⁷ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 2, 155-159.

‘A Thoraphi child (ลูกทรพี)’¹⁷⁸ and ‘To measure one’s foot print (วัดรอยเท้า)’:¹⁷⁹ These expressions make reference to the buffaloes Thorapha and Thoraphi. Thorapha is the reincarnation of a celestial attendant to Phra Isuan who committed a sin and was cursed to be born as a buffalo and to be killed by his own son. Thorapha has a large harem of female buffalos, but whenever a male buffalo is born, he kills it. One of his female buffalos manages to escape to a cave and give birth to a male buffalo, named Thoraphi. As Thoraphi grows up, he keeps testing his hoof print against his father’s until it is equal, at which point he knows he has the strength and power to kill his father, Thorapha, which he does.¹⁸⁰

These expressions come from this episode and mean someone who is ungrateful to their parents. Patricide, being an unforgivable act in Thai culture has therefore resulted in an ungrateful son in Thai being called a ‘Thoraphi’. This is notwithstanding the fact that Thorapha, the father, readily and repeatedly committed infanticide and would have killed Thoraphi, his son, if given the chance. These expressions seem to indicate the relative position of parent and child in Thai society.

‘Just like *Ramakien* (ราวกับรามเกียรติ์)’:¹⁸¹ This means something that is very, very long and comes from the fact that *Rama I Ramakien* is the longest piece of Thai literature. In fact, *Rama I Ramakien* is also possibly the longest telling of the Rama story in the world.

Plants and Food

There are a number of plants and foods that take their name from the Rama story. With respect to food, there is a type of curry made with pork or fish called *Phra Ram Long Song* [พระรามลงสรง] (sometimes called ‘Swimming Rama’)¹⁸² or sometimes referred to as *Thotsakan Long Song* [ทศกัณฐ์ลงสรง].¹⁸³ There is a medicinal herb with a long list of potential benefits called *Maiyarap* [ไมยราบ] (Sensitive or Sleeping plant, *Mimosa pudica L.* in English). *Maiyarap* is the *asura* friend of *Thotsakan* who at one point abducts *Phra Ram* in an effort to kill him.¹⁸⁴ Also, *saraphi* [สารภี] (*Mammea siamensis* Kosterm), a well-known medicinal plant in Thailand that has antibacterial characteristics and is the tree symbol of the Thai Bar Association, is also called *Thoraphi* [ทรพี] in certain areas, such as in Chanthaburi. As previously discussed, *Thoraphi* is the buffalo character in *Rama I Ramakien* who kills his father, *Thorapha*.¹⁸⁵ There is a tree named *Samo Phiphek* [สมอพิเภก] (Murobalan Wood, *Terminalia bellirica*), the fruit of which is used as a digestive aid.¹⁸⁶ *Phiphek* is the younger brother of *Thotsakan* who is expelled by his brother and goes to help *Phra Ram* in the fight to recover *Nang Sida*.

178 Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 272.

179 Somporn, “Ramakien and Thai Culture”, 34.

180 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 335-348.

181 Somporn, “Ramakien and Thai Culture”, 35.

182 “Swimming Rama”.

183 Somporn, “Ramakien and Thai Culture”, 34.

184 “*Maiyarap*, Properties and Benefits of *Maiyarap*, 48 Uses”; see also, Ramakien of Rama I, Vol 2, 290-345.

185 “*Saraphi* [สารภี]”; see also, Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 335-348.

186 “*Samo Phiphek* [สมอพิเภก]”.

There are a number of plants and fruits named after Nang Sida, including:

- A decorative vine called *krachao Sida* [กระเช้าสีดา] (Indian Birthwort, *Aristolochia indica*), the root of which can be used, among other things, as a remedy for poisonous snake bites.¹⁸⁷
- A type of fern called *chaipha Sida* [ชายผ้าสีดา] or *sabai Sida* [สไบสีดา] (Staghorn Fern, *Platycerium Desvaux*).¹⁸⁸
- A common fruit called *lamut Sida* [ละมุดสีดา] (*Sida Sapodilla*, *Manilkara zapota*), which is twice mentioned in Rama I's narrative, thus indicating that, although not originally native to this area, existed long before *Rama I Ramakien* was composed and further attests to the long connection of the Rama story in Thailand.
- A certain type of guava is often called *bak Sida* [บั๊กสีดา].

Royal Barges

A long lasting tradition in Thai history has been the use of royal barges in grand processions for certain state ceremonies and events. There is evidence that such barges existed as early as the Sukhothai period for certain ceremonies.¹⁸⁹ This tradition was much expanded in the Ayutthaya period and was used by the king to take robes to the monks at the end of the Buddhist lent period in Royal Kathin ceremonies, as well as other royal processions. King Rama I revived this tradition at the beginning of the Rattanakosin period and it has been kept alive until the present time, having been renewed once more by King Rama IX in 1959.¹⁹⁰

Among the many barges, there are a number that include carved figures and/or have the same name as characters in *Rama I Ramakien*. These include those named for monkey characters – พาลีรั้งทวีป [*Phali Rang Thawip*] (Phali Holds Back the Land); สุครีพครองเมือง [*Sukhrip Khrong Mueang*] (Sukhrip Rules the Realm); สุครีพหักฉัตร [*Sukhrip Hak Chat*] (Sukhrip Breaks the Umbrella); นิลนนท์แทงเขน [*Nilanon Thaeng Khen*] (Nilanon Stabs the Shield); สุรเสนแสนหาญ [*Surasen Saen Han*] (Surasen, the Brave); สุรกานต์แสนกล้า [*Surakan Saen Kla*] (Surakan, the Courageous); ชมพูปานแผลงฤทธิ์ [*Chomphuphan Phlaeng Rit*] (Chomphuphan Displays His Might); หนุมานตัดเศียรไมยราพณ์ [*Hanuman Tat Sian Maiyarap*] (Hanuman Cuts the Head of Maiyarap); อสุรผัดผ่าพล [*Asuraphat Pha Phon*] (Asuraphat Splits the Troops); กระบี่ปราบเมืองมาร [*Krabi Prap Mueang Man*] (The Krabi Vanquishes the City of the Asura), which has a figure of Hanuman at the head. Those with *asura* characters include – พญาขรถอนรัง [*Phaya Khon Thon Rang*] (Phaya Korn Pulls up the Rang Tree), Khon is the brother of Thotsakan; อินทรชิตสาดศร [*Intharachit Sat Son*] (Intharachit Throws His Arrow), Intharachit is the son of Thotsakan; อสุรวายภักซ์ [*Asura Wayuphak*] (Wayuphak, the Asura), who is a half-bird, half *asura* who fights Phra Ram.¹⁹¹

187 "Aristolochia indica Herb Uses, Benefits, Cures, Side Effects, Nutrients".

188 "Method to plant and care for the fern chaipha Sida".

189 Nattaphatra, Royal Barges , 146.

190 Ratee, Guide to the National Museum of Royal Barges, 3.

191 Somporn, "Ramakien and Thai Culture", 34.

It is unclear exactly when each of these barges were created and at what point they were included in the standard royal procession. However, several of them are mentioned as being from the period of at least Rama I, including *Asura Wayuphak* and the *Krabi Prap Mueang Man*.¹⁹²

It is interesting that the names of a number of these royal barges refer to specific episodes or events in *Rama I Ramakien*. This includes *Phaya Khon Thon Rang* which points to the episode when Phaya Khon, having gone to fight Phra Ram in retaliation for his sister, Samanakha, being maimed by Phra Lak, is out of weapons and pulls up a huge *Rang* tree to use as a weapon;¹⁹³ *Sukhrip Hak Chat* referring to the episode when Sukhrip goes to break the magic umbrella of Thotsakan, which is also a favorite scene for school children;¹⁹⁴ and *Hanuman Tat Sian Maiyarap* which makes reference to how Hanuman killed Maiyarap and cut off his head after he had rescued Phra Ram from being abducted by Maiyarap and taken to Badan, his underworld kingdom.¹⁹⁵

This again shows the long history of the Rama story in a Thai context, as well as the use of imagery from the Rama story to show power and position with a protective aspect. The royal barge processions, which likely grew out of army processions going to battle, are a magnificent display of the grand majesty of the king, with the various characters playing a role in showing his power and ability to protect.

Education

The Rama story is a regular part of the educational curriculum for elementary through university students. Srisurang points out: "...excerpts from the Ramakien are studied at school and in the universities. Many poets admit their debt to the reading of the Ramakien."¹⁹⁶ In this regard, there have been a number of research projects and master degree theses written about the use of the Rama story in education lessons. A review of available databases indicates the following:

- Thipwan Nakhasuwan [ทิพวรรณ นาคะสุวรรณ]. "การสร้างบทเรียนแบบโปรแกรม สไลด์เทปวิชาภาษาไทยเรื่อง 'รามเกียรติ์ตอนศึกไมยราพ' สำหรับนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่หนึ่ง (A construction of a Thai slide-tape programmed lesson on 'Ramakien: the episode of the Battle of Maiyarap' for First Level High School students)." Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2524 [1981].
- Patcharee Linitda [พัชรี ลินธิฎา]. "การเปรียบเทียบผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนวิชาภาษาไทยเรื่อง "รามเกียรติ์" โดยใช้ชุดการสอนจลบทกับการสอนแบบปกติ ของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 5 โรงเรียนสตรีวัดระฆัง กรุงเทพมหานคร (A comparison of Student's Thai Learning Achievement on the Title "Ramakien" between Using Minicourse Approach and Regular Classroom Instruction at the High School Five Level, Striwatrakang School, Bangkok)". Master's Thesis, Kasetsart University, 2534 [1991].

192 Ratee, Guide to the National Museum of Royal Barges, 23, 24.

193 Ramakien by Rama I, Vol. 1, 492-512.

194 Ramakien by Rama I, Vol. 2; 281-290.

195 Ramakien by Rama I, Vol. 2, 320-345.

196 Srisurang, The Indian Influence on Thai Culture in the Thai Ramayana, 15.

- Sumitra Boonprasert [สุมิตรา บุญประเสริฐ]. “การศึกษาผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนวรรณคดีเรื่องรามเกียรติ์ของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 1 ที่สอนโดยเน้นกระบวนการคิดวิจารณ์ญาณ (A Study of Thai Literature Achievement on *Ramakien* of High School Level One Students by Using Critical Thinking Process Method).” Master’s Thesis, Kasetsat University, 2537 [1994].
- Kritsada Chararat [กฤษดา ชะรารัตน์]. “การพัฒนาแผนการเรียนรู้ และบทเรียนสำเร็จรูปแบบเส้นตรงเรื่อง รามเกียรติ์ ตอนกุมภกรรณทนต์น้ำ กลุ่มทักษะภาษาไทยชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 6 (Development of a Study Plan and Prepared Lesson Plan regarding *Ramakien*, Episode of Kumphakan Blocks the Water, Thai Language Skills for Grade Level 6 Students).” Master’s Thesis, Maha Sarakham University, 2547 [2004].
- Kanokphon Wingwon [กนกพร วิงวอน]. “การศึกษาละครเรื่องรามเกียรติ์ พระราชนิพนธ์ในพระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธยอดฟ้าจุฬาโลกมหาราช เพื่อการสอนภาษาไทย (A Study of *Ramakien* Composed by King Rama I for Teaching Thai Language).” Master’s Thesis, Kasetsat University, 2537 [1994].

Current Popularity of *Ramakien*

In 1979, Srisurang stated that “nowadays the performance of *Khon* is not so frequent as in the old days. The high cost of each performance, and also the competition of the cinema are the chief reasons. Yet the Thai realize that value of the performance of the *Ramakien*.”¹⁹⁷ Today, Thai people, indeed, seem to realize the value of performance as the situation appears to have changed from 1979.

Recent *Khon* Performances

One testament to the current and enduring popularity and relevance to Thai people of the popularity of the Rama story in Thai has been most recently evidenced by the extremely popular reception of the annual *khon* masked play performances sponsored by the SUPPORT Foundation of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand. These productions started with a performance of the *Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow* episode, wherein Intharachit transforms himself into Phra In (Indra), and uses his Phrommat Arrow to shoot Phra Lak, the younger brother of Phra Ram. This was the first large scale, royally-sponsored revival of *khon* performance, which ran over three days – 25, 27 and 28 December 2007. The productions by the SUPPORT Foundation continued in 2010 with a staging of *Nang Loi*, one of the most popular and performed episodes wherein Thotsakan has his niece, Benyakai, transform into a dead Nang Sida, wife of Phra Ram, to try to deceive Phra Ram into giving up his fight to recover Nang Sida. This performance ran for four days from 23-26 July 2010. The next year, 2011, the *Battle of Maiyarap* was staged, where in an acquaintance of Thotsakan, Maiyarap, is called on to kidnap and kill Phra Ram, but who is eventually rescued by Hanuman. This performance was scheduled to run from 15-31 July 2011, but because of its popularity and sold out performances, was extended for another several weeks of performances. The *khon* productions have continued from 2012 to

¹⁹⁷ Srisurang, *The Indian Influence on Thai Culture in the Thai Ramayana*, 16.

date with performances of the episodes of *Jong Tanon, Marking out the Causeway to Longka* (2012), the *Battle of Kumbhakan Mokusak* (2013), *The Battle of Indrajit, Episode of Nagabas* (2014), *Phrommat* (2015) and *The Allegiance of Phiphek* (2016). Each year, the performances are scheduled for ever longer periods, and generally all the dates sell out.

The enthusiastic audience reception of these recently revived performances of the *khon* masked plays shows the continuing popularity of the Rama story in Thailand. The large casts, newly designed sets and exciting performances appear to have re-ignited the love of watching *khon*, where the audiences range from young school children to elder patrons, along with many foreigners as well. While *khon* performance has existed since ancient times, and has been a continued focus of dramatic instruction in school, with a certain segment of the population always interested in watching, these performances seem to have increased the reach into Thai society and re-awakened a love and interest for the Rama story.

Rama I Ramakien: A Reflection of Thai Society and Culture

Thai Culture as Represented in *Rama I Ramakien*

The representation of Thai culture, values, traditions and society in *Rama I Ramakien* has been well established and written about by many leading scholars in the field of Thai Studies, two of which include Srisurang, *Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien*: "...the customs and social values of the Thai people find their way into the story;"¹⁹⁸ and Maneepin Phromsuthirak, "The Ramakien and Thai Cultural Life," นิทรรศการพิเศษ รามเกียรติ์ในศิลปะและวัฒนธรรมไทย / *Special Exhibition of The Ramakien in Thai Arts and Culture, Bangkok*: "As revealed from several versions in different localities in Thailand, the Ramakien purports all the expressions of Thai living style..."¹⁹⁹

I will attempt to summarize briefly some of the points made by each of these researchers, with a few selected excerpts from *Rama I Ramakien*, as well as provide some examples of how *Rama I Ramakien* might serve as a sort of Thai historical encyclopedia.

Deep Reverence for the King

The role and position of the king as the supreme authority in the social structure has been one of the most important aspects of Thai history and tradition. This element is most clearly evident in *Rama I Ramakien* in that each ruler in the story is portrayed as receiving utmost respect and obedience from their subjects. This is depicted continually through description of gestures, bowing in obeisance, pledges of allegiance and by acts of devotion.

Maneepin states: "Deep reverence for the King which gives uniqueness to the Thai Society is reflected in the saying of Phali while teaching his younger brother:"²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Srisurang, *Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien*, 2

¹⁹⁹ Maneepin, "The Ramakien and Thai Cultural Life", 188.

²⁰⁰ Maneepin, "The Ramakien and Thai Cultural Life", 189.

In the ornate royal throne hall, do not be disobedient and rise up to sit level with His Royal Highness.

...
You must be devoted in serving His Royal Highness; 201

Srisurang goes on to explain the position of the king, making the point that “...Rama in Ramakien, unlike his counterpart in Ramayana, often stressed the fact that he was a god...the reason for the change in Ramakien must be due to the wish to uphold the image of Rama as a divine king like the position of the Thai king at the time, for the king was made sacred by the rajyabhiseka ceremony conducted by Brahmans...”²⁰²

Social Hierarchy and Respect for Elders and Learned Ones

Social hierarchy is an important aspect of traditional Thai society, with a well-established hierarchical structure for family relations and kinship. In *Rama I Ramakien*, this is well represented in the way the relationships between the many characters are depicted, including between the older and younger brothers, husbands and wives, generals and soldiers. While there are many points throughout the text where this aspect is clearly evident, one part that shows this very well is when Phra Phrot learns that his mother has arranged for him to become the ruler in place of Phra Ram, his elder brother. He says:

So shamefully disgraceful throughout the three worlds? Where and who has the custom to confer the realm to a younger brother, to rule the land before his elder? 203

In addition, there is a strict hierarchy of position in Thai society, with those considered holy or with deep knowledge to have the highest positions such that even the kings and rulers pay respect to and obey them. This can be seen in the many times that the characters consult and then follow the words of advice from an ascetic. For example, after Thotsakan has been rewarded with Nang Montho to become his consort, and she has been stole away by Phali, Thotsakan goes to his *rishi* teacher, Khobut, who advises him to consult Phali’s teacher, the *rishi*, Angkhot, because he knows that Phali will listen to Angkhot’s word’s of advice and in the end Phali “สุดคิดที่จะขัดพระฤๅษี – was at the end of his wits to deny the revered *rishi*.”²⁰⁴

Giving Lavish Feasts to Welcome Guests

Srisurang makes the point that giving a lavish welcome to guests is a Thai custom, usually involving some sort of offering of food and drink. She notes the old Thai saying: “It’s an old Thai custom to welcome those who arrive at their house.”²⁰⁵

201 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 2, 29. Note, all translations are those of the researcher.

202 Srisurang, Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien, 5.

203 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 407.

204 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 123.

205 Srisurang, Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien, 9.

This custom can be seen in the many lavish dinners that Thotsakan provides for his guests when he has invited them to come to Longka, usually with the ulterior motive of having them go out to fight, and die, on his behalf. The events typically include an elaborate menu of dishes, many kinds of drink, and a bevy of beautiful women to serve and entertain the guests. This hospitality extends not just to the important guests, but also to the army of troops that have come along, who usually end up in some sort of drunken brawl.

It is not just the *asura* side that exhibits this custom. When the forest hunter, Kukhan, meets Phra Phrot and his entourage who are on their way to find Phra Ram to try to convince him to return to Ayuthaya, he arranges food for the traveling party, albeit simple forest fare.²⁰⁶

However, interestingly, such a lavish feast is only described once as being held in Ayuthaya and that just for the troops when Phra Ram returns from the war.²⁰⁷ Perhaps, as Srisurang points out, this was a way to provide a contrast between good and bad behavior, as the feasts might be considered somewhat in bad taste and wasteful – “Intelligent readers and listeners will take the hint and practise this custom in moderation.”²⁰⁸

Solemn Ceremonies to Celebrate Special Occasions

Special ceremonies to celebrate both solemn occasions, as well as other important events, are well represented in *Rama I Ramakien*. Such ceremonies include births, coronations and investiture ceremonies, royal weddings, rain-calling ceremonies, bathing ceremonies, and, of course, cremations. In the description of these ceremonies, there is typically the inclusion of many Thai identifiable elements, including use of *baisi* [บายศรี], a type of container made of elaborately folded banana leaves and flowers, and lighted candle that are passed around from left to right seven times (*wien-tien* – เวียนเทียน), with the smoke then blown over the principals of the ceremony.

When, oh when the propitious moment,
Then they sounded the victory gong three times,
Royal brahmins and elders lighted candles,
receiving and passing according the order
Seven rounds completed according to the treatises,
Brahmins and elders waved the fumes over them,

the astrologers opened the *baisi*.
the tumultuous noise spreading far.
passing them in a circle around left to right,
of the royal family, courtiers and attendants.
the official doused the flame.
anointing them with the ash.²⁰⁹

There are also many cremation ceremonies described including the use of royal urns, funeral processions, the asking for forgiveness, offering of incense and sandalwood and the lighting of the flames, all common elements of royal and regular funerals in Thai tradition. The following is the description of the cremation of Thotsakan:

²⁰⁶ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 391-399.

²⁰⁷ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 3, 505-506.

²⁰⁸ Srisurang, Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien, 32.

²⁰⁹ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 185.

Then the *yaksa*, Phaya Phiphek
 had the body of the ruler of *Longka* placed upon a great royal carriage,
 decorated with royal regalia, a white tiered umbrella, long-handled parasols and ornate fans
 Conscripted troops crowded around, parading in rows; carriages were all arranged;
 drum, pipe and gong made a noisy din, resonating, the echoing sound reverberating;
 bugles and trumpets in pairs, the solemn sound in a clamor.
 The carriage proceeded slowly with the supreme body of the royal *yaksa* ruler of the world,
 with a procession following the carriage going to the great bejeweled cremation hall.

...
 Then the *yaksa*, Phaya Phiphek,
 took incense and a golden candle that had a permeating fragrance.
 He asked for forgiveness from his elder brother who had insulted and despised him before.
 Instead he thought of him with loving feelings, raising his hands in reverent homage.
 Then, taking eaglewood, laurel and sandalwood, all with sweet smelling aroma,
 and placing them under the ornate *kaeo* urn, the *asura* lord lighted the flame.
 All of the royal ones and family, the groups of maidens and concubines,
 each asking for forgiveness from the *asura*, paid obeisance then offering flames together.²¹⁰

Another common element of these celebratory events is to have entertainment following the ceremonies. This typically includes references to performance of *khon*, the masked play dance drama, and shadow play, *nang yai*, which are usually reserved for presentation of the Rama story, thus making this a sort of circular description:

Between the hall, there were pavilions *khon*, shadow play and dancing of every kind. 211

The Custom of Consulting Astrologers and Fortune Tellers

Although many cultures and societies make use of astrologers, in traditional Thai society, this was a very important and common custom. In *Rama I Ramakien*, astrologers and fortune tellers are used on almost every occasion when there is a significant event, ceremony or pressing need, especially to determine the auspicious moment to start some celebration or ceremony:

Upon arriving, he sat upon his bejeweled throne and ordered the astrologers, all four:
 “You must quickly find the most auspicious day, as I will bequeath the realm to my son
 to be the ruler of *Ayuthaya* and reign over the kingdom
 to carry on our celestial lineage. You courtiers must quickly determine this matter.”²¹²

Dream interpretation also plays an important role in the story. There are many episodes where the main character has a strange dream and then asks his astrologers to interpret the meaning of the dream, which typically foretells some event that is about to occur. One of the most well-known of these dream interpretations is by Phiphek, the younger brother of Thotsakan, who has specifically incarnated to play the role of fortune teller and seer to help Phra Ram in his fight with Thotsakan. In this scene, Thotsakan has had a dream and Phiphek interprets the elements of the dream,

210 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 3, 427-428.

211 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, page 409.

212 Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, page 182.

which ultimately leads to the expulsion of Phiphek from Longka, where he ends up joining forces with Phra Ram, to the ultimate destruction of Thotsakan:

Then,	<i>Phiphek</i> , that mannerly one,
analyzed the dream giving him a feeling of dread.	He heaved a sigh and pondered:
‘This is most unfortunate for the land of the <i>kumphān</i> ,	a place of such joy like <i>Dusit</i> .
It will be destroyed by some enemy	that will come from the east.’
Thinking thus, he raised his hand in reverence	and informed his royal elder brother:
“As for your dream, you made reference to a coconut shell –	that represents <i>Longka</i> .
The wick – that is You Majesty;	the oil is your royal family, small and big.
The brilliant flames spreading out –	that represents the fair <i>Nang Sida</i> .
As for the woman who ran in to light the fire –	that represents <i>Nang Samanakha</i> .
The white <i>raeng</i> that flew in –	is <i>Phra Ram Chakri</i> ;
the black <i>raeng</i> is Your Majesty	in the lineage of glorious <i>Phra Phrom</i> .
There will be a fight	with the husband of charming <i>Sida</i> .
This dream is not at all auspicious;	there will be trouble for the empire of <i>Longka</i> .
All of the <i>asura</i> and <i>yaksa</i>	will hang their faces and together weep piteously.” 213

Ramakien as a Thai Historical Encyclopedia

Rama I Ramakien, completed in 1797, can also serve as a sort of historical reference book giving the reader a unique window into many aspects of life at that time. Below are just a few of the areas that can be seen:

Architecture

There is a description of the construction of several cities, including Ayuthaya, Longka and Khit Khin, as part of the narrative. Also, there is a description of other cities as viewed by one or other of the characters when they enter a new city. Here is a description of Ayuthaya when it was first constructed:

There were three great palaces,	towering beautifully tall into the sky;
with four porticos finely coated with gold.	<i>Bai raka</i> formed with gems;
graceful <i>chofa</i> , long and lovely roof finials.	<i>Barali</i> above <i>mukkrasan</i> ;
golden balconies decorated with <i>kranok</i> design.	Golden <i>butsabok</i> , beautiful and bright,
seven stories, all coated with crystal.	Golden windows with nine gems, radiant and regal;
resting quarters paved with silver, beautifully polished;	lion faces dazzling with gems.
There were two wings of rooms, flanking left and right;	sparkling crystalline platforms.
Inner court chambers for the palace maidens, all in a row;	, overlapping engraved screens;
guardhouses near rooms for the palace folk;	with storehouses and inner court guardhouses;
elephant corrals and horse stables;	chariot barns and garages for the royal vehicles.
Pavilions for the court officials, side by side;	parade grounds for the troops to drill.
Three levels of shining walls;	with an embankment and moat surrounding like an ocean.
Dragon standards bordered the ramparts;	gold, petal-shaped <i>sima</i> stones on the walls.
Fortress turrets with inlaid gold;	towers running continuously along the colonnade;
wide arched gates of glistening gems.	All as lovely as the domain of <i>Phra Phrom</i> .214

213 *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol. 2, page 164.

214 *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 8.

Note the many references to common elements of traditional Thai architecture, such as *bai raka* – tooth like ridges on the sloping edges of a gable, said to representing the fin on the back of a naga; *chofa* – ornamental roof points often shaped like the head of a Garuda; *barali* – small pointed peaks along the ridge line of the roof; and *mukkrasan* – small porticos that connect one throne hall to another.

Flora and Fauna

Typical of many pieces of classical Thai literature, *Rama I Ramakien* has many passages when the travelers admire the flora and fauna. While in many poetic works this is included as a way of showing the feelings and experience of the travelers by making comparisons to some element of nature, in many of the passages in *Rama I Ramakien*, these passages appears more as a poetic device to show of the prowess of the composers. In any event, these passages, along with other references in the narrative, provide a long list of flowers, trees, plants, animals – both real and imaginary – fish, birds and even rock formations.

More than 200 different type of flora, including fruits, can be identified in the Rama I narrative, along with more than 80 kinds birds and 125 animals, fish and insects. An interesting study could be done of the plants and animals that must have existed in Thailand or known at that time, as compared to what is known today, to see what may have been introduced to Thailand since 1797.

Food

As part of the lavish feasts that were given, as described above, a menu of dishes is often included in the narrative, giving one a glimpse of food at that time, such as duck, chicken and pork prepared in spicy salads (yam [ยำ]), roasted (คั่ว), as *phanaeng* curry (แกงพะเนียง) or deep fried as patties (ทอดมัน). Interestingly, the food that is included for the *asura* to eat often includes taboo items, such as elephant, perhaps as a way to highlight their demonic nature:

Set up in rows, placed all in order were savory snacks to go with the liquors and brews, spicy buffalo salad, deep fried bull and donkey patties; sliced elephant all around.²¹⁵

Some other unusual dishes that are included in *Rama I Ramakien* include:²¹⁶

- Spicy elephant salad (ข้างพลาข้างแกง)
- buffalo *nam ya* (กระทิงทำน้ำยา)
- deep fried tiger patties (เสือทอดมัน)

Dress and Ornamentation

Along with the passages of admiring the flora and fauna, are verses of dressing that describe the clothing and ornaments worn by the principal characters before they set out on a journey or go into battle, which is also typical of classical Thai literature, particularly dance drama works. While to some extent these can be seen as sort of

²¹⁵ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 3, 116.

²¹⁶ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 3, 160, 276.

stage directions, they also serve to show off the poetic abilities of the poet and it is said, when used in an actual performance, to give the dancer an opportunity to show off their dancing skills. Here is an example of Phra In getting dressed, without any attempt to translate those pieces of dress and adornment that are uniquely Thai:

He took a joyous cleansing bath, while angels softly fanned him. <i>chaiwai</i> and <i>chaikhraeng</i> of golden design; <i>Tapthit</i> , <i>thapsuang</i> , and <i>sangwan</i> ; Glittering diamond <i>phahurat</i> and rings; Earrings hung with garlands; Grabbing <i>Wachirawut</i> , majestically grand with the retinue of deities,	having a sweet, celestial aroma, He donned a <i>kranok</i> patterned <i>phusa</i> , <i>chalongong</i> of crossed patterned brocade. pearl jeweled <i>kudan</i> patterned <i>thongkon</i> . a radiant crystal jeweled crown. dazzling flowers tassels tucked behind the ear. that was so powerful and strong, he went forth to mount his elephant. ²¹⁷
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Dance Postures

As part of the entertainment for the guests at the lavish banquets, dancing would always be included for the principal guests. As well, when some great event occurred or there was some celebration, such as a dance of offering to Phra Ram and Nang Sida when they are reunited, dancing would be also be presented. There are 21 scenes that include description of such dancing with reference to at least 31 classical Thai dance postures.²¹⁸

In addition to these scenes of entertainment, one of the most famous episodes involving dancing is when Phra Narai transforms to be a beautiful woman to seduce Nonthok, the ill-intentioned attendant of Phra Isuan, and eventually kill him for his misuse of a diamond finger given to Nonthok by Phra Isuan as a boon. This passage includes a long list of dance positions:

<i>Thep Nom Pathom See Na</i> ; <i>Kwang Doen Dong</i> ; <i>Hong Bin</i> ; <i>Cha Nang Non</i> ; <i>Phamon Khiao</i> ; <i>Mekkhala Yon Kaeo Waeo Wai</i> ; <i>Lom Phat Yot Tong</i> ; <i>Phrom Nimit</i> ; <i>Yai Tha</i> ; <i>Matcha Chom Sakhon</i> ; <i>Nonthok</i> follow each dance movement until the pose <i>Nakha Muan Hang Wong</i> ,	<i>Sot Soi Mala</i> , delicate and charming; <i>Kin Rin Liap Tham Amphai</i> ; <i>Khaek Tao</i> ; <i>Phala Phiang Lai</i> ; <i>Mayuret Fon Nai Amphon</i> ; <i>Phitsamai Riang Mon</i> ; <i>Phra Si Kon Khwang Chaka Ritthi Rong</i> . with passionate infatuation when he pointed his finger at his own leg. ²¹⁹
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Conclusion

Accordingly, we can see that there are many aspects of *Rama I Ramakien* that reflect, in addition to being a reflection of, Thai society and culture. As well, *Rama I Ramakien* can be considered a rich and well developed ‘encyclopedia’ of many aspects of the environment and aspects of life as it existed in the late 18th century. *Rama I Ramakien* is also well represented in visual art, which will be the subject of

²¹⁷ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 6.

²¹⁸ See, Thanit, Arts of Dance and Performance or Handbook of Thai Dramatic Arts.

²¹⁹ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol. 1, 48; for a list of the dance postures, see, Thanit, Arts of Dance and Performance or Handbook of Thai Dramatic Arts, 193-229.

the following chapters, including a detailed description of the Thai lacquerware cabinets that are the subject of this research. Before that, the next chapter will provide a brief review of lacquerware in Thailand.



Chapter 4: History of Lacquerware and Thai Lacquerware Cabinets

The application and use of the lacquer sap coming from an indigenous tree found in many areas of Asia has a long history, dating back more than 7,000 years. Given the preserving and aesthetic qualities, local people and artisans have found a wide variety of uses for applying lacquer to both articles used in everyday life and highly refined artworks. The raw material for making lacquer is derived from the *Toxicodendron verniciflua* tree, which has a number of varieties and is grown in a many areas of the regions of East and Southeast Asia. In Thailand, natural latex is extracted from medium sized trees of the *Melonorrhoea usitata* tree – most typically known as *rak yai* [รักใหญ่] in Thai – found in northern, southeastern and upper southern regions of Thailand, with the best said to come from Surat Thani province.¹ The tree is tapped by boring or slashing the trunk, somewhat similar to how latex is extracted from rubber trees. The sap is then collected and refined into a thick liquid that is suitable for applying to a number of different surfaces.

Lacquer is quite popular for use in traditional arts and crafts because of its special adhesive characteristics. As well, when painted on wood and other surfaces, the surface will be protected from heat, humidity, insects and other natural elements and is very durable, which is perhaps the reason why many wooden lacquerware items have survived for hundreds of years.² Application of lacquer also serves as a water-proofing foundation for subsequent gold leaf application,³ an application process that will be discussed in more detail below. It is these qualities that have made the use of lacquer popular by indigenous people for practical purposes in order to preserve everyday household wares and make them waterproof and durable. The wood, latex and fruit of the lacquer tree also have medicinal and therapeutic applications. Refined lacquer can be used both individually and in combination with other herbs in herbal remedies and indigenous drugs, externally for skin diseases, and internally as a potent cathartic.⁴

History of Lacquerware

Most historians would agree that China has the oldest recorded use of nature lacquer, dating back more than 7,000 years.⁵ There is also evidence for the use of lacquer in East Asian areas, such as Japan and Korea, attesting to the influence of Chinese lacquerware in the region.

There is also a long history of the use of lacquer in the area of present day Thailand. The oldest evidence for the use of lacquer in this area is on a log coffin found in a cave in Mae Hong Song province in northern Thailand, dated about 1,000-

1 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer, 9; Chiraphan, Thai Traditional Rod-Nam Designs, 28.

2 Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 15.

3 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer, 9.

4 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer, 156.

5 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer, 29.

2,000 years ago.⁶ In the Sukhothai period (11-12th century), it is likely that this technique was used as shown by the records of correspondence with the Chinese emperor sent by King Ramkamhaeng in 1291 that include a reference to the manner in which a royal letter was prepared to be sent to China, “lo hok kok ong [หลอฮอกก๊กอ๋อง] (referring to ruler of the Thai) has ordered an envoy to bring this royal correspondence [ราชสาส์นอักษร], written with *lai rot nam* (gold lacquer) along with articles of tribute....to offer.”⁷

While there are just a few such references method,⁸ there are a few Buddha images, such as that at Wat Suthat and the Buddha Chinarat image in Phitsanulok, that were covered with lacquer and gold leaf, indicating that the lacquer and gold method was known and used at that time.⁹ Also, in the foundation inscription for Wat Chang Lom [วัดช้างล้อม] dated 1384, there is reference to gilding a Buddha image with gold, to which Alexander Griswold and Prasert na Nagara note “the usual method of gilding an image is to coat if first with adhesive lacquer.”¹⁰ As well, an inscription from Wat Hin Tan in Sukhothai dated between 1398 and 1419 states “...the two of us bought five hundred cowries (worth of) gold to put on the Lord’s face”, to which a footnote adds: “the statute was gilded by giving it a coating of lacquer and gold leaf.”¹¹

Toward the end of the Ayutthaya period, lacquerware started to expand greatly from the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century. However, there are earlier references to the use of lacquer, such as in the Palace Law of Ayutthaya written during the reign of King Boromma Trailokanat (r. 1448-1488), which made reference to a “sunshade extended with handle decorated with mother-of-pearl and leaf coated vermilion with gold design.”¹² There is also another reference in the Palace Law to a “sparkling lacquered hair ornament.”¹³

Additional evidence from the Ayutthaya period can be found in the *Testimonies of Khun Luang Wat Pradu Song Tham*. The description of various structures within the city walls states: “Toward the north is a royal residence that has columns built right in a pond and five rooms with gold gilded patterns on the wooden walls and lacquer varnish coating....in another pond...the building’s support columns are decorated with gold gilded lacquer paintings of *song khao bin* [ทรงเข้ามณฑล] patterns.”¹⁴ This document also refers to many other royal residences with similar gold lacquer painting decorations. As well, there is a reference to the selling of

6 The Second International Conference, Study of Oriental Lacquer, 20.

7 Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 6-7.

8 Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 10; Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 6-7.

9 Sanan, Art of Lacquerware, 8.

10 Griswold, “The Inscription of Vat Jan Lom”, 204.

11 Griswold, “Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 22, An Inscription From Vat Hin Tan, Sukhodaya”, 68, 71.

12 “กลด ต่อดำประดับมุก ใบทาชาดเขียนลายทอง.”(emphasis added). Winai, Palace Law, Royal Anniversary Version, Research Results, 164; Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 10.

13 “เกล้ารัก”. Baker, The Palace Law of Ayutthaya, 115; Winai, Palace Law, Royal Anniversary Version, 150; Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 16.

14 Testimony of Khun Luang Wat Pratu, Document from the Royal Archives, 30-31.

lacquer [น้ำรัก] in the market, indicating that the use of lacquer may have been quite widespread.¹⁵

During the reign of King Borommakot (r. 1732-1766), an envoy coming from Lanka to ask the Thai sangha to help restore Buddhism, described the royal palace:

Once passing the second door, one reaches the throne hall (Samphet Palace), two sides at the base of the *muk det* of the throne hall there are various images, such as bears, royal lions, huge yaksa, celestial beings, naga, yaksa, all these images have gold applied in pairs. Near this group, above is the *muk det* and the royal throne, high about 10 kep, with royal regalia around (the *muk det*) royal throne has a curtain embroidered with gold, very elaborate. The walls of the throne hall have gold applied.¹⁶

There is also evidence of the production and export of lacquer as a commodity during the mid-Ayutthaya period. Zacharias Wagenaël, the governor general of the Dutch East India Trading Company in Nagasaki, reported that after a destructive fire in Japan in 1657, he ordered Dutch ships to go to Siam (Thailand) to buy lacquer to help in the reconstruction of the city.¹⁷

The tradition of using lacquer to decorate the walls of royal structures continued into the Rattanakosin period. As originally built during the reign of Rama I, the outside walls of the *ubosot* at Wat Phra Kaeo were decorated with red lacquer and gold. However, these walls deteriorated and were renovated in the reign of Rama III with cut glass as we see today.¹⁸

In the Palace of the Front, there was a “Ho Phra Wai [หอพระไวย]” in the middle of a pond, called “Phra Wiman [พระวิมาน]”. This building, which no longer exists, was decorated with lacquer design, including depictions from the Rama story, in a beautiful delicate way such that when King Rama V saw it, he wrote:

There is a wall that is carved and gold lacquer...in the gallery that surrounds the Phra Wiman Ho Phra Yai, the walls inside are drawn with the story of Life of the Buddha and Ramakien, very beautifully done. Outside there is gold gild design with colored glass. In the Phra Wiman...the outer wall have a *khao bin* pattern in gold lacquer with glass. The inner walls have lacquer... .¹⁹

The use of lacquer and lacquerware artworks has become less favored in modern times likely because of the difficult and time consuming process. Only recently have there been efforts taken to revive and restore this ancient art practice. In this regard, H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn initiated studies of lacquer as part of the “revitalization of Thai wisdom” and two major conferences, one in 2009

15 Testimony of Khun Luang Wat Pratu, Document from the Royal Archives, 7, 29-31.

16 Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 17; Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 8-9.

17 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer, 91-93.

18 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer, 10; Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 14; Restoration of Wat Phra Si Rattanasatsadaram, 12.

19 Quoted in Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 14.

and the second in 2015, were organized to bring together local and international experts in this field.²⁰

Lacquerware Technique in Artworks

The technique for using lacquer for artistic and decorative purposes varies from culture to culture, with some evidence of borrowing and some evidence of indigenous knowledge and skill. The method used in China, which has the longest recorded history, has probably had the most influence on other techniques.

As for the use of lacquer in Thai artworks, and especially the technique employed in creating the designs and patterns on Thai lacquerware cabinets, there is evidence and opinion that this is of local origin. While Silpa Bhirasri states that “in olden days, the technique of the lacquer originated from China...,”²¹ Michael Wright remarks:

...we have no means of studying the origins of the technique in Siam, nor of knowing whether it was indigenous or imported. Its prevalence in mainland southeast Asia, particularly in Burma and Siam, suggests that the technique might be native, as does the fact that the forests of northern Thailand are a major source of raw material... the Thai word for lacquer is ‘*rak* [รัก]’...thus the name implies a non-Chinese background, either native or Persian.”²²

Many are of the opinion that the application and washing method described below, called *lai rot nam* [ลายรดน้ำ], that has been used by Thai artists is a practice of local wisdom unique to this area. Prince Yachai Chitraphong theorizes that the technique of *lai rot nam* is an indigenous technique of the Thai because, even though in China and Japan the use of black lacquer decorated with gold existed before, the process of decorating is different from that used by the Thai.²³ Although there is no clear evidence of when the technique of *lai rot nam* started, there is evidence that it was already in use in the Sukhothai period for gilding Buddha images, as well as the references in the previously mentioned correspondence between King Ramkamhaeng and the Emperor of China alluding to this technique of applying gold with lacquer.

During the early Ayutthaya period, the lacquer technique was likely used for decorating the walls in the palace and very often the background was red lacquer, from red vermilion or cinnabar, rather than black, since red was considered the color of royalty. Later, black background became more extensively used because, because when lacquer was used in the temples and by ordinary people, the prohibition on the use of red, being the symbolic color of the monarch, made the use of black necessary, and thus more prevalent. Accordingly, the background color can be an indication of the original owner and creator of the piece, red background being for royal use and black for others.²⁴

20 Seminar on Study of Oriental Lacquer; The Second International Conference, Study of Oriental Lacquer.

21 Silpa, Thai Lacquer Works, 7.

22 Wright, “Towards a History of Siamese Gilt-Lacquer Painting”, 18.

23 Referenced in Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 15.

24 Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 7-9.

The *lai rot nam* method is quite elaborate and time consuming, requiring specialized skill and training. Silpa Bhirasri briefly describes the technique used in Thailand as follows:

...the technique consists of applying to the wooden panel or bamboo-box, three coats of black lacquer, a resin from a plant growing in the north of Thailand. Subsequently, the drawing is traced, and with a yellow-gummy-paint the parts which have to remain black are covered in all their smallest detail. The next process is to give a thin coat of lacquer over the surface, and when it is semi-dry, gold leaves are applied over the whole surface. After about twenty hours, the work is washed with water which detaching the gold leaves adhering to the yellow-gummy-paint let the design appear neat in all its details. Hence this art is called “lai rot nam” – ornaments washed with water.²⁵

The follow is the step-by-step process for creating gold lacquerware artworks that is used by Thai artisans:²⁶

1. If applied to a flat wooden panel, the wood will first be sanded smooth and then coated with a layer of smooth liquid lacquer, called *rak nam kliang* [รักน้ำเกลี้ยง], in which the impurities have been filtered out.

2. Next the wood surface is coated with lacquer that has been mixed with various types of powder, called *rak samuk* [รักสมุก], and then left to dry.

3. After drying, the surface is then smoothed again using a pumice stone or fine sandpaper, and then washed with water, dried and painted again with *rak nam kliang* and dried.

4. The top surface is peeled away using fine grain sandpaper or a special stag-horn pumice stone and then painted again with *rak nam kliang* and dried.

5. A final sanding is performed using deer-antler powder that is rubbed over the entire surface with the fingers and then washed with water.

6. Next the “yellow-gummy-paint” that Silpa Bhirasri refers to needs to be prepared. This is based on a natural mineral named realgar, which in Thai is called *horadan* [หรดาน]. This mineral is a soft orange-red arsenic ore, As_2S_2 , used in pyrotechnics and tanning and as a pigment. The *horadan* is carefully mixed with other natural ingredients, including *feronia elephantum* corr. (called *yang makhwit* [ยางมะขวิด] in Thai), also known as Bela, Billin, Kath, a commonly known herb in the Indian system of medicine to treat various disorders including diabetes mellitus without any scientific evidences, and soap pod or *Acacia concinna* (Willd.) DC. (called *fak sompoi* [ฝักส้มป่อย] in Thai), a climbing shrub native to Asia. This mixing process is very important to have the correct substance to create a fine end product.

7. A carefully outline of the image to be created is drawn on the lacquer prepared surface by using a technique similar to fresco painting. The drawing is made on tracing paper and a needle is used to pierce tiny holes outlining the image. This paper is then laid over the wood surface and lightly rubbed with powder, transferring the image to the wood.

²⁵ Silpa, Thai Lacquer Works, 7-8.

²⁶ This process was compiled from Kopplin, Lacquerware in Asia, Today and Yesterday, 143-148; Sanan, Art of Lacquer Ware, 36-55; Chunlathat, Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo, 26-57.

8. Next the image is outlined and all the empty areas painted with the *horadan* solution, creating a negative image of the final painting.

9. After this, another layer of lacquer is applied, being careful to make it smooth and the thickness just right.

10. The next step is to apply gold leaf over the entire surface before the lacquer has dried completely, which is firmly pressed onto the wood and then cleaned to make it smooth.

11. Straw paper soaked in water is placed on the area where the gold leaf has been applied and left for a short time and then cotton is used to rub over the entire surface and those areas where the *horadan* has been applied will wash clean to the original layer, leaving the gold just on the areas where just lacquer was painted, revealing the intended image.

12. The surface is then washed again and rubbed smooth with cotton to make sure any excess paint has been removed and then left to dry.

Gold Lacquerware in Thailand

The *lai rot nam* technique for creating lacquerware objects in Thailand is used for many kinds of objects and parts of buildings, including both small and large items, such as bowls with pedestals, trays with stands, the covers of scripture and chanting books and boxes to hold the scripture, as well as partition screens. The same technique has been used as well for decorating large parts of buildings and other structures such as partitions, walls, doors, and windows.²⁷

However, the most extensive use of the *lai rot nam* technique has been to decorate cabinets designed to hold the sacred Buddhist scriptures. These cabinets are known by various names in Thai: *tu phra traipidok* [ตู้พระไตรปิฎก] or *Tripitaka* cabinet; *tu phra tham* [ตู้พระธรรม], or dhamma cabinet; *tu lai rot nam* [ตู้ลายรดน้ำ]; *tu lai nong* [ตู้ลายทอง], or gold patterned cabinet. The most extensive collection of lacquerware articles that have survived from the past are these lacquerware cabinets.²⁸ It is these cabinets that are the focus of this study, thus the following discussion will focus on these items.

Thai Lacquerware Cabinets

Lacquerware cabinets are wood cabinets intended to hold palm leaf bundles of the sacred Buddhist scripture, the *Tripitaka*, although other manuscripts and items such as chanting and prayer books may also be kept in such cabinets. Other items of a similar nature are boxes (*hip* [หีบ]), generally 30 inches wide, 20 inches high, with a flat lid. Originally, these boxes and cabinets, decorated with beautiful lacquer for durability and design, were used to keep books, cloths or other apparel of the nobles, those in the upper class or high ranked women.²⁹ When the owner of the boxes died, their descendants would take and donate them to the temple in order to make merit for

²⁷ Chunlathat, *Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo*, 3.

²⁸ Fine Arts Department, *Development of Lacquerware*, 25.

²⁹ Fine Arts Department, *Development of Lacquerware*, 26.

the deceased.³⁰ The monks started to use them to keep the *Tripitaka*.³¹ Subhadradis Diskul further explains this:

The boxes for palm-leaf manuscripts were originally made as household articles to keep cloth. With their contents they were dedicated to Buddhist monasteries after the owners' death by their descendants in order to present merit to the dead.³²

While initially such cabinets may have been pieces of household furniture that were donated to the temples, at some point the cabinets were specifically made to be offered to the temples to hold the Buddhist scripture. Peter Skilling notes that such offerings were a standard, and potent, way to make merit that could be traced back to the Buddha himself.³³

It is not known when or from where the first scripture cabinets came from or where they were used. However, several ancient stone inscriptions speak of buildings that make reference to halls or rooms where the *Tripitaka* would be kept, for example, *Phra Monthientham* [พระมนเทียรธรรม], *Ho Pidok* [หอปิฎก] and, more often called a *Ho Trai* [หอไตร], which could likely have also contained cabinets to hold the scriptures.³⁴ For example, in the previously mentioned 1384 foundation inscription from Wat Chang Lom in Sukhothai, there is mention of dedicating a “*Ho Phra Pidoktham* [หพระปิฎกธรรม]...a library for the Tripitaka (Scriptures)”³⁵ and an inscription at Wat Si Umong in Payao dated 1503, that speak of building and dedicating various items for Buddhism.³⁶ This indicates that from at least 1384, there were places to keep the scriptures and thus perhaps cabinets inside to hold the *Tripitaka*.

While there is no specific mention of scripture cabinets, per se, there is a reference to “*hep chin* [หีบจีน] (Chinese chest)” in an inscription at Prasat Phra Khan in Cambodia from around 1191, which also speaks of places that should be located in present day Thailand, such as Lopburi, Suphaburi, Ratchaburi.³⁷ This leads one to suppose that at that time, the Chinese made such chests for storing articles and such chests reached parts of present day Thailand.

Since it was the Chinese who introduced these types of chests, it is likely that the cabinets first used by the Thai were in a Chinese style, although it has been suggested that the boxes may have a Western origin.³⁸ However, in later periods, Thai artisans made modifications and adjustments, changing the shape to suit local taste, transforming them to have a unique Thai manner according to the preferences of the time and age they were built. As the cabinets changed and developed in terms of shape, design and adornment, it is likely that the user or the sponsor had a significant input on the changes. For those used by or built by commoners, the materials and

30 Piriya, *Buddhist Art of Thailand*, 266.

31 N. Na Paknam, *Tripitaka Cabinets: The Best in the Art of Lacquerware*, 5.

32 Subhadradis, *Art in Thailand*, 27.

33 Skilling, “For merit and Nirvana”, 88.

34 Fine Arts Department, *Development of Lacquerware*, 25; Kongkaew, *Antique Thai Cabinets*, 1-3.

35 Griswold, “The Inscription of Vat Jan Lom”, 197, 204.

36 Fine Arts Department, *Development of Lacquerware*, 25.

37 Kongkaew, *Antique Thai Cabinets*, 5-6.

38 Piriya, *Buddhist Art of Thailand*, 266.

design work would not have been as developed, but the ones built by or intended to be used by the upper class would have likely been quite elaborate and finely decorated.³⁹

The oldest cabinets that are still existent are from the late Ayutthaya period, of which there are quite a number. N. Na Paknam notes that this might be because "...there were many temples that remained undamaged outside of Ayutthaya scattered hidden among the fields and forests that survived the aftermath of the war with the Burmese."⁴⁰ Most art historians would agree, though, the height of production of lacquerware scripture cabinets was during the early Rattanakosin period when the techniques carried over from the Ayutthayan artisans were refined and perfected. Accordingly, this study will focus on cabinets from that period.

Lacquerware Cabinets – Thai or Chinese?

Some have questioned whether the art form of Thai lacquerware cabinets can be said to be a Chinese or Thai art form. The answer to this question revolves around two aspects. The first is the origin of the form and shape of the cabinets in general, and the other is the lacquer technique and its use to adorn scripture cabinets. With respect to the form and shape of cabinets, Wright writes:

The word tuu [ตู้] is of Chinese origin like the Thai names for most items of furniture (เก้าอี้, a chair; and โต๊ะ, table), which is natural enough as the Thais have always been a floor-living people like the Japanese, for whom most items of furniture used to be superfluous. The cabinets have no antecedent in the Indo-Lankan tradition and so, because of the Chinese name and because similar trapezoidal cabinets are known in China, I hypothesize, very tentatively, a Chinese origin for these cabinets.⁴¹

Mongkol Pornsiripakdee, in his Master's Thesis, "Cabinets with gold motifs in the Rattanakosin period" states that "...after comparing Chinese cabinets and Thai cabinets, and given the long trading and cultural exchange relationship between the two areas, it can be surmised that the Thai cabinets were heavily influenced by the Chinese...".⁴² In addition, there is evidence from the 9th-10th century that the Chinese were using bookcases to hold the Tripitaka.⁴³

However, while it might perhaps be that the original shape and design of such cabinets is of Chinese origin, their current shape and design features, including the technique of applying the decoration, is more likely a local convention. As noted earlier, at first these cabinets or receptacles were made for personal use to hold clothes or other household items and then donated to the temples and used to hold Buddhist scripture documents. After a while, these cabinets were made purposely for

39 Fine Arts Department, Development of Lacquerware, 25; Kongkaew, *Antique Thai Cabinets*, 9-11.

40 N. Na Paknam, *The Art of Lacquerware*, 6.

41 Wright, "Towards a History of Siamese Gilt-Lacquer Painting." 21.

42 Mongkol, "Cabinets with gold motifs in the Rattanakosin period." 8.

43 Handler, *Austere Luminosity of Chinese classical Furniture*, 246-247.

donation to the temples to hold the Buddhist scripture, evidenced by the many cabinets having colophons with dedication inscriptions.⁴⁴

With respect to the styles and form of depictions, the designs and patterns are all clearly of Thai origin. In this regard, N. Na Paknam describes the difference between traditional Thai paintings and Chinese paintings:

Whenever images are drawn for the people to see and admire, the figures will generally be in the same proportion, either on the walls or on the cabinets and will be of the same size, with figures of people about six inches or a bit smaller, which is the standard almost universally. But if the image is drawn higher than the level above the frame of the door or window of the ubosot, the old masters will draw the figures larger as they get higher, up to one foot, more or less, with increased bold outlining. However, when we examine from the mural of the Chinese, they mostly will draw the images on paper that can be rolled up to keep, they will draw the images as if from a bird's eye view.⁴⁵

Therefore, we can see that, while the basic concept of a cabinet is likely of ancient Chinese origin, the way these lacquerware cabinets have been used in a Thai context, in this case to hold Buddhist scripture texts, is likely a local custom. As well, there is certain evidence and opinion that the *lai rot nam* lacquer technique used to create the gold design on the cabinets is indigenous. This, along with the uniquely Thai designs, motifs and patterns used on in the decorations, makes the gold lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scripture that are the subject of this research singularly Thai.

Lacquerware Cabinets – National Library Collection

While there are many lacquerware cabinets from the early Rattanakosin period scattered in temples, museums and private homes, the largest collection of cabinets is housed at the National Library of Thailand on Samsan Road in Bangkok, with some kept at the National Museum in Bangkok and at the National Library branch in Latkrabang. This collection was started in connection with the establishment of a national library by Rama V in 1891 when the king and some royal family members donated items and built a library at the Grand Palace in honor of Rama IV. This library was later combined with another collection of books and further expanded by Rama VI, moved several times until eventually became the National Library of Thailand at its present location.⁴⁶ As part of this effort, in the early 20th century, a large number of Thai lacquerware cabinets were collected from various Buddhist temples in and around Bangkok to keep books and ancient palm leaf manuscripts, but also to help preserve the cabinets.

⁴⁴ Mongkol “Cabinets with gold motifs in the Rattanakosin period.” 11.

⁴⁵ N. Na Paknam, *Tripitaka Cabinets*, 12.

⁴⁶ Kongkaew, *Antique Thai Cabinets*, 1-8.

The collection at the National Library consists of cabinets gathered from more than 80 temples in Bangkok, Thonburi and nearby provinces, as well as cabinets with unknown provenience. While it is not clear how the cabinets were selected to be given to the National Library, the collection appears to contain a good cross sample of lacquerware cabinets of various types and styles and thus could be considered a valid representation of Thai lacquerware cabinets in general. In this regard, a casual review of a number of the cabinets outside those held by the National Library indicates that similar themes and images are represented, thus it would appear that undertaking the long and complicated process of adding them to the database for this study would not add materially to the overall findings and conclusions.

Today, there are 414 cabinets held by the National Library, 38 of which have been assigned by the Fine Arts Department to the Ayutthaya and Thonburi period, with the balance of 376 assigned to the Rattanakosin period. It is these 376 cabinets assigned to the Rattanakosin period that forms the database to be used in this study, which will hereafter be called the “National Library Collection”.

Regarding the dating of the cabinets, only 21 of the cabinets can be precisely dated through colophon dedications included on the cabinets. With respect to the balance of the cabinets, the Fine Arts Department has generally assigned them to the Ayutthaya, Thonburi or Rattanakosin period based on certain design and style criteria. In this regard, it should be noted that a number of the cabinets so assigned by the Fine Arts Department, particularly those to the Ayutthaya and Thonburi period, have been alternatively placed in the Rattanakosin period by other art historians and experts. Furthermore, McGill and Pattaratorn note: “The fact is, however, that the chronology of Thai paintings from 1750 to 1900 in various media and formats – murals, illustrated manuscripts, gilded lacquer panels – has not been worked out in detail. Specialists would seldom agree in assigning a painting to one quarter century or another.”⁴⁷ Accordingly, given the generally uncertain nature of assigning dates to Thai art, and a lack of expertise, as well as the general focus of this research, no independent dating or reassignment of cabinets to different periods will be undertaken, and the original assignment by the Fine Arts Department will be used for purposes of this research.

Thai Lacquerware Cabinets

Thai lacquerware cabinets that are intended to hold the Buddhist scriptures are square in shape, tapering to be slightly narrower at the top than the bottom. The general convention has been to define the cabinet by the type of leg or base. The general types of legs or base on the cabinets, typically decorated with lacquer, although some are carved, include:

- Pig-leg, which are square, straight legs, sometimes with two or three drawers added below the bottom rail. This type accounts for 307

⁴⁷ McGill, “Thai Art of the Bangkok Period at the Asian Art Museum”, 31.

cabinets, 74% of the total number of cabinets in the National Library Collection.⁴⁸

- Lion-claw with four legs carved in the shape of lion claws, sometimes with drawers. For some cabinets, the artisan applied a special design feature and made the lion claw clutching a ball. It has been said that the lion-leg feature was reserved for royal purposes.⁴⁹ However, while this could have been the case originally, the custom may have changed after a while as there is at least one cabinet with a dedication colophon created by a commoner for donation to a temple.⁵⁰ This type accounts for 64 cabinets, 15% of the total.
- Bent-leg cabinet, which were only made during the Rattanakosin period.⁵¹ The legs of bent-leg cabinets have an outward curve at the top of the leg. This type accounts for 24 cabinets, 6% of the total.
- Lion-base cabinets, with a solid, quite elaborately carved and decorated base that is said to be in the shape of a lion holding up the cabinet. Some lion-base cabinets have legs under the lion-base, but this is likely from some restoration and addition to the cabinet after it was built.⁵² This type accounts for 14 cabinets, 3% of the total.
- Miscellaneous, including lotus-base or those with no legs.

The typical dimensions of Thai lacquerware scripture cabinets are:

- Height: 110-260 cm, average 168 cm.
- Front width, lower: 70-201 cm, average 102 cm.
- Front width, upper: 68-190 cm, average 94 cm
- Side width, lower: 40-150 cm, average 82 cm.
- Side width, upper: 40-142 cm, average 74 cm.

On the upper part of the cabinet is a ‘top rail’ that is decorated with some design, sometimes carved in the shape of an upright lotus. The ‘bottom rail’ will also be sometimes decorated with an upright or inverted lotus, but this is not as often found. In the front, there are two equal sized doors, the full size of the cabinet that both swing outwards for easy access to the inside. Inside the cabinet there are usually three or more wood shelves used to hold the bundled manuscripts or other articles. The inside of the cabinet is not typically decorated with any design, but usually just applied with red or black lacquer. Another distinctive feature on some cabinets is a wood cut decorative ‘apron’ adorned with some design feature attached to the bottom rail in one of two shapes: ‘lion-mouth’, which generally goes from one side to the other, covering the entire space between the legs and ‘elephant-ear’ which are pieces just fit into the corners and not joined at the center. Some cabinets have no such decorative pieces.

48 The figures and information in this section is based on the National Library collection of Thai scripture cabinets that form the database for this study.

49 “A museum of land,” Bangkok Post, 14 March 2014.

50 Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol. 3 (Bangkok Period), 361.

51 Kongkaew, Antique Thai Cabinets, 12.

52 Kongkaew, Antique Thai Cabinets, 12.

In addition to the typical type of cabinet, there are a few variations and exceptions to the general structure of the cabinets. For example, there are a few twin pig-leg cabinets, which are essentially two cabinets put together, thus with four doors. There is also one example of a cabinet that is made up of four cabinets. There are also various details that some artisans used to decorate the antique Thai cabinets to make them special, for example, some cabinets were made with the back side bulging out a bit or with a top made in the shape of an inverted lotus.

Decorative Motifs

The design features that decorate most of the lacquerware scripture cabinets using the *lai rot nam* technique include both abstract patterns and figure and images from narrative sources that fill up the entire space on the surfaces of the cabinet, although only 20% of the cabinets are decorated on the back side.⁵³ This feature was used by Prince Damrong, who, in an effort to preserve the gold designs on the front of the cabinets where the most damage typically occurs through the opening and closing of the doors, had the backs of a large number of cabinets replaced with glass doors that could be used to gain access to the inside.⁵⁴

The abstract design patterns show a unique Thai element and have developed over the long period of use to have distinctive features. These design patterns are generally used as the background to fill up the space not occupied by other figures on the body of the cabinet or along the top and bottom rail, the legs, the apron and stile frame. The most common pattern for the body of the cabinet is called *lai kranok* [ลายกระหนก] (or *kanok* [กนก]), which Boisselier describes as "...fine undulating tongues of flame, but as seen as a skilful stylization of the ears of rice at the moment of flowering."⁵⁵ There are also a large number of similar patterns that use a sort of lattice design or garlands of flowers. In this regard, Kongkaew and Niyada, who have catalogued and chronicled the cabinets held by the National Library, identify at least 35 different patterns that appear on the cabinets in various parts and section.⁵⁶ Within these patterns, often figures will be incorporated, such as *garuda*, *naga*, monkey or *wanon*, or *asura/yaksa*, or sometimes ending in the figure of a celestial being or other animal.

Narratives

Of these 376 cabinets in the National Library Collection, approximately 60% have some narrative depiction, that is, images of characters or scenes that can be traced to an existing known narrative. These narratives include depictions from the Thai Rama story, the Life of the Buddha and the *Jataka* tales, along with some miscellaneous folk tales and stories, such as *Mani Mekhala/Ramasun* and the *Nariphon Tree*. The other 40% of the cabinets have either non-episodic depictions of

⁵³ Most of the cabinets are decorated with lacquer and gilded with gold design features, however a few are wood carved. N. Na Paknam, *Tripitaka Cabinets: The Best in the Art of Lacquerware*, 6.

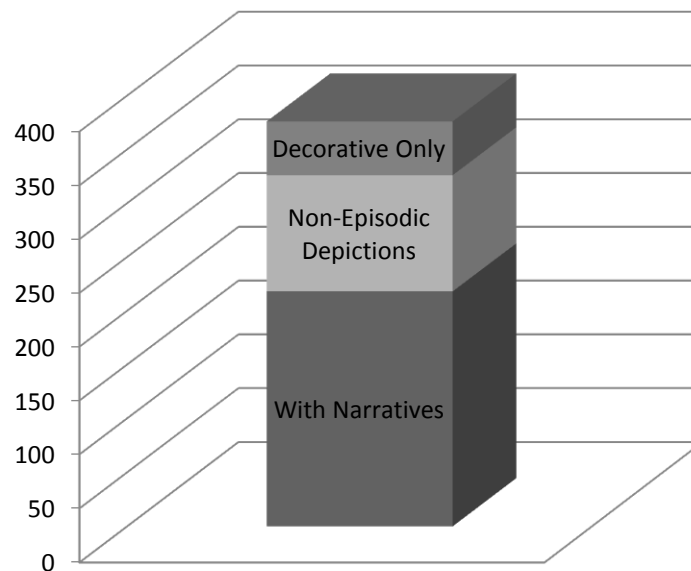
⁵⁴ Kongkaew, *Antique Thai Cabinets*, 16.

⁵⁵ Boisselier, *Thai Painting*, 69

⁵⁶ Kongkaew, *Antique Thai Cabinets*, 18-23.

generic figures of deities or animals or with no design features, many of which are decorated with geometric patterns of cut colored glass.

Table 4-1: Lacquerware Cabinets from the Early Rattanakosin Period in the National Library Collection



Source: Based on data compiled from Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 1 and Part 2, Vols 1-4.

Other than narrative depictions taken from the Rama story, which will be detail in Chapter 5, narratives directly related to Buddhism comprise most of the rest of the narrative depictions on the cabinets. The narratives directly relating to Buddhism can be broken down into three groups: the Life of the Buddha, the *Thotsachat Jātaka* tales, and other miscellaneous *jātaka* stories (collectively, the “Traditional Buddhist Narratives”). The depiction of these narratives generally follows the same format and depictions as can be found on mural paintings in many Buddhist temples.

With respect to the Life of the Buddha, the full life story of the Buddha can be found in one form or another on the cabinets in the National Library Collection, from the time he is invited to be reborn in his last life as the Buddha, to his *Parinirvana* and the distribution of his relics. Patricia Young makes the assertion that there was a shift in the subject matter of narratives used in mural paintings during the reign of Rama I, from a primary focus on *jātaka* stories in the Ayutthaya period to the Life of the Buddha in the early Rattanakosin period.⁵⁷ Whether this is true for the choice of depictions on the lacquerware cabinets, it should be noted that there are many more cabinets remaining from the early Rattanakosin period than from Ayutthaya, which

⁵⁷ Young, “The Lacquer Pavilion in Its First Reign Context”, 146-147.

could perhaps explain why we see many cabinets depicting scenes from the Life of the Buddha.

Regarding the other significant source of Traditional Buddhist Narratives used for depictions on the cabinets from the National Library Collection, the *jātaka* tales, the stories of the previous lives of the Buddha, follow conventional tradition with the most prevalent *jātaka* found being the last ten stories, *Thotsachat* [ทศชาติ] in Thai. In addition, a number of non-canonical *jātaka* stories that must have been popular at that time were also used with some frequency.

It is interesting to note that many researchers and others who have written about the depictions on the lacquerware cabinets appear to assume that most of the depictions are directly related to some Traditional Buddhist Narrative. The eminent art scholar, Silpa Bhirasri, notes that "...both painting and drawing for lacquer works are saturated with the representation of religious scenes..."⁵⁸ N. Na Paknam, a well-respected art historian, makes the statement:

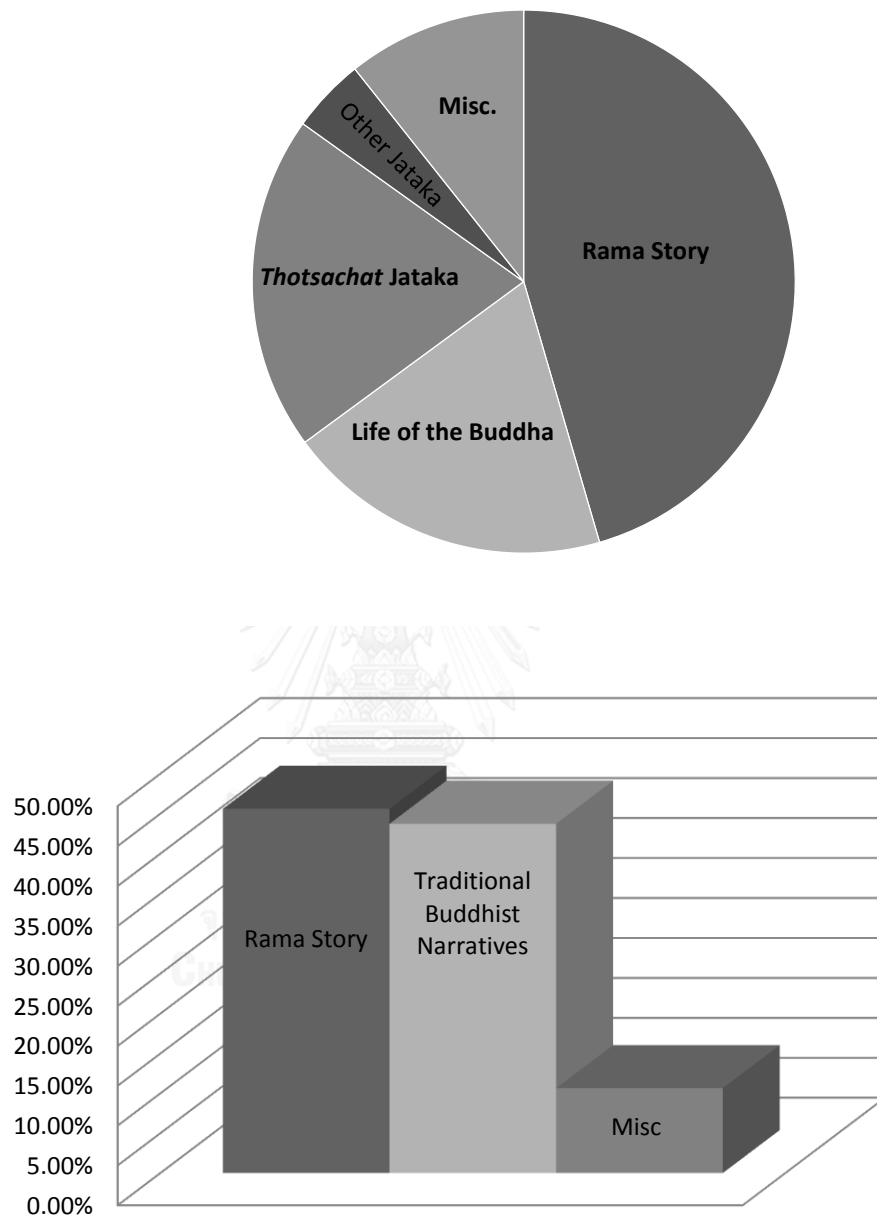
The narratives that are depicted on the gold lacquerware cabinets generally are narratives concerning Buddhism, owing to the fact that Tripitaka cabinets are important cabinets to keep the dhamma teaching of the Buddha. The stories that are drawn in gold thus are the Life of the Buddha, or if not, then the Jatakas, for example the 10 great Jataka stories, along with stories in the Buddhist scripture.⁵⁹

In addition, other research covering lacquerware cabinets in particular tends to focus on the Traditional Buddhist Narratives, without much reference to those from the Rama story. However, as can be seen from Table 4-2, the depictions of images relating to the Rama story are more prevalent than those related to the aggregate of the Traditional Buddhist Narratives. This is one of the most interesting and important findings from this research and a fact that which appears to have been overlooked or not generally recognized or highlighted before.

⁵⁸ The Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkad Palace, 12.

⁵⁹ N. Na Paknam, The Art of Lacquerware, 21.

Table 4-2: Narrative Themes on the Lacquerware Cabinets from the Early Rattanakosin Period in the National Library Collection



Source: Based on data compiled from Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 1 and Part 2, Vols 1-4.

Colophons

As previously mentioned, 20 of the cabinets from the National Library Collection have dedication colophons that indicate the date of construction, the cost and the names of the donors. Such colophons serve as the only definitive elements

that can be used to date any specific cabinet. However, a few researchers have used this factor to try to date other cabinets having similar design features.⁶⁰

A review of the names of the donors mentioned in the colophons indicates that the people who sponsored the creation of the cabinets range from high royalty and members of the sangha to nobles, along with commoners. While there are relatively only a few cabinets containing colophon, the dates include in these inscriptions would appear to indicate that more commoners sponsored cabinets in the later period of the early Rattanakosin period, starting in the reign of Rama III. This would seem to indicate that the tradition spread beyond the royal court and noble class, perhaps because of changing social conditions and increased wealth among the merchant class in Thai society at that time.

The colophons typically make reference to the desire of the donor to increase their merit to be able to reach Nirvana and to maintain Buddhism, and tend to use fairly standard and repeated phrases. In this regard, here are some examples of colophons, roughly translated:

A noble from an early period: Than Luang Chan Narong and Thanphuying built this for Buddhism, finished with 10 tra, 2344 after the Buddha [1801]. Please let this be merit to reach Nirvana.⁶¹

Royalty from the middle period: 2,361 years of the Buddhist Era having elapsed [1818], first month, 8th day, a Year of the Tiger, tenth of the decade, Queen Amarinthramat [Somdet Amarinthramat] had this made for Buddhism. May I become a mother of a Buddha in the future.⁶²

A commoner in a later period: “This cabinet Nai Kaen, Mae Nap, Mae Thongyu built in the 2408th year of the Buddhist era [1865], year of the ox, in the fifteenth week of this year, at the cost of [1¹ 2₃] Please let this be a cause for Nirvana.”⁶³

Other Significant Gold Lacquerware

In addition to the large number of gold on black lacquerware cabinets, there are a few other significant pieces of lacquerware that should be mentioned. These include cabinets, panels and buildings created using the *lai rot nam* technique.

The Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkad Palace

⁶⁰ See, Mongkol, “Cabinets with gold motifs in the Rattanakosin period” and Wright, “Towards a History of Siamese Gilt-Lacquer Painting”.

⁶¹ ทารหลวงชานณรงค์กับท้าวหญิงฝักสร้างไหว้สำหรับพระศาสนา สำเรดเปนเงินตรา ๑๐ พระพุทธศักราช ๒๓๔๔ พระวษาขอไหเปนปีไชยแกพรนิพานเท็ด” ๑. Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol. 3 (Bangkok Period), 167.

⁶² ศกมัสตพระพุทศักราชล่วงแล้ว ๒๓๖๑ พระวษาเศษ สังขยาเดือนหนึ่งกับ ๘ วัน ปัจจุบันปีขาล สัมฤทธิศกเดือน ๗ แรม ๘ ค่ำ สำเร็จ สมเด็จพระอมรินทราบรมราชินีทรงพระราชมารสร้างไว้ในพระศาสนาให้ได้เป็นพุทธมารดาพระเจ้าองค์ใดองค์หนึ่งในอนาคตการ. Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol. 3 (Bangkok Period), 210.

⁶³ ตูใบนินายแกนเมहनับ เมทองยุสร้าง เมื่อพระพุทศศักราชล่วงแล้ว ๒๔๐๘ พระวษา ปีฉลู สัปดาห์ ๑^๑ ๒^๓ ขอไหเปนปีไชยแกพรนิพานเท็ด. Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol. 2 (Bangkok Period), 111.

One of the best examples of the use of gold leaf lacquerware on a large scale is the Lacquer Pavilion located at Suan Pakkad Palace in Bangkok. While the provenience of the building and lacquer paintings is unclear, the discovery and removal of the building to its present site is well known. In 1958, the building was seen by a French antique dealer at Wat Ban Kling in Ayutthaya and was recommended to Prince Chumbhot Krommanun Nagara Svarga. The Prince then acquired the building and had it moved to Bangkok and restored and reassembled at Suan Pakkad Palace as a present for his wife, MR Panthip Boriphath. The villagers at Wat Ban Kling claimed the building originally came to the temple from a royal residence in Ayutthaya, but the date and place was not known.⁶⁴

The building was formerly two buildings, a library (*ho trai* [หอไตร]) and a scriptorium (*ho khian* [หอเขียน]). The library originally had a surrounding open air gallery and the scriptorium had walls on three sides, carved on the outside with lacquer paintings on the inside. At some point, the two buildings were torn down and reassembled as one building, albeit without much regard for keeping the original integrity of order of the lacquer panels, nor any attempt to preserve all the parts and pieces of each building. When the building was moved to Bangkok, a major restoration was undertaken, including repainting some of the panels that had faded. However, there was no attempt made to reassemble it to its former state, with the form and layout as was found in 1958 retained.

The lacquer paintings on the panels depict the Life of the Buddha on the upper register and scenes from the Rama story on the lower register. However, because of the way the building was reassembled by the villagers, the order of the scenes does not follow the chronology of the narratives, thus making for some clever interpretations by art historians. An interesting aspect of the Rama themed paintings is that they appear to depict scenes from the less well-known latter part of the story, when the two younger brothers of Phra Ram, Phra Phrot and Phra Satarud, are engaged in a war that is to some extent a mirror image, albeit it shorter and more concise, of the war fought between Phra Ram and Thotsakan that forms the major part of the story and which is most well-known and often performed. Other than in the mural paintings along the gallery at Wat Phra Kaeo, this is the only place this part of the story is depicted.

The most controversial and disputed element of the Lacquer Pavilion is the dating of the original paintings. Most traditional Thai art experts, including Subhadradis Diskul, Silpa Bhirasri, Kukrit Pramoj and N. Na Paknam, have place the origin of the artwork in the reign of King Narai (r. 1656-1688),⁶⁵ making these paintings some of the oldest that can be found. Many subsequent researchers have followed this convention and attributed these paintings to the Ayutthaya period.

However, Boisselier placed these paintings to the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Rattanakosin period.⁶⁶ In addition, Patricia Young analyzed the subject matter of the paintings and concluded that they correspond quite closely with those at Buddhaisawan Chapel that was built during the late eighteenth century as part of the

⁶⁴ The Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkad Palace, 1.

⁶⁵ The Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkad Palace, 3, 23; N. Na Paknam, *The Art of Lacquerware*, 44.

⁶⁶ Boisselier, *Thai Painting*, 96.

Palace of the Front (*wang na*), and thus were most likely created during the reign of Rama I.⁶⁷

The depiction of the particular scenes from the Rama story would also seem to raise a question about a date going back to the reign of King Narai since that would mean that the episodes of the second war fought by the two younger brothers of Phra Ram were in existence and well known at that early date. While this is possible, there are no other references or indication of such episodes in any of the verses remaining from the time before Rama I had his narrative compiled in 1797. This would seem to point to *Rama I Ramakien* as the narrative source of the paintings in the Lacquer Pavilion and thus a date later than the Ayutthaya period.

Buddhaisawan Chapel Scripture Cabinets

Created during the reign of Rama III, there are three large cabinets that are located in the Buddhaisawan Chapel that are another example of fine lacquerware using both the *rot lai nam* technique, as well as another painting technique called *lai kammalo* [ลายกมละล] that uses color mixed with lacquer to decorate the paintings in addition to the gold leaf.⁶⁸ The cabinets were built under the direction of Somdet Phra Bowon Ratchachao Sakphonlasep [สมเด็จพระบวรราชเจ้ามหาศักดิ์พลเสภ], the *Uparat* in the reign of Rama III, to hold the *Tripitaka*.⁶⁹

It seems evident that two of the cabinets, each of which have a two sets of doors and are the exact same size – 73 cm wide, 262.5 cm long and 313 cm high⁷⁰ – were made to be twin cabinets, as there is only decoration on three sides, with one side blank. The other cabinet, which is bigger – 74 cm wide, 262 long and 428 cm high⁷¹ – has three sets of doors and decoration on all four sides, thus was likely meant to stand alone. It is interesting to note that these cabinets are quite a lot bigger than the typical Thai lacquerware cabinet, perhaps befitting the high royal sponsor and place where they were to be installed. It is also likely that the cabinets were meant to be free standing since all the exposed surfaces are fully decorated with scenes from the Rama story. For the larger cabinet, the front side with the doors partitioned into three separate sections is in color, as are the exposed ends. The back side, in black and gold lacquer, is one continuous painting. For the twin cabinets, the front sides with the doors are decorated with gold lacquer, split into two sections on each cabinet, with the back side and exposed ends in color depicting one continuous scene. Given the different size and styles, it is possible the three cabinets were made at different times or by different workshops.

67 Young, “The Lacquer Pavilion in Its First Reign Context”.

68 Chunlathat, *Lacquerware and Lai Kammalo*, 41.

69 Apiwan, *Mural Paintings Buddhaisawan Chapel*, 155; Kunphanthada, *Color Painted Lacquerware Cabinet at Buddhaisawan Throne Hall*, 4.

70 Kunphanthada, *Color Painted Lacquerware Cabinet at Buddhaisawan Throne Hall*, 4.

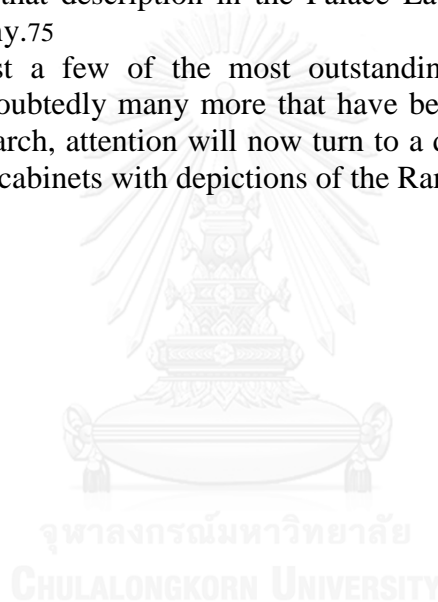
71 Kunphanthada, *Color Painted Lacquerware Cabinet at Buddhaisawan Throne Hall*, 5.

Lacquer Screen in the Dusit Audience Hall

In the Museum of the Emerald Buddha at the Grand Palace in Bangkok, there is a large screen that once was located in the Dusit Audience Hall. The screen is 8.40 meters long and 2.20 meters high and divided into five sections, nearly identical on each side. The screen is said to have been installed by Rama IV, although Dhani is under the opinion that one part of the screen could have been from the time of Rama I.⁷²

The screen is decorated with a depiction of the “Anointment of Indra” or “*Indraphisek*”, as previously described as being part of the Palace Law of Ayutthaya, was one of the many ceremonies of the court at that time.⁷³ Baker and Pasuk, in their translation of the Palace Law of Ayutthaya say: “The very elaborate ceremony is perhaps a reaffirmation of divine royal power in the wake of the inauspicious destruction of a palace building”.⁷⁴ The depiction on the screen corresponds, with minor deviations, to that description in the Palace Law of Ayutthaya, showing the details of the ceremony.⁷⁵

These are just a few of the most outstanding examples of Thai lacquer production, with undoubtedly many more that have been produced. However, given the focus of this research, attention will now turn to a discussion and examination of the Thai lacquerware cabinets with depictions of the Rama story.



⁷² Dhani, Lacquerware Screen in the Dusit Throne at the Grand Palace, 5-6.

⁷³ Winai, Palace Law, Royal Anniversary Version, 168-170.

⁷⁴ Baker, The Palace Law of Ayutthaya, 71.

⁷⁵ Dhani, Lacquerware Screen in the Dusit Throne at the Grand Palace, 4-5.

Chapter 5: The Rama Story and Lacquerware Cabinets

As previously mentioned, the Rama story has been frequently depicted on gold lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scripture since at least the mid-to-late Ayutthaya period. With respect to the 376 cabinets from the National Library Collection that form the database for this research, 173 (46.0%) have some type of depiction, narrative or otherwise, that can be related to the Rama story, hereafter to be called the ‘Rama Cabinets’. The other cabinets in the National Library Collection have either non-narrative or purely decorative design features or contain depictions from other narratives, as detailed in Chapter 4. This chapter includes an analysis of the depictions on the Rama Cabinets, including the method used to identify the various characters and narrative scenes from the Rama story, using in this case, *Rama I Ramakien* as the reference narrative. A discussion of the non-narrative depictions is also included to provide a complete survey of the images on the Rama Cabinets.

Character Iconography

As most of those who have been exposed to performances or depictions based on the Rama story in Thai know, one of the most distinguishing features is the multifarious color used for the hundreds of characters that are included in the story, whether for the masks and costumes used in *khon* masked dance drama or the character’s body color in color paintings. In the Rama related texts, either *Rama I Ramakien* or otherwise, color descriptions of the characters are provided for only a relatively few characters, such as Phra Ram and his brothers, Hanuman, Phali, Sukhrip, Ongkhot, and Intharachit; thus how all the other hundreds of characters obtained their color designation is not totally clear. However, in discussing the history of *khon* masks, it is typically noted that in the early days of this form of entertainment, color coding of the characters was developed in order to be able to tell one character from the other.¹ Furthermore, given that there are so many characters that can easily be confused by similar color coding, other distinguishing iconographic features have been added over the many years, including different types of headdress, the shape of the mouth and eyes, and a weapon or vehicle that can be associated with a particular character.

With respect to the analysis in this research, color is, naturally, of no use since all the depictions are rendered in gold on black. Therefore, the other identifying features are critical in identifying individual characters. Such identification allows, in most cases, for the episodes depicted to be identified. Given that the monkey characters are much easier to identify and are fewer in number, focus of the iconographic character identification is on the *asura* characters, particularly on their headdress, facial features and weapons carried.

Interestingly, these identifying iconographic features do not seem to have changed significantly over hundreds of years of development of depiction or performance of the Rama story in Thai. Therefore, the features present today can still

¹ Dhanit Yupho, *Khon Masks*; Sujit, *A Ramakien Dance Drama from the Ayutthaya Period*.

be used to identify the characters on the Rama Cabinets that were created during the early Rattanakosin period.

Headdress

Dhanit Yupho has divided the headdress for the *asura* characters in 14 groups, generally based on the type and shape of the crown, or lack thereof. The most important headdresses for the major characters seen on the Rama Cabinets are:

- Bamboo-pointed crown similar to that worn by Phra In, with a sharp point at the end [ยอดไฟเดินหนแบบพระอินทร์], sometimes called a ‘human crown [มงกุฏมนุษย์]’; worn by Intharachit.
- *Kranok* crown, shaped with a stylized *kranok* pattern [มงกุฏกระหนก]; worn by Maiyarap and Saeng Athit.
- Pleated or fluted top crown, with a flute-like top piece [มงกุฏจีบ]; worn by Sattalung and Satthasun.
- Cock’s tail crown, shaped like a cock’s tail, although quite similar to the *kranok* crown and thus easily confused [มงกุฏหางไก่]; worn by Wirunchambang.
- Naga-headed top crown, with a naga head at the top [มงกุฏเศียรนาค]; worn by Mangkornkan.
- Gourd shape crown, with a bulbous form [มงกุฏน้ำเต้า]; worn by Phiphek.
- Bamboo bract [มงกุฏกาบไฟ]; worn by Rammasun.
- Uncrowned, bald headed with no crown [หัวโล้น]; as seen on Kumphakan.

For certain characters, such as those with multiple heads, the headdress is less important in identifying the particular character. For example, Thotsakan is easily recognized with his ten heads shown on three levels. The only time Thotsakan is shown on the lacquerware cabinets without ten heads is when he transforms to be Phra In during his last battle with Phra Ram before he dies. In some depictions of this scene, his *asura* fangs can be seen, but otherwise, he appears with the face of a deity and thus other surrounding features need to be used to identify him in this particular scene.

Another multi-headed character seen on the Rama Cabinets is Sahatsadecha, who has one-thousand heads and is often easily confused with Thotsakan. On the *khon* mask, Sahatsadecha’s heads are arranged on four levels, but in many paintings and often on the lacquerware cabinets, he is shown with just three levels of heads, and thus other iconographic features are needed to distinguish Thotsakan from Sahatsadecha.

An important character that has a relatively common headdress is Intharachit, which is a bamboo-pointed crown. However, Intharachit has relatively unique facial features in that his protruding fangs, which all the *asura* characters have, are small and point down rather than curved upwards. There are only a few other characters with similar fangs, and thus this feature can usually be used with a high level of confidence to identify Intharachit.

Facial Features

There are two facial features of the *asura* that distinguish one character from another: the mouth and the eyes. The mouth can be either grimaced [แสบ], with a sort of snarling shape, or clenched [ขบ], with the mouth clamped shut. The eyes are either bulging, wide-open [โพลง] or squinting [จระเข้] in a form referred to in Thai as ‘crocodile’ shaped.

Weapons and Vehicle

Another distinguishing feature of many of the *asura* characters is their primary weapon. While most carry a standard bow, some characters have distinctive weapons, including Maiyarap who carries a blow-pipe and Wirunchambang who has a long spear. Since these two characters have identical facial features and crowns that look quite similar, they are difficult to distinguish without color as a clue. In certain settings, mainly *phap chap* depictions primarily against Hanuman, their weapon is the only iconographic feature that can be used to tell them apart.

Along with weapons, a vehicle or mount can often also be used to identify the character. Again, while many characters use a standard war chariot to go out to battle, some use other vehicles, such as a horse by Wirunchambang.

Table 5-1 shows a list of the major characters that will be discussed in the description of the images on the cabinets and their iconographic features.

¶

Table 5-1: Iconographic Features of Major Asura Characters¶

Character	Headdress	Mouth-Shape	Eye-Shape	Primary-Weapon	Primary-Vehicle
Thotsakan	10-Heads	Grimaced	Wide-open	Various	Various
Kumphakan	Uncrowned	Grimaced	Wide-open	Spear	Chariot
Intharachit	Bamboo-pointed	Clenched, fangs downward-pointing	Wide-open	Various	Chariot
Maiyarap	Kranok	Clenched	Crocodile	Blow-Pipe	None
Wirunchambang	Cock's-Tail	Clenched	Crocodile	Long-Spear	Horse

¶

Royal Characters

The royal characters, in particular Phra Ram and Phra Lak, and depicted with the exact same headdress, and, in the absence of color, are otherwise indistinguishable. Therefore, other factors need to be used to identify whether the depiction is of Phra Ram or Phra Lak. In most cases, unless they are shown together, in which case Phra Ram will be shown in the superior position, the opposing *asura* character can often be used to make the identification.

Non-Narrative Images

While the focus of the discussion in this chapter will be on the narrative scenes, in order to provide a full overview of the images on the cabinets, a review of the non-narrative depictions will be provided. The images designated as non-narrative can be broken down into four groups:

1. depictions of ‘Marching Out’;
2. *phap chap* that can not be associated with a narrative episode;
3. individual characters from the Rama story, such as Hanuman, or some other *asura* or monkey character, including depiction of characters in other non-*Ramakien* related scenes, specifically depictions of the Buddha Overcoming Mara; and
4. Phra Ram, Phra Lak or Thotsakan in the form of a celestial door guardian.

Marching Out

The largest number of non-narrative scenes is that of ‘Marching Out’, which are depictions of the armies of the two combatants marching out to the battlefield in full battle formation in preparation for a fight, led by the principal characters, including either Phra Ram and/or Phra Lak on one side and Thotsakan or his son, Intharachit, on the other. Since there are a number of episodes in *Rama I Ramakien* where these two pairs of combatants engage in battle, most of these depictions can not be associated with any one specific episode. When depicted on the front panel of the cabinet, this scene will show the two combatants facing each other, one on each door panel. If the ‘marching out’ scene is depicted on the side panels, there will generally be just one of the combatants, with the other combatant often on the opposite side panel.

Generally, in the scenes of ‘Marching Out’, the leader of the combatants will be riding on a chariot pulled by either horses for Phra Ram/Phra Lak or royal lions for Thotsakan/Intharachit, usually with a charioteer and troops surrounding them. On a few occasions, the combatants are shown walking, leading their troops into battle, or in a few cases, riding on the shoulders of a *wanon* or *asura*.

Given that when Phra Ram and Phra Lak are depicted in gold on the lacquerware cabinets they look the same, it is quite difficult to distinguish between the two in these scenes. However, in *Rama I Ramakien*, Phra Ram never engages in battle with Intharachit, and Phra Lak never goes to battle with Thotsakan on his own. Therefore, since it is quite easy to distinguish Thotsakan, given his ten heads, and Intharachit, given his unique fang features, we can discern who the pair of combatants is on nearly all the depictions of the non-narrative ‘marching out’ scenes. Table 5-2 shows a breakdown of the number of ‘Marching Out’ scenes.

Table 5-2: Marching Out Scenes

Marching Out Scene	Number of Scenes
Phra Ram and Thotsakan	25
Phra Ram/Phra Lak and Thotsakan	5
Phra Ram	12
Thotsakan	10
Phra Lak and Intharachit	31
Phra Lak	11
Intharachit	10
Total	94

It is interesting to see that, even though Phra Ram and Thotsakan might be considered the principal characters, involved in more battles than any other characters, the number of depictions of Phra Lak and Intharachit in the Marching Out scenes is the same as for Phra Ram and Thotsakan. This highlights the disproportionate representation of these two characters as compared to their role in the overall tale, as will be discussed later.

Phap Chap

Phap chap [ภาพจับ], which can be seen quite frequently in Thai painting, shows isolated images of hand-to-hand combat or other close contact between two characters or one character against a group.² The word ‘*phap* [ภาพ]’ means drawing or picture, and ‘*chap* [จับ]’ means to catch or hold, usually the body or clothes of the other character, or perhaps their weapon. *Phap chap* sometimes includes chasing and catching, most typically for Hanuman and his love interests, either Benyakai or Suphanamatcha.

Phap chap also represent dance postures, in this case *chap* meaning to strike a pose that that can often be seen as part of dance performances.³ In this regard, during most *khon* performances, and typically as part of tourist oriented dance shows, at one point there will be a fighting scene in which the characters will assume a *chap* pose, with one character, always the royal figure, being supported around the waist while rising up to stand on the knee or shoulder of the *asura* character in a superior position in the fight. This type of dance pose is quite stylized, but has the effect of showing off the physical and artistic dance capabilities of the two dancers.

Such dance poses follow the pattern as set forth in the narrative that describes fighting scenes between the two characters, although, in the narrative, the *asura* character will sometimes be described as being in the superior position, raised up on the knee or shoulder of the royal figure or *wanon*. However, such a pose, with the *asura* in a superior position over a royal figure, is never shown in depictions of *phap chap* or in *khon* performances, which would seem to emphasize the superior nature of the royal figures over the *asura*. With respect to *phap chap* involving a *wanon* and

² Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat, 64; Niyada, Somdet Phra Paramanujit Jinorasa Tripitaka Hall, 31; Chot, Dictionary of Architecture and Related Art, 372.

³ N. Na Paknam, Dictionary of Art, 224.

asura, such as Hanuman and Maiyarap, the two figures are depicted in either position, perhaps showing the more equal nature between them.

In addition to dance poses as can be seen in *khon*, *phap chap* can be seen in many large leather shadow *nang yai* puppets, and it has been suggested that this is the origin of *phap chap*. In a book on *phap chap* from the time of Rama I there are “drawings of white and black monkeys fighting in various poses as teaching poses or traditional poses, which is supposed could be the origin of *phap chap* and is likely from the white and black monkey fighting in *nang yai*”.⁴ In fact, there are many of these reference manuals from the early Rattanakosin period showing images of *phap chap* now kept at the National Library, which were perhaps intended as reference works for paintings or other depictions. The traditional opening scene of shadow puppet performances, called *Chap Ling Hua Kham* [จับลิงหัวดำ], includes a white and a black monkey who engage in a series of fighting poses.⁵

There are a few places where a series of *phap chap* images can be seen. One is in paintings above the windows inside the *ubosot* of Wat Suthat and the other is around the base of walls in the Somdet Phra Paramanujit Jinorasa Tripitaka Hall at Wat Phra Chetaphon, both of which will be discussed in more detail the Chapter 6.

On the Rama Cabinets from the National Library Collection, there are hundreds of *phap chap* depictions, most of them isolated images without necessarily having any context to a specific scene or episode. In some images, the characters can easily be identified by associated iconographic elements; for example Thotsakan by his numerous heads fighting with Phra Ram, or Intharachit with his distinctive downward protruding fangs fighting with Phra Lak. Since Phra Ram and Phra Lak have hand-to-hand combat with Thotsakan and Intharachit in a number of episodes in the story, as previously mentioned, the specific episode for most of these images can not necessarily be identified. For other *phap chap* images, the fighting characters can not be positively identified because of a lack of defining iconographic elements or the image has deteriorated or is not clear enough to distinguish the features of the character. In many cases, these pairings are just supporting characters, such as *wanon* soldiers and *asura* troops.

However, for some of the character pairings, the specific episode associated with *Rama I Ramakien* can be identified since there is only one such episode in which that particular pair of characters engage in hand-to-hand combat. For example, Mangkornkan can easily be identified by his naga-head crown, and he fights only with Phra Ram in one episode, thus this image can be positively associated with the episode of Mangkornkan Fights and Dies. The same is true for the many *phap chap* images of Hanuman with Maiyarap or Wirunchambang, since these pairings only occur in one episode.

Therefore, in the analysis for this study, if the two figures could be identified based on iconographic elements, and when compared to *Rama I Ramakien*, those two characters only engage in battle in one episode, that image has been designated as a narrative scene and assigned to that particular episode. If, however, both figures can not be identified, or if identifiable, but is not necessarily episode specific, as in the

4 Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat, 65.

5 Compilation of Ramakien Verses, Volume 1, 238; Mattani, Dance, Drama, & Theatre in Thailand: 9.

case of Phra Ram/Thotsakan and Phra Lak/Intharachit, the image has been designated as non-narrative and assigned to a general category.

Individual Characters

On many of the cabinets, particularly those that have non-narrative elements, there are many depictions of individual *wanon* or *asura* figures. In some cases, the character can be positively identified, mostly in the case of Hanuman or some other *wanon* character, such as Ongkhot or Sukhrip.

It would appear some of these images have been included to be incorporated in the design feature, such as emerging from the end of a vegetal scroll or as part of the *kranok* pattern. Very often these images appear on the front apron of the cabinet. While it is possible some of these images are not characters from the Rama story, given the close association of monkey characters with Rama, identification as such would appear to have a fairly high level of confidence.

Individual characters from the Rama story also appear in scenes of the Buddha Overcoming Mara. In this scene, just before the Enlightenment of the Buddha, the forces of temptation and evil, in the form of Mara, come to attack the Buddha and challenge his right to be the Buddha. The Buddha calls Mother Earth to bear witness his accumulated merit, which she does by wringing her hair to show all the water that has been poured over his many lives, causing a flood that washes away Mara's army. Within that army, Hanuman and other *wanon* characters can sometimes be seen, first marching in with Mara's army, then attacking and fighting his troops. This can be seen in many mural paintings in Buddhist temples, as will be discussed in the next chapter, and is depicted on three of the Rama Cabinets – R 73 front (see Figure 1, Appendix 2); R 87 front; R 300 front.⁶

Celestial Door Guardians

About 10% of the cabinets in the National Library Collection have depictions of celestial door guardians, called *thep thewaraban* [เทพทวารบาล] in Thai and *dvārapāla* in Sanskrit. These figures have their roots in Indian Hindu concepts of the guardians of the eight directions, combined with legends of Chinese mythological warriors protecting the emperor against malevolent spirits. Setthaman Kanchanakun explains: “The word ‘thewaraban [ทวารบาล]’ comes from ‘thewara [ทวาร]’ meaning door or opening and ‘ban [บาล]’ meaning to guard, protect, oversee...door guardian.”⁷

Adopted and adapted during the early Ayutthaya period, celestial door guardians frequently appear in many forms and manner on the outside and sometimes inside the doors and windows of sacred and important buildings,⁸ as well as on many

⁶ Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 255, 306; Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol 4, 56. The cabinet numbers referenced here and elsewhere in this discussion, albeit using “R” instead of “BKK” before the number, follows the numbering system assigned by the Fine Arts Department and as used in Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 1 and Part 2, Vols 1-4.

⁷ Setthaman, Celestial Door Guardians, 4.

⁸ See, Setthaman, Celestial Door Guardians; Arunsak, Hindu Deities, Guardians of Buddhist Sites.

lacquerware cabinets. While typically these figures appear on the front of the cabinet, thus allowing for a pair, sometimes they appear singly on a side or back panel.

Silpa Bhirasri, as well as publications from the Fine Arts Department, has associated a number of such images of celestial door guardians with Phra Ram.⁹ This is typically based on identifying iconography of a bow and arrow and/or a *wanon* or monkey. Such depictions can be seen on at least nine of the cabinets in the collection. When appearing in a pair, one figure can be identified as Phra Ram and the other as Phra Lak. Some have asserted that some of the depictions may be of Thotsakan in the guise of Phra In, which he assumes when he knows he will die and goes out to fight for the last time.¹⁰

A good example of this can be seen on the front door panels of cabinet R 42 (see Figure 2, Appendix 2). On the left hand side is a figure, facing to the right, with a royal crown carrying a bow held in his left hand resting on his shoulder. He is standing on a plinth that is held up by a crowned, open-mouthed *wanon* figure. On the right hand side, there is a nearly identical figure, in walking pose, facing to the left, but holding a sword in his left hand that is resting on his shoulder. This figure is also on a plinth that is being held up by a non-crowned, open-mouthed *wanon*. Given the bow and the *wanon* figures, the figure on the left can be identify as Phra Ram being supported by Sukhrip and the figure on the right as Phra Lak being supported by Hanuman.

Similar variations of this theme can be seen on other cabinets, some holding a sword instead of a bow or no weapon. In some depictions, one of the figures is shown above an *asura* figure, or in one case, *Garuda*.¹¹ Those being held up by an *asura* figure could possibly represent Thotsakan, as noted above, or perhaps Phra Ram or Phra Lak after the *asura* have been subjugated. Precedent for this can be found in *Rama I Ramakien* when Phra Ram returns after vanquishing Thotsakan and Phra Lak leads the *asura* army marching into Ayuthaya.¹²

Narrative Scenes

Of the 173 Rama Cabinets, there are 116 cabinets containing 239 narrative scenes that can be associated with a specific episode from *Rama I Ramakien*, indicating that many of the cabinets have more than one narrative scene. These scenes are in the form of fully developed episodes or just one or two figures, typically *phap chap* images, that can be identified with a particular episode using the criteria as explained earlier. These narrative scenes can be associated with 44 different episodes from *Rama I Ramakien*, as set forth in Table 5-3. The episodes are listed in the order that they appear in *Rama I Ramakien*. Since the original text of *Rama I Ramakien* has no divisions or indications of breaks between episodes, the number, name and division of text into 167 episodes was made by the author of this research based upon a reading and translation of the text. If an episode appears more than once on a single

9 Silpa Bhirasri. Thai Lacquer Works, 15; Buntuean, Ramakien on Lacquerware Cabinets, 12, 17.

10 Buntuean, Ramakien on Lacquerware Cabinets, 11, 15.

11 Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 195.

12 Ramakien of King Rama I, Volume 3, 503-504.

cabinet, it is only counted as one cabinet. The episodes that appear in bold are the eight most frequently seen episodes on the Rama Cabinets.

Table 5-3: List of Episodes on the Rama Cabinets

Episode	Number of Cabinets
16. Ramasun; Phali, Sukhrip Straighten Mt Meru	7
19. Thotsakan Straightens Mt Krailat	10
21. Thotsakan Steals Busabok	4
39. Thoraphi	1
42. Phra Ram Meets Hunter and Rishi	1
47. Samanakha	1
49. The Abduction of Nang Sida	7
50. Sadayu Fights Thotsakan	2
51. Phra Ram Follows Nang Sida	1
54. Death of Phali	2
57. Adventures on the Way to Longka	5
59. Hanuman Searches for Nang Sida; Thotsakan to Nang Sida	4
60. Hanuman Burns Longka	2
62. Phiphek Expelled from Longka	1
65. Nang Loi	12
66. Marking Out the Causeway	2
67. Suphanamatcha	14
68. Matchanu	4
72. Maiyarap Abducts Phra Ram	2
73. Hanuman Rescues Phra Ram from Maiyarap	19
74. Kumphakan Goes to Fight	4
75. Kumphakan Strikes Phra Lak with the Mokkahasak Spear	3
77. Death of Kumphakan	2
78. Enter Intharachit	4
80. Mangkornkan Goes to Fight	14
82. Nagabat	5
83. Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow	10
84. Nang Sida Rides Busabok Kaeo	2
85. Hanuman Carries the Mountain to Cure Phra Lak	2
86. Intharachit Beheads the False Nang Sida	2
87. Phra Lak Fights Intharachit	1
88. Death of Intharachit	29
93. Sahatsadecha Fights and Dies	2
94. Saeng Athit Fights and Dies	4
99. Satthasun Fights and Dies	3
100. Wirunchambang Fights and Dies	25
101. Judgment of Maliwarat	2
106. Montho's Celestial Elixir	1
108. Hanuman Gets Thotsakan's Heart	2
109. Hanuman Pretends to Fight Phra Lak	4
110. Hanuman Tricks Thotsakan To Go Fight	5
111. Thotsakan Bids Farewell and Dies	6
149. Hanuman Tied Up	5
159. Wayuphak Fights and Dies	1

Since most of these scenes only appear a relatively few times, the discussion herein will be limited to those episodes that are represented on 10 or more of the total number of Rama Cabinets, of which there are eight. As part of the analysis, each narrative scene was examined in detail to identify the various ‘iconic elements’ that can be readily associated with such episode. For example, an image of one character shooting an arrow at another character or a *phap chap* image containing identifiable characters would be considered one iconic element. For each episode, the total number of iconic elements that were used on all the cabinets to depict the scene was determined, along with the average number of iconic elements used in each depiction on the cabinets associated with that episode. For example, the “Death of Intharachit” appears on 29 cabinets, with 19 iconic elements among all the depictions, and an average of 4.21 per cabinet. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4: List of Most Represented Episodes

Episode	Total Number of Cabinets (%)*	Total Number of Iconic Elements	Average Iconic Elements per Cabinet
Death of Intharachit	29 (25.0)	19	4.21
Wirunchambang Fights and Dies	24 (20.7)	13	2.13
Maiyarap	18 (15.5)	21	1.95
Suphanamatcha	15 (12.9)	9	2.69
Mangkornkan Goes to Fight	15 (12.9)	10	1.80
Nang Loi	12 (10.3)	5	1.67
Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow	10 (8.6)	13	2.80
Thotsakan Lifts Mt. Krailat	10 (8.6)	6	2.00

* Percent of the number of Rama Cabinets (116) with narrative depictions.

The following discussion will describe each of these eight scenes and a description of the iconic elements that appear. As well, a detailed description of the scene on one representative cabinet that best depicts each episode is included. See Appendix 1 for a list of the cabinets where the scenes appear and a translation from *Rama I Ramakien* of those episodes described below.

1. Death of Intharachit

The most frequent episode to appear on the Rama Cabinets is the Death of Intharachit, which appears on 29 cabinets. In the images on these 29 cabinets, 19 different iconic elements can be identified, the most important, and common for this scene, by order of prevalence, being:

- Intharachit floating in the sky – this element can be seen on all of the cabinets with this scene depicted,¹³ albeit sometimes with his head already decapitated by Phra Lak's arrow. In most of the depictions, Intharachit is holding a discus (*chakra*), as seen in 19 (65%) of the depictions, the other times he has no weapon.
- Ongkhot floating in the sky – Ongkhot, who is easily identifiable by his unique 'three petal crown' and clenched mouth, is included in 26 (90%) of the depictions of this scene. In most cases he is holding a footed tray (in 24 of the depictions), another readily identifiable iconic element of this scene, to catch the head of Intharachit. In two of the depictions, Ongkhot can be seen going to receive the tray from Phra Phrom.
- Phra Lak shooting an arrow – Phra Lak, standing on one foot in the typical stylized shooting pose, is seen pointing his bow and arrow up in the sky, aimed at Intharachit. This is included in 21 (72%) of the cabinets.
- *Phap chap* of Phra Lak/Intharachit and/or Phra Lak/Intharachit Marching Out – although these elements are not necessarily iconic to this episode, one or the other is included on 20 of the 29 cabinets that depict this episode.

In addition to these common iconic elements, some images depict other parts of the full scene, such as Phiphek pointing out Intharachit in the sky to Phra Lak, Intharachit's head on the tray being presented to Phra Lak, and Phra Ram sending Phra Lak out to fight Intharachit. There is one cabinet that has an image with an iconic element that can not be found in *Rama I Ramakien*, that is showing Intharachit suckling at the breast of Montho, his mother, an element that will be discussed later.¹⁴

Description of Cabinet R 206 มหาวิทยาลัย

This scene appears on the front of cabinet R 206, on both door panels (see Figure 3, Appendix 2). Starting at the bottom left hand side, Intharachit, identifiable by his bamboo peaked crown and downward pointed fangs, can be seen marching out to battle riding in a royal chariot being pulled by two royal lions, including a three-tiered umbrella and ceremonial fans. Intharachit is facing toward the right, holding his bow that rests on his shoulder. There is an *asura* in the front as the charioteer holding a spear and *asura* troops holding maces surrounding the chariot. At the very bottom of the panel, there are some human looking troops marching out as well, perhaps Arab or Muslim given their headdress and clothing, with shields and swords.

On the right hand side, Phra Lak is shown riding in a royal chariot being pulled by two horses, with Matuli as the charioteer, and royal regalia, including a

¹³ On one cabinet (R 323), the right hand door is missing. The left hand door has the standard image of Phra Lak aiming his bow up into the sky, along with a *phap chap* image of Phra Lak and Intharachit, thus we can fairly safely deduce that the right hand door has the image of Intharachit floating in the sky, especially given that he appears as such in every other depiction of this scene. See Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part IV, 138.

¹⁴ Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 228.

three-tiered umbrella and various ceremonial fans. Phra Lak is facing to the left, holding a bow in one hand, with his arm raised up half way. We can identify this as Phra Lak because, following the narrative, Phra Ram never marches out to fight with Intharachit. Marching along with the chariot are Hanuman in front, Ongkhot, with his clenched mouth, then Sukhrip with a pointed crown, followed by Phiphek, the only *asura* among the *wanon* troops. At the bottom are forest monkey troops, three in front riding a tiger, next two riding a horse or donkey and then two others riding a bull or perhaps a boar.

On both sides of the panel, just above the Marching Out image, there are *phap chap* images of Phra Lak rising above Intharachit, who is again identifiable by his facial features. On the far left hand side near the edge of the cabinet, Phra Lak can be seen holding a sword over his head in his left hand, as if to swing down and strike Intharachit, while grabbing onto Intharachit's bow with his right hand as if to ward off the blow. Just to the right of this image is what appears to be another *phap chap* image of Phra Lak and Intharachit, although the image is worn away and not easily discerned. On the far right hand side, there is another *phap chap* image of Phra Lak and Intharachit. In this image, Phra Lak holds his bow in his left hand, raised up as if to strike Intharachit, while grabbing Intharachit's bow with his right hand.

Just above, on the right hand side, is an image of Phra Lak standing, curiously holding a sword, not his bow, with Phiphek and Ongkhot kneeling in front of him. Phiphek, who is closest to Phra Lak, is identifiable by his gourd shaped crown and Ongkhot by his clenched mouth.

Above this image, also on the far right hand side in the upper right hand corner of the panel, Ongkhot can be seen receiving a footed tray from Phra Phrom, identifiable by his four faces and multiple arms. To the left of this image, and slightly lower down on the panel, Phra Lak is depicted standing on one foot, in the typical stance of shooting an arrow. Kneeling at his feet are Hanuman, pointing upwards, and Phiphek.

To the far left hand side of the panel, Intharachit can be seen flying through the sky, holding a *chakra* discus in his left hand, with the other hand raised up to his face. Just above this image, Intharachit, still holding a *chakra* in his left hand, is facing to the left looking straight at an arrow aimed directly at his head. Just below, Ongkhot holds the footed tray ready to catch Intharachit's head.

Interestingly, on the right side panel of this same cabinet, the Death of Thotsakan is depicted and on the left, the Death of Wirunchambang. The back panel shows the fight, and defeat, of Kumphakan. Thus, each panel on this cabinet shows the triumph of the side of Phra Ram over an important *asura* character.

Discussion

It would seem somewhat surprising that the episode of the Death of Intharachit is the scene most often depicted on the cabinets, since today this scene is rarely, if ever, performed, indicating that, at least in more recent periods, this scene has not been very popular. It is possible that some taboo on performance has developed, similar to performances of the Death of Thotsakan.¹⁵ In the mural paintings at Wat

¹⁵ Somtow, "The importance of being earnest with Thotsakan's death".

Phra Kaeo, this scene appears over two panels, although the climatic part of the episode, the decapitation of Intharachit, only appears in the very upper corner of the mural, as if to hide it from general view. Interestingly, at Wat Phra Chetaphon, there are eight bas-relief panels that can be associated with the scene of the Death of Intharachit. This might indicate that at least in the time of Rama III, this episode had a certain degree of attention and popularity.

It is also evident that the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien* was primarily used for the depiction of these scenes. This is the only narrative that has the narrative element of Ongkhot using the tray to catch the head of Intharachit as he flies in the air. There are no existent texts from the Ayutthaya period with this episode and Rama II's version, the only other narrative with this episode, just has Phra Lak shoot Intharachit with his arrow, killing him on the ground.¹⁶

Another interesting point about this scene is the inclusion on one cabinet of an image showing Intharachit nursing at the breast of his mother, Montho (see Figure 4, Appendix 2).¹⁷ This element, which can not be found in either the narrative of Rama I or Rama II, appears in several other places, including the mural paintings at Wat Phra Kaeo and in the stone bas-relief carvings at Wat Phra Chetaphon. Given the inclusion at Wat Phra Chetaphon, created during the reign of Rama III, this would indicate that at some point fairly soon after the texts were composed, this element became a regular part of the telling of this episode.

This particular cabinet (R 67) has two images with elements that can not be found in *Rama I Ramakien*, which appears to indicate that perhaps an alternative telling was used as the source for the depictions on this particular cabinet. Cabinet R 67 is quite interesting as it also has depictions of at least eight other episodes, some involving Intharachit, as well as other well-known scenes with other characters. Unfortunately, as with many of the cabinets, there is no date of when this particular cabinet was created.

2. Wirunchambang Fights and Dies

The second most represented episode on the lacquerware cabinets is that involving the character Wirunchambang, which can be identified on 24 of the Rama Cabinets. There are 13 identifiable iconic elements associated with this scene, with the most represented iconic elements on the 24 cabinets being:

- *Phap Chap* of Hanuman and Wirunchambang – which includes Hanuman chasing Wirunchambang – present on 19 of the 24 cabinets. This element often appears as the only part of the episode depicted, but can still be considered as representative of this episode since this is the only time that Wirunchambang appears in the narrative and is the only time when these two characters engage in hand-to-hand combat. In these *phap chap* images, Wirunchambang can be readily identified by two iconographic elements: a cock's tail crown and a spear, the only character with this combination of iconographic elements.

¹⁶ Ramakien of King Rama II, 294.

¹⁷ See, Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 228.

- Hanuman wooing Wanarin – the next most prevalent iconic element for the depiction of this episode is Hanuman together with Wanarin. Some aspect of the encounter between these two characters can be seen on eight of the cabinets. While there are many such episodes in the narrative of Hanuman wooing a female character – Benyakai Butsamali and Wanarin, all of whom generally look similar in depiction on the cabinets – this scene can be identified by the depiction of either a cave, wherein Wanarin lives, and/or forest monkeys, who serve her.
- Wirunchambang riding a horse – which can be seen on five cabinets. This is considered iconic because there are only a few characters using a horse as their mount, Wirunchambang being one. Thus, a character holding a spear, wearing a cock's tail crown mounted on a horse can be identified as Wirunchambang.
- The other iconic elements related to this scene include Hanuman fighting Wirunchambang in the sea, wrapping him with his tail and cutting his head off, as well as Phra Ram Marching Out.

Description of Cabinet R 67

This narrative is depicted on the left side panel of cabinet R 67 (see Figure 7, Appendix 2). The narrative depiction starts at the very bottom of the panel, showing Wirunchambang riding a horse, carrying a spear, charging into battle from the left hand side, facing to the right. Wirunchambang is readily identifiable by the iconographic elements in this depiction, including the presence of the horse, holding a spear and the cock's tail crown. Surrounding Wirunchambang on his horse are forest monkey troops in an apparent state of turmoil. On the right hand side, Phra Ram can be seen marching out to battle facing to the left, standing on a royal chariot pulled by one horse, with the standard royal regalia. Hanuman is seated in front in the position as charioteer. We can presume this is Phra Ram, not Phra Lak, by reference to *Rama I Ramakien*, in which Phra Ram is the one who goes out to fight Wirunchambang, although in the narrative, Phra Lak accompanies him to battle, which is not depicted here.

Just above, in the center of the panel, is an image of Phra Ram facing to the left hand side in the stance of shooting an arrow, with one foot raised. A bit above Phra Ram to the left, a horse with Wirunchambang riding can be seen with its head severed by the arrow of Phra Ram. Just above this, on the right hand side, Wirunchambang on his horse is shown being attacked by Hanuman in front and another *wanon* in the back. It is possible this is a depiction of the simulacrum of Wirunchambang and his horse created after his real horse is killed and the real Wirunchambang escapes.

Just above this, on the left hand side, Wirunchambang can be seen with one foot raised and one hand held in front of his face and one behind, in the posture of fleeing. On the same level, but on the far right hand side, Hanuman is in a posture of flying through the air, holding his sword in his left hand held above his head, in pursuit of Wirunchambang.

In the middle of the panel, slightly above these two figures, Hanuman can be seen holding Wanarin in an amorous embrace. Above, to the right of this image, a bit

out of narrative sequence, Hanuman is depicted looking up at Wanarin, who is flying up into the sky, as Hanuman has delivered her back to heaven.

To the left of this, Wirunchambang can be seen holding a mace in a posture of invoking an incantation to make himself small so he can hide in the ocean, perhaps represented by the intertwined nagas below his feet. To the left of this, Hanuman, holding a sword pointed at Wirunchambang, and Wirunchambang, holding a mace above his head, engage in a fight.

On the next level up, from left to right, there is a *phap chap* of Hanuman and Wirunchambang engaged in a fight; then Hanuman strangely holding onto a crocodile, one hand on its mouth, the other on its back; and then Hanuman in a posture of leaping toward Wirunchambang, who has been ensnared by Hanuman's long tail. Just above, on the left hand side, Hanuman can be seen holding a mace above his head, as if to beat Wirunchambang who lies below him at his feet. On the right hand side, Hanuman holds Wirunchambang by his leg, using his foot to hold him down. The final image, at the very top of the panel in the center, is of Hanuman holding the head of Wirunchambang in his left hand, as he flies through the air, his sword in his other hand raised above his head.

Discussion

The episode of Wirunchambang is an episode that must have had a fair degree of popularity at one time, with Wirunchambang typically considered part of the important *asura* characters from the Rama story, including having a statue of him at Wat Phra Kaeo. Both Rama I and Rama II give a fair amount of space in their respective texts to this episode.¹⁸ However, this episode does not seem to be as well known today, as it is performed less frequently.

One of the appealing aspects of this episode is perhaps the love scene between Hanuman and Wanarin, Hanuman's amorous adventures being a common theme for depiction and popular with audiences. As well, the clever prowess of Wirunchambang in being able to create a copy image of himself and his horse and being able to reduce himself to the size of a bubble in the ocean perhaps made people interested in his character.

The depiction on this cabinet differs only slightly from the narrative of Rama I in some minor details, such as showing Phra Ram marching out alone, without Phra Lak, and not showing the simulacrum of Wirunchambang surrounded by the arrow net that Phra Ram creates to stop the image from attacking the troops until Hanuman can kill the real Wirunchambang. However, there are many details, such as the head of the horse being severed and Hanuman using his tail to catch Wirunchambang, such that this is a quite well-developed depiction following the narrative on this panel of the cabinet.

It is also interesting that the other three panels on this cabinet – the back has glass doors added during the time of Prince Damrong – also have well-developed narratives. These include the episodes of Maiyarap on the right side panel, as described below, and numerous episodes involving the many battles between Phra Lak and Intharachit on the front panels, as previously discussed. This would seem to

¹⁸ Ramakien of Rama I, Vol 3, 177-201; Ramakien of Rama II, 368-382.

indicate that the artisan who designed this cabinet was very familiar with the Rama story narrative. Unfortunately, this panel has no colophon or indication otherwise of when it was created.

3. Maiyarap

The episodes involving the character Maiyarap are represented on 21 of the Rama Cabinets. This is the most well-developed narrative depicted on the cabinets, with 21 separate iconic elements identified. However, 12 of these elements can only be found on one or another cabinet and most on just one cabinet, R 67. Otherwise, the most prevalent iconic elements are:

- *Phap chap* Hanuman and Maiyarap – including various forms of Hanuman chasing or grabbing Maiyarap – appears on 12 of the 18 (66.7%) the cabinets with this episode depicted. As with the identification of Wirunchambang, these depictions can be considered iconic since this is the only time Maiyarap appears in the Rama story. As well, he can be readily identified as he wears a *kranok* crown and usually carries a blow pipe as his weapon. However, it should be noted, there is often quite a bit of similarity between Maiyarap and Wirunchambang, given that both have the same facial features, clenched mouth and crocodile eyes, and their crowns, albeit different shapes, appear quite similar. Therefore, some discretion was used in deciding which character was being depicted.
- Hanuman and Matchanu – the interaction between Hanuman and Matchanu, his son with the mermaid Suphanamatcha, appears on six of the cabinets. Given his monkey body and fish tail, Matchanu is always readily identifiable. The depiction of these two characters interacting includes both fighting between the two, represented as standard *phap chap* images, along with Hanuman showing off his might, including breathing out the sun and stars.

Description of Cabinet R 67

On the right side panel of Cabinet R 67 (see Figure 8, Appendix 2), the episodes involving Maiyarap are set forth in a detailed depiction, with 14 iconic elements, the most for any cabinet with this episode depicted. The narrative sequence starts at the bottom and generally proceeds in a zigzag pattern from right to left and back, until reaching the top of the panel.

Starting from the bottom, Maiyarap, who can be identified by his *kranok* crown, can be seen in the center walking with his consorts. To the far left hand side, Maiyarap is shown kneeling in front of his mother, hands raised in respect, with his mother holding her hand up in a gesture of denial. Just above this, on the left hand side, Maiyarap's mother is pointing at Maiyarap who is standing with his arms raised in a forceful manner next to a chariot that he has overturned in anger at his mother for telling him not to go help Thotsakan.

Just above, in the center of the panel, Maiyarap can be seen mixing the special sleeping potion he will use to abduct Phra Ram, with two *asura* attendants just to his

left. To the right of this, Maiyarap is shown blowing out the potion from his blowpipe, testing the sleeping portion, creating two lovely maidens, who are seated on a dais.

Above, and to the far left, Maiyarap blows the magical sleeping potion from his blowpipe, putting everyone to sleep. In the center, just above, Maiyarap picks up the sleeping Phra Ram, while Phiphek, Sukhrip and Hanuman are unconscious; then, a bit lower down to the left, carrying Phra Ram away. To the far right, a figure that should be Phra Lak is shown in a stylized sleeping posture. Above, to the right hand side, Phra Lak, surrounded by Phiphek, Sukhrip and Hanuman, with the still sleeping forest monkeys in front, can be seen in a state of despair when they discover Phra Ram is missing. Another human figure would seem to be present in this group, but since it could not be Phra Ram, as he has already been taken to Badan by Maiyarap, perhaps this is a mistake by the artisan.

Just below this, on the far right, Hanuman can be seen starting his journey to Badan, by breaking off a lotus to enter through the stem. Then, to the far left, Hanuman attacks, and just above, destroys an elephant barrier. To the right of this, Hanuman encounters his son, Matchanu, identifiable by his fish tail and monkey body. First they fight, as seen in the center, then Hanuman breaths out the sun, moon and stars to prove to Matchanu that he is really his father.

At the top of the panel, on the very upper right hand corner, the battle between Hanuman and Maiyarap is depicted, first with them pulling up palm trees to use as clubs, then with Maiyarap beating Hanuman with his club. To the far left, Hanuman can be seen cutting off the head of Maiyarap with his sword.

Discussion

This episode appears on quite a number of panels, but is most typically represented by just *phap chap* depictions of Hanuman and Maiyarap, either alone or as a series of such images. Other than cabinet R 67 as described above, no other cabinet has more than three iconic elements.

However, given that Maiyarap is shown on so many cabinets, this would seem to indicate that this episode has been a constant favorite and quite well-known since the early period. While there are no written texts describing this episode before that of Rama I, given its popularity and well-developed narrative detail, this episode must have been known long before that time. As previously mentioned, Maiyarap is mentioned in a piece of literature dating from the late Ayutthaya period.¹⁹ In this regard, the narrative of Rama II has a long and detail account of Maiyarap,²⁰ which has been used, along with the narrative of Rama I, for most performances of this episode. In the revived royal *khon* productions sponsored by the Support Foundation of Her Majesty the Queen, the episode of Maiyarap was chosen to be performed in 2011.²¹

The lasting appeal of this episode may, again, be attributed to the clever adventures of Hanuman in being able to rescue Phra Ram, having to overcome many obstacles along the way. Also, the encounter with Matchanu, and the endearing

19 “Pun No Wat Kham Chan”.

20 Ramakien of Rama II, 142-171.

21 Royal Khon Performance “The Battle of Maiyarap”.

reunion of father and son, has universal appeal. Finally, the clever and wily nature of Maiyarap perhaps provides both elements of admiration and adventure to the story, as well as moments of amusement. For example, during the ceremony when he is creating his magic sleeping potion, he instead creates beautiful women, with whom he momentarily becomes enraptured, and even cute young kittens.

4. Suphanamatcha

The episodes involving Suphanamatcha are represented on 18 of the Rama Cabinets. These episodes have a relatively limited number of iconic elements, just 9, with the most prevalent being:

- *Phap chap* of Hanuman and Suphanamatcha, who is easily identifiable since she is a mermaid – including some form of Hanuman pursuing, holding or wooing Suphanamatcha – appear on 14 of the 15 cabinets depicting scenes associated with this episode.
- Matchanu – either being born or as an individual character. As noted earlier, given his monkey body and fish tail, Matchanu is readily identifiable.
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Description of Cabinet R 323

The depiction of this scene on the left side panel of cabinet R 323 is a series of *phap chap* images starting at the top and moving down to the bottom (see Figure 9, Appendix 2). At the very top center, Hanuman can be seen in a posture of pursuit, with his hands held up, one clutching his sword. Below, and slightly to the left, Suphanamatcha, with her characteristic mermaid tail, is shown fleeing in fright, arms held out in front of her.

Below this, there are two *phap chap* images. The one on the left is of Hanuman catching Suphanamatcha, holding her arm with one hand, with the other hand on her back. In the image on the right, Hanuman has a tighter grip on Suphanamatcha, with one hand holding each arm and his leg around her back. At the bottom, set apart with a cave like, rocky border, Hanuman holds Suphanamatcha in a loving embrace, arms encircling her in a posture of wooing. As an added bit of humor, forest monkeys can be seen catching and molesting other mermaids, an element that is not part of the *Rama I Ramakien* narrative.

Discussion

As with the episode of Maiyarap described above, and for Mangkornkan as described below, this part of the story is typically represented by *phap chap* depictions, in this case of Hanuman either chasing, catching or wooing Suphanamatcha, and is sometimes included as a single image on cabinets along with other narratives. On a number of the cabinets, this episode appears on the apron, and on one cabinet, the scene is quite fully developed on the apron on all four sides, including showing the fish taking away the rocks up to the birth of Matchanu.²² However, on only a few cabinets with this episode are the other associated parts of the

²² Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol III, 62-67.

story included, such as the building of the causeway or the fight between Hanuman and Nilanon.

As with some of the other scenes that were picked for frequent depiction, the amorous adventures of Hanuman are the possible reason for the popularity of this episode. Again, while there are no textual sources showing that this scene existed before Rama I, given its popularity and well-developed narrative elements, it must have existed for some time before. As well, this episode was chosen for part of royal *khon* performances by the Support Foundation of Her Majesty the Queen in 2012.²³

5. Mangkornkan Goes to Fight

The episode involving Mangkornkan is represented on 15 of the Rama Cabinets. Mangkornkan is easily identifiable by his crown, which has a naga, or perhaps dragon, head at the top. The representation of the episode involving Mangkornkan also has a relatively limited number of iconic elements, in this case 10 in total. The most often included are:

- *Phap chap* and Marching Out of Phra Ram and Mangkornkan – these depictions appear on 13 (86.6%) of the cabinets with this episode and are readily identified by Mangkornkan’s naga crown.
- Kesonthamala and Mangkornkan – this extra-textual element appears on four of the cabinets, showing the *wanon* Kesonthamala comforting his old *asura* friend Mangkornkan with whom he had sworn a bond of allegiance that they would die together, although in this case with the intent to point out which of the multiple copies of Mangkornkan was the real one so Phra Ram could shoot him.

Description of Cabinet R 198

While depiction of this episode has relatively few iconic elements, most being *phap chap* images of Phra Ram and Mangkornkan, the front panels of cabinet R 198 show a sort of mirror narrative sequence on the left and right hand doors, except for the image at the bottom of each panel (see Figure 10, Appendix 2). At the very bottom, there is an interesting layout on two levels of a Marching Out scene. On the left hand side, a quite faded image of Phra Ram can be seen marching out facing to the right, Hanuman in front. Although only a faint outline of a royal figure can be seen, with reference to the Rama I narrative, we can assign this image to be Phra Ram since he is the one to go out to battle with Mangkornkan. Below this image, separated by a stone shaped border, Mangkornkan, with an *asura* attendant, is shown marching facing to the left. On the right hand side, Mangkornkan is marching out facing to the left, holding his bow on his shoulder, with an *asura* holding a sword behind him. Below, separated by a stone shaped border, Phra Ram, with Hanuman following behind, can be seen marching facing to the right.

Above this image, on the very left hand edge, Phra Ram can be seen in the stylized pose of shooting his arrow with one foot raised, which is pointed upward to the right. A much faded mirror image of this is on the very right hand side. Further up,

²³ Royal Khon Performance “Jong Tanon”.

toward the middle, are *phap chap* images of a *wanon*, likely Hanuman, and Mangkornkan, identifiable by his naga crown, although for the image on the right hand side, the naga head can not be clearly seen.

At the very top, on both the left and right edge, are mirror images of Mangkornkan being comforted by Kesonthamala, his *wanon* friend, who has flown up to help identify the real Mangkornkan for Phra Ram to shoot. As explained below, this is an extra-textual element of unknown origin, as it does not appear in any of the texts.

Discussion

It is somewhat curious as to why the image of Mangkornkan would appear so often on the cabinets as he would normally be considered a relatively minor character without an important part in the tale, nor does he have any particularly fantastic characteristics, other than his naga crown. One clue might be a change in the narrative sequence of the point at which Mangkornkan is included in the story. In the narrative of Rama I, Mangkornkan appears as a diversionary tactic while Intharachit strengthens his Nagabat Arrow. However, Rama II changed the narrative sequence and has Mangkornkan appear as the diversionary tactic while Intharachit strengthens his Phrommat Arrow, which is the same narrative sequence used for the royal *khon* performance in 2015.²⁴ Given the fact that it seems the Phrommat episode has been given much more prominence and performance than the Nagabat episode, perhaps Mangkornkan became much more well known in this way and thus more popular and frequently depicted. As with Wirunchambang, a statue of Mangkornkan can be seen at Wat Phra Kaeo attesting to the familiarity of this character in the story.

As with some of the other scenes, this episode is most often depicted by *phap chap* images of Phra Ram and Mangkornkan, and sometimes with Hanuman as a third party to the image. Mangkornkan is easily identifiable with his unique naga headdress, and thus the identification of the frequent depiction of this episode is readily certain.

One departure from the standard narrative is the scene of Kasonmala and Mangkornkan which is not included in either *Rama I Ramakien* or that of Rama II, similar to Intharachit nursing at the breast of Montho as discussed earlier. Interestingly, this part of the scene also does not appear in the bas-relief carvings at Wat Phra Chetaphun, nor on the murals at Wat Phra Kaeo, indicating that perhaps it was a later addition to the standard narrative. However, since it does appear on four of the cabinets, this narrative element must have been quite well known, and with some degree of familiarity. As well, this aspect can be seen in some performances, particularly in the *nang yai* shadow puppet theatre of Wat Khanon, which will be discussed later.

²⁴ Royal Khon Performance “Battle of Indrajit: Episode of Prommas”. This episode was also the subject of the first royal khon production in 2007. See, Performances in Celebration of the Auspicious Occasions of His Majesty the King’s 80th Birth Anniversary and Her Majesty the Queen’s 75th Birth Celebration.

6. Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow

The episodes covering the episode of Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow, including the related episodes of Nang Sida Riding in Busabok Kaeo and Hanuman Carries the Mountain to Cure Phra Lak, are represented on 14 of the Rama Cabinets. This is another relatively well developed episode on the cabinets, with 13 iconic elements identified. The most readily seen are:

- Hanuman Attacking Erawan – seen on seven of the cabinets, with Hanuman either in the process of attacking or shown fallen on the head of the elephant.
- Phra Lak struck by the Phrommat Arrow – shown on four cabinets, either with Phra Lak being held by some *wanon* or by Phra Ram.
- The other familiar elements of the story, including Hanuman carrying the mountain with the medicinal herbs to cure the poison of Intharachit's Phrommat Arrow and Nang Sida riding in the Busabok Kaeo to see Phra Ram and Phra Lak fallen on the battlefield, are seen on just one or two of the cabinets.

Description of Cabinet R 311

The front panels of cabinet R 311 have a full display of this episode, starting at the bottom left hand side with Phra Lak riding a royal chariot pulled by one horse and Matuli as the charioteer holding peacock feather dusters, marching out facing to the right (see Figure 11, Appendix 2). Phra Lak has a transfixed facial expression, with his eyes wide open and arms raised above his head. Facing Phra Lak is Hanuman, his hands held together in respect, with Phiphek seen just behind the chariot. To the lower right of the chariot are celestial dancers, who are the disguised soldiers of Intharachit.

To the lower right hand side, Intharachit, in the form of Phra In, is riding the transformed Erawan, a three-headed elephant. Intharachit has his bow raised, with the Phrommat Arrow read to be shot, aimed to the left at Phra Lak. To the front of the elephant are celestial flag bearers. Above this, on the left hand side, Phra Lak lies prone, albeit with no arrow sticking in his body, with Phra Ram lamenting at his side and Sukhrip and Phiphek kneeling just in front, facing them, their hands held to their face in a sign of sorrow. A forest monkey is sitting close to Phra Ram holding his bow, with other forest monkeys surround them.

Just above this, Nang Sida can be seen riding in the Busabok Kaeo floating chariot, with Trichada sitting in front of her, hands held up in respect. Nang Sida has her hand held to her chest in an apparent sign of distress at seeing Phra Ram and Phra Lak unconscious on the battlefield.

In the top right hand corner, Intharachit, transformed to be Phra In riding on the transformed Erawan, can be seen floating in the sky. Just below, are two celestial dancers holding peacock dusters and below them, two more celestials holding weapons. In the top left hand corner, Hanuman can be seen kneeling, facing a celestial being who is sitting in front of a mountain with a *chakra* discus at the top. Just to the right of this, Hanuman can be seen flying through the sky, carrying the mountain that has the medicinal herbs needed to cure Phra Lak.

Discussion

This episode is one of the best known and most performed episodes of the Rama story in Thai. The episode of Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow was chosen as the first episode to be shown when Queen Sirikit decided to help revive *khon* performances starting in 2007, and was reproduced in 2015.²⁵ Images of this episode, particular the scene of Intharachit as Phra In riding the false Erawan being attacked by Hanuman, can be seen in many other depictions, including on a mural painting at Wat Benchamabophit and was chosen as one of the primary scenes performed in the 2011 movie *Khon Khon*.²⁶

The image that is most reproduced from this episode, although not on the cabinet described above, is that of Hanuman breaking the neck of the false Erawan. The other very well-known and familiar part of this episode is Hanuman carrying the mountain with the medicinal herbs to counteract the Phrommat Arrow and cure Phra Lak.

This image of Hanuman carrying a mountain is one of the most enduring in the many tellings of the Rama story, albeit sometimes in different episodes. In *Valmiki Ramayana*, Indrajit, rendering himself invisible, uses an arrow that he received from Brahmā and has empowered in a sacred ceremony, to attack and strike the army of Rama, incapacitating nearly everyone, including Rama and Laksmana, other than Vibhisana and Hanuman. Hanuman is instructed to go gather the medicinal healing herbs from a mountain. When the herbs hide themselves, Hanuman brings back the entire mountain.²⁷ The many similarities to the episode in the Thai rendition of this episode is striking, although without the element of Intharachit changing to be Phra In riding the false Erawan, particularly that of Hanuman carrying the mountain.

7. Nang Loi

The episode that shows the Nang Loi episode in which the niece of Thotsakan, Benyakai, changes to be a dead Sita floating on the river in an attempt to deceive Phra Ram and end the impending war, is represented on 12 of the Rama Cabinets. This episode is represented by only five iconic elements, with only one shown on more than one cabinet:

- *Phap chap* Hanuman and Benyakai – appears on all the cabinets, either in the form of Hanuman chasing, catching or wooing Benyakai.

Description of Cabinet R 85

The layout and depictions on the right side panel of cabinet R 85 is a series of *phap chap* images starting at the top and moving down to the bottom (See Figure 12, Appendix 2), very similar to that on R 323 that depicts the episode of Suphanamatcha

²⁵ Royal Khon Performance “Battle of Indrajit: Episode of Prommas”. This episode was also the subject of the first royal khon production in 2007. See, Performances in Celebration of the Auspicious Occasions of His Majesty the King’s 80th Birth Anniversary and Her Majesty the Queen’s 75th Birth Celebration.

²⁶ Sarunyu, *Khon Khon*.

²⁷ Goldman, *The Ramayana of Valmiki*, Volume VI: *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 322-332.

described above.²⁸ At the top center, Hanuman can be seen in almost an identical posture of pursuit, with his hands held up, one clutching his sword. Below, and slightly to the left, Benyakai is shown flying through the air, fleeing in fright.

Below this, to the right hand side is a *phap chap* image of Hanuman catching Benyakai, holding her arm with one hand, with the other on her back. A bit lower down, on the left side, is a *phap chap* image with Hanuman holding Benyakai by both arms, with one foot on her hip.

At the bottom, sitting on a rocky border, Hanuman holds Benyakai in a loving embrace, arms encircling her in a posture of wooing. Curiously, below the rocky border, there are two figures with Western faces and human heads, but with long crocodile-like bodies and tails.²⁹

In fact, the similarity between the left side of R 323 showing the scene of Suphanamatcha and the right side of R 85 with Benyakai leads one to believe that they were perhaps created by the same artisan. These images also seem to indicate that there was some sort of standard format for depiction of this type of chasing and catching scene as several other cabinets have similar layout of these scenes.

Discussion

As with the episode of Supanamatcha, this episode is typically depicted with this type of *phap chap* image – Hanuman chasing, catching and then wooing Benyakai. In fact on all 12 of the cabinets associated with this episode, only two have images of other parts of the episode. The famous scene of Benyakai acting as the dead Nang Sida, floating down the river and Phra Ram holding her body in his arms, is only shown on one cabinet in the National Library Collection. As well, the burning of Benyakai appears on only one cabinet. The rest of the cabinets that depict this scene have just *phap chap* images.

This episode is one of the most familiar and often performed of all scenes of the Rama story in Thailand, including in a royal *khon* performance in 2010.³⁰ In addition, there have been many volumes written about performance of this episode³¹ and the verses composed by Rama II are very well-known.³² While this scene is perhaps most famous for the dance sequence showing the transformation of Benyakai into Nang Sida, making Thotsakan become lost in love and lust, and for the lament of Phra Ram when he thinks that Nang Sida has died, the artisans have chosen to show the interaction between Hanuman and Benyakai instead. In the performance of this episode, the dance scene between Hanuman and Benyakai is also one of the highlights

28 Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol IV, 140.

29 Kongkaew identifies these creatures as norahera [นรหะระ]. Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, (Bangkok Period), 301.

30 Royal Khon Performance “Nang Loi” (Feigning Death: Floating Lady).

31 Pensak, Nang Loi The Floating Maiden; Praphan, Ramakien, ‘Nang Loi’ Episode; Nawarat, “Performance of “Joe Louis” Puppet Theatre, Ramakien, Episodes of Going to Battle and Nang Loi”; Montree, “Vocal techniques of the Todsakan role in khon performance by kru Tadsanee Khinthong: the Nang Loi excerpt of the Ramayana Epic”.

32 Compilation of Ramakien Verses, Volume 1, 27-32; Compilation of Ramakien Verses, Volume 2; 64-76.

and perhaps the most entertaining of part of the scene, often performed as a stand-alone piece.

8. Thotsakan Lifts Mt. Krailat

The episode of Thotsakan Lifts Mt. Krailat is represented on 10 of the Rama Cabinets. This episode is represented by just six different iconic elements and essentially only one scene is shown. Some of the important parts of the episode, showing Thotsakan lifting Mt. Krailat or carrying Phra Uma, are not depicted on any of the cabinets, with depiction of this episode limited to showing Thotsakan carrying Montho and being attacked by Phali who steals her away from him. The most shown elements are:

- Phali chasing Thotsakan who is holding Montho – seen on seven of the cabinets.
- *Phap chap* of Phali and Thotsakan holding Montho – shown on six of the cabinets, often in combination with Phali chasing Thotsakan.

Description of Cabinet R 130

As with the depiction of the episodes of Suphanamatcha and Nang Loi, the episode of Thotsakan Lifting Mount Krailat is generally depicted with *phap chap* images as can be seen on the left side panel of cabinet R 130 (See Figure 13, Appendix 2). Starting at the top, Phali, arms raised above his head, sword held in his left hand, flies through the air, in pursuit of Thotsakan, identifiable with his ten heads, who is carrying Montho in one arm.

Just below this, on the left hand side, Phali can be seen attacking Thotsakan, who tries to fight back with his bow, while still holding Montho as Phali tries to snatch her away. A bit lower, on the right hand side, the fight continues, with Phali pulling on Thotsakan's bow, while still trying to hold on to Montho. At the bottom of the panel, Phali can be seen holding Montho in one arm, while fending off Thotsakan, his bow raised as if to thrash. Three forest monkey troops are shown sitting to the right hand side.

Discussion

This episode, which comes from the first part of the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*, is perhaps more obscure than the others that have been described herein, and thus it is somewhat curious as to the relatively frequent depiction on the cabinets. It is likely that this episode is rarely, if ever, performed. It is important, however, in the sequence of events in the story, as it leads to the birth of Ongkhot, who plays a critical role in the subsequent war between Phra Ram and Thotsakan. This episode also provides for an amorous scene, in this case, between Phali and Montho, always a favorite of Thai audiences.

As with the similarity of the pair of cabinets depicting the episodes of Nang Loi and Suphanamatcha noted above, this cabinet, R 130, and R 210 (see Figure 14, Appendix 2) have very similar layout of the images, which also bear a striking resemblance to the first two cabinets. These four cabinets would, therefore, appear to be likely from the same artisan or workshop.

Overall Observations

As we can see, the narratives on the cabinets cover a significant portion of the story, from the early episodes to the later parts of the tale. However, the scenes that were chosen for depiction tend to be concentrated on certain episodes and scenes, with a focus on certain characters. The eight most represented episodes account for only 15% of the total 44 episodes depicted, but they account for 70% of all the 239 Rama related narrative scenes that have been identified on the Rama Cabinets.³³

The exact reason for the selection of any particular episode or scene will never be known since there are no written records from the sponsors and artisans. Perhaps these episodes were the most popular at that time and, after frequent depiction, became a sort of standard for use on the cabinets. Perhaps the artisan or sponsor was more familiar with that part of the narrative. Perhaps the artisans had a ready repertoire of stencils for those scenes to be used to create the depiction in lacquerware. In any event, since the artisans and/or sponsors of the cabinets did not leave any indication of why they chose to use that particular part of the story, we can only hypnotize as to the reason. Further discussion of this matter is included in Chapter 8.

From the examination of the cabinets containing these eight most frequently depicted episodes, we can, however, make some general observations regarding the depictions of the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets in the National Library Collection. The images of these narratives on cabinets of can generally be broken into two groups:

- Full narrative depictions that show many different iconic elements to convey the story line of the scenes in a more complete manner, much like a full mural painting. The episodes under this group include The Death of Intharachit; Wirunchambang; Suphanamatcha; and Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow. The cabinets depicting these episodes have an average of more than two iconic elements per cabinet.
- Representational depictions generally showing only *phap chap* images of just the two main actors. The episodes under this group include Maiyarap; Mangkornkan Fights and Dies; Nang Loi; and Thotsakan Lifts Mount Krailat. The cabinets with these episodes have an average of two or less iconic elements per cabinet.

Another general observation is the very frequent use of *phap chap* images in the depictions. This may be a legacy of the use of this format to show action scenes in other forms of depiction, such as mural paintings and *nang yai* shadow puppets, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and thus has been replicated on the lacquerware cabinets. *Phap chap* is an effective way to show a fighting scene that allows for a sense of action and movement in a confined space, essential for the layout of the images on the cabinets that have limited space for portrayal.

³³ The number of total narrative scenes, 239, takes into account episodes that may appear more than once on a cabinet on different panels.

We can also see that a number of the cabinets have quite similar layout and form of depiction, indicating that they were either produced from the same artisan or workshop, or that a standard format for depiction of certain scenes or elements developed over time. This is generally true for the more representational depictions involving *phap chap* images, but can be seen on some of the other cabinets as well.

What we can conclude from this analysis is that there are one or two iconic images for each of the narrative episodes which allow us to identify the narrative being depicted immediately and easily:

- Ongkhot holding the tray waiting for the head of Intharachit in the Death of Intharachit.
- Wirunchambang on a horse holding a spear.
- Hanuman attacking Maiyarap.
- Hanuman chasing the mermaid, Suphanamatcha.
- Phra Ram fighting the naga crowned Mangkornkan.
- Hanuman catching Benyakai in Nang Loi.
- Hanuman attacking the false Erawan ridden by Intharachit.
- Thotsakan holding Montho with Phali in pursuit.

From this list we can see that the common iconic images are dominated by scenes of pursuit and fighting, as well as being concentrated on the most popular and well-known characters, primarily Hanuman in action. However, another overall aspect of the depictions on the cabinets is the frequency of images of Intharachit, particular in full narrative scenes, which would seem to be out of proportion to his role and prominence in the narrative. Of the 173 cabinets in the National Library Collection that have depictions related to the Rama story, the Rama Cabinets, there are 550 panels with some sort of decoration, narrative or otherwise; 420 of these panels have Rama related images, narrative and non-narrative, with 213 panels containing images that can be positively related to a narrative episode in the Rama story.³⁴ Phra Lak and Intharachit are shown on 54 (25.3%) and 51 (23.9%) of the panels, respectively. Other than Hanuman, who appears on 117 (54.9%) panels, albeit not always in a central role, this is the highest for any character depicted on the Rama Cabinets.

If we look at the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*, Hanuman appears in at least 52 episodes, covering somewhat over 30% of the entire narrative and thus his frequent appearance on the cabinets can be expected. However, Intharachit figures in only 12 episodes, which represents only approximately 7% of the whole story. Therefore, while we might expect Hanuman, who arguably has the largest role of any character in the story, to appear so often on the panels, as well as Phra Lak, who always accompanies Phra Ram, the central character, the frequency of Intharachit is somewhat striking.

In addition, of the 239 narrative scenes from 44 episodes identified on the Rama Cabinets, Intharachit can be seen in 69 (29%) of them, including two episodes with the highest frequency of depiction, the Death of Intharachit and Intharachit Uses

³⁴ As for the non-narrative images on the cabinets – those showing non-episodic *phap chap*, Marching Out, and individual characters – or with just lacquer or glass doors, the number cabinet panels account for approximately 50% of the total, 207 out of 420 panels.

the Phrommat Arrow. Again, this seems to be disproportionately high as compared to the overall role that Intharachit plays in the Rama story. Possible reasons for this will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Another striking aspect is the very low number of images of Nang Sida, also one of the central characters in the story. She appears only nine times on all the panels, which would appear to be to a low proportion given her role and presence in the narrative. However, because of the focus on scenes of battle and pursuit selected for depiction, this perhaps makes sense.

Before a discussion of the possible reasons for the selection of these particular episodes, and for the use of the Rama story in general, on the lacquerware cabinets, a description of the use of the Rama story in other settings in Thailand will be provided in the next chapter. This will provide some context to the use of the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets.



Chapter 6: Additional Depictions of the Rama Story in Thailand and Nang Yai Shadow Puppetry

Along with the large repository of depictions of the Rama story that can be found on lacquerware cabinets, as discussed in the previous chapter, there are many other forms of depictions of the Rama story in Thailand. A review of such depictions, particularly their location and setting, will help support the main hypothesis of this research, that is, that depictions of the Rama story have primarily a symbolic intent rather than a decorative purpose. As well, since these depictions can primarily be found at Buddhist temples, this confirms the connection between the Rama story in a Thai context and Buddhism, all of which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

In addition, a comparison of the way the Rama narrative has been used in large shadow puppetry, called *nang yai* in Thai, and on the lacquerware cabinets can help to provide context to the findings regarding the type of episodes used for depiction. In this regard, an analysis of the shadow puppets in the collection of Wat Khanon is included at the end of this chapter.

Depictions at Buddhist Temples

At a large number of Buddhist temples in Thailand, one can see mural paintings, carvings, statues and other depictions of scenes or characters from the Rama story. The mural paintings are generally found outside the main temple buildings, although in one case they form the principal images on the walls inside the *ubosot*.

Wat Phra Kaeo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)

When King Rama I came to power in 1782, he almost immediately ordered the construction of Wat Phra Kaeo (the Temple of the Emerald Buddha) next to the newly built Grand Palace, to house the important Emerald Buddha image that he had taken from Vientiane.¹ Extensive renovation and structural changes have been undertaken since the original construction, thus dating the various elements in the temple is not easy. Notwithstanding, there are a number of places that the influence of the Rama story can be seen in this temple complex, considered to be the most important Buddhist shrine in Thailand.

Mural Paintings along the Cloister Gallery

Surrounding this temple complex is a cloister in the form of a covered gallery upon which the most noteworthy and famous of the depictions of the Rama story in Thailand can be found. *Rama I Ramakien* is depicted nearly in its entirety along the

¹ Subhadradis, History of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, 17; Nidda, A Guide to the Thai Art and Architecture – The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace, 70.

walls of the cloister surrounding the temple, in what has been called the longest continuous mural in the world.²

It is generally asserted that these murals were first painted during the reign of Rama I. However, the only piece of written evidence of the murals being in existence during that early period is the reference in *Klong Sansoen Phra Kiat Phra Bat Somdet Phra Phutta Yot Fa*, as previously mentioned.³

Some have asserted that the murals were installed by Rama I as a celebration of the Emerald Buddha image, claiming they were intended to establish an association between Phra Ram, the king and the Emerald Buddha image, with the intention "...to convey to the people the power of the jewel and the religious merit and sovereign power of the reigning dynasty founded by King Rāma I."⁴ However, it should be noted that Wat Phra Kaeo was built and the Emerald Buddha image installed in 1785, many years before *Rama I Ramakien* was completed in 1797, and the Rama text was completed many years after the reigning dynasty was founded and had already been well established in terms of power and position.

After a fire in 1788 destroyed the original Phra Mondop, a new Phra Mondop gallery was built, expanding the compound of the temple. It is generally assumed that the murals were first executed at that time.⁵ As noted pervious, this was perhaps in celebration of the new Phra Mondop and Tripitaka installed therein.

There are those who have asserted that the murals had a specific didactic function. Noted author and Thai art historian, Chunlathat Phayakharanon has opined that the murals were intended to convey Buddhist moral lessons of suffering and delusion in the world, and how to overcome attachment and desire.⁶ This supposition might be questioned, however, if one considers who would have had access to Wat Phra Kaeo and the surrounding gallery at that time. This leads one to consider the possibility that the murals had a more symbolic function, as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

In any event, even if the murals were first executed during the reign of Rama I, what we see today is far different from what would have existed at that time. First, the murals have been repainted many times, roughly every fifty years in celebration of the founding of Bangkok, and most recently in celebration of Rama IX's long reign. The existing murals likely have been faithfully reproduced only since the restoration in 1932 during the reign of Rama VII, having been newly executed during the reign of Rama V. In this regard, some have noted that many Western art aspects were incorporated into the murals, such as the use of certain paint colors and the incorporation of Western perspective. Jean Boisselier goes so far as to say the incorporation of such elements ruined the murals: "The paintings in the cloister of Wat Pra Kèò reveal all too clearly the unfortunate impact of the European vision on classical painting in Thailand;" Boisselier goes on to express the opinion that

2 Subhadradis, Ramakian [Rāmāyana], Mural Paintings Along the Galleries of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

3 Chamniwohan, Verses in Homage to King Rama I, 56.

4 Reynolds, "The Holy Emerald Jewel", 185.

5 Naengnoi, Architecture in the Royal Grand Palace, Vol 2, 264.

6 Based on an interview with Chunlathat Phayakharanon, as cited in Pawina, "Ramakien: the relationship between literary texts and visual arts", 54-55.

“...series of compositions, some of which are remarkable, dates from the reign of Rāma III... ”⁷

The second matter to consider is that the layout of the cloister has changed since it was first constructed by Rama I. When first built, the gallery was essentially square in shape,⁸ but during the reign of Rama IV, the gallery was reconfigured to accommodate the expansion to the east and west of the platform containing the Phra Mondop when the Prasat Phra Thep Bidorn or Phra Phutthaprang Prasat [ปราสาทพระเทพบิดร or พระพุทธปรารังปราสาท] (sometimes called the Royal Pantheon) and the Phra Sri Rattana Chedi [พระศรีรัตนเจดีย์] were added.⁹ This reconfiguration added a significant amount of new wall space and thus would have meant the entire layout of the murals would have changed. Therefore, the layout of the murals as we see them today is most likely only from the time of Rama V.

There are also a few curious aspects of the murals that remain unexplained and generally unexplored. The first is the fact that the murals start about one-quarter of the way through the story, when Nang Sita is unearthed by Phra Chanok. Some of the episodes and scenes before this point in the story are painted around the gates and in other parts, but not in a continuous fashion as is done for the murals, as if these parts were added after the main murals had been installed.

The second curious aspect is that the proper numbered murals start at Gate 7, the Wihan Yod Gate [ประตูวิหารยอด], which is located on the northern wall of the gallery, opposite Wihan Yod, and not at what might be considered the ‘front’ gate, Gate 1, the Koeisadet (Front) Gate [ประตูเกษเด็จ (หน้า)] opposite the Royal Pantheon or at Gate 2, Na Wua Gate [ประตูหน้าวัว], opposite the main door of the *ubosot*, both on the east side, as one might expect. However, Gate 1 does have a depiction of Phra Narai’s incarnation as the white boar to vanquish the *asura*, Hiran, leading to the founding of Ayuthaya, which is also the opening episode of *Rama I Ramakien*. This leads one to wonder if the paintings at Gate 1 and at the other gates were added later in an attempt to rectify this anomaly.

As seen today, and likely the layout since the time of Rama V, there are 178 murals that proceed in a clockwise direction, depicting the story from the time of Nang Sita’s unearthing to the very end of the story, including the later part of the tale when the younger brothers of Phra Ram go to fight and eliminate a second group of *asura*. This later part is rarely seen in any depictions and rarely, if ever, performed, thus making these murals only one of two places, outside the narrative, that this part of the legend can be enjoyed.¹⁰

The murals are continuous, running from scene to scene with some overlapping parts, although the sequence of events within the scenes sometimes moves from left to right or top to bottom or visa versa. Beneath each scene is a marble plaque with a short explanation of the scene in non-poetic language. There are also marble tablets installed by Rama V, as previously mentioned, containing poetic verses

7 Boisselier, Thai Painting, 54.

8 Noppadon, Royal Palaces of Three Realms: Strategic Location of the Royal Seat during Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Rattanakosin, 201.

9 Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 75.

10 The other site where some of this part of the story is depicted is at the Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkard Palace. See the discussion in Chapter 4 and The Lacquer Pavilion at Suan Pakkad Palace.

describing each scene located on the columns supporting the roof. As well, individual characters from the Rama story are painted on some of the columns and in other spaces around the gallery.

In addition to the depiction of *Rama I Ramakien*, there are scenes of the incarnations of Phra Narai (Vishnu), mainly taken from the versions of *Narai Sip Bang* previously described, but also some others and even one scene of Phra Isuan coming to vanquish an evil being. Some of these relate to episodes in *Rama I Ramakien*, albeit with some different elements as contained in the Rama I narrative. However, most are unrelated, leading one to believe that they may have been added later, particularly since they are only on the areas near the gates and corners and not necessarily in exact order. The similarity between the depictions around the gates and the mural paintings in the pavilions surrounding the Phra Mondop at Wat Phra Chetaphun is striking and leads one to wonder if there is a relationship between the two – a subject of possible further research.

Mural Painting inside the *Ubosot*

On the eastern wall inside the *ubosot* is the usual scene of the Buddha Overcoming Mara, with Mara's army marching in from the right hand side, the Buddha in mediation pose in the middle, Phra Thorani, Mother Earth, below wringing water from her hair, and Mara's army being swept away in the flood on the left hand side. Marching in the army on the right, Hanuman – in white with open mouth and no crown – Sukhrip – in red with pointed crown – and Ongkhot – in green with closed mouth and three petal crown – along with other monkey characters, can be seen. Then on the left hand side, Phali – in green with pointed crown – fighting with the bull, Thoraphi, and Hanuman attacking an *asura* figure are shown.¹¹ These depictions are similar to those seen in other temples, as described below.

Statues

Dispersed around the temple are six-meter tall statues of twelve *asura* characters from the Rama story placed as pairs in front of some of the gates, as if in the form of door guardians. The grouping of these characters is interesting in that each pair has some connection in the story and/or is similar in their iconographic depiction and facial features:

- Intharachit and Suriyapop, at Gate 1, Koeisadet (Front) Gate in the middle of the eastern side of the temple, have similar iconographic face features and headdress crowns, and are both the first sons of the principal combatants from the two major wars in the story.
- Wirunhok and Mangkornkan, at Gate 2, Na Wua in the southern part of the eastern wall, both have similar iconographic face features and, particularly, similar naga-headed crowns.
- Thotsakhirithon and Thotsakhiriwan, at Gate 3, Phra Sri Rattanasatsada Gate [ประตูพระศรีรัตนศาสดา] at the western end of the southern wall, are the elephant faces sons of Thotsakan.

¹¹ The Mural Paintings of the Life of the Lord Buddha in the Ubosot of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, 68-69.

- Chakkrawat and Atsakanmara, at Gate 4, the Hermit Gate [ประตูพระฤๅษี] at the southern end of the western wall, are both multi-headed *asura* with similar facial features, and both are friends of Thotsakan.
- Thotsakan and Sahasadecha, at Gate 5, Koeisadet (Rear) Gate [ประตูเกษเสด็จ (หลัง)] in the middle of the western side, both have multiple arms and heads.
- Wirunchambang and Maiyarap, at Gate 6, the Sanam Chai Gate [ประตูหนามไชย] at the northern end of the western wall, both have similar iconographic facial features, as previously identified, and both are popular characters for depiction and performance, as can be seen on the lacquerware cabinets discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition to the large standing *asura* statues, surrounding the base of two golden chedis originally built by Rama I for his mother and father, now located on the upper terrace on the east side of the Royal Pantheon, are figures associated with the Rama story which were added during the reign of Rama V.¹² These include four monkey statues in the posture of holding up the base of the chedi, one in the middle of each side, and 16 *asura* figures, two on each side and two on each corner, all with different color bodies and headdresses.

Similar type figures can also be seen on the eight Phra Atsada Maha Chedi [พระอัษฎาอัษฎามหาเจดีย์] located on the east side of the temple, six of which are outside the walls of the temple, with two now inside the walls after the gallery configuration was changed to accommodate the Royal Pantheon. Built during the reign of Rama I, and extensively renovated during the reign of Rama III, along the upper part are *asura* and monkeys holding up the top of the *prang*.¹³

As well, in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha Museum there are two stone statues identified as Hanuman and Supanamatcha. These statues, along with others figures from well-known piece of Thai literature, used to be located at the north-eastern angle of the *ubosoth* at Wat Phra Kaeo. According to Subhadradis Diskul, they probably date from the reign of Rama III.¹⁴

Other Related Depictions

On the mother-of-pearl inlaid doors on both the front and back of the *ubosot*, figures from the Rama story can be seen in medallion decorations on the doors. Some of the most popular characters are depicted, including Intharachit holding a *chakra*, which reminds one of the scenes on the lacquerware cabinets of the Death of Intharachit, along with Mangkornkan, Hanuman, Ongkhot, Sukhrip and others.

The Phra Mondop, originally built during the reign of Rama I, and renovated and rebuilt by Rama III and IV, houses a copy of the Tripitaka in a mother-of-pearl inlaid scripture cabinet. On the sides and along the base of this cabinet are characters

12 Nidda, A Guide to the Thai Art and Architecture – The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace, 53.

13 Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 75; Nidda, A Guide to the Thai Art and Architecture – The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace, 26-27.

14 Subhadradis, “Ramayana in Sculpture and Paintings in Thailand”, 679-680; Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 156.

and scenes from the Rama story, including depictions of Matchanu; *phap chap* of Hanuman fighting Maiyarap and Wirunchambang; and Kumphakan holding the Mokkhasak Spear fighting Phra Lak¹⁵ – all favorite images seen on the lacquerware cabinets, as previously described. As well, the mother-of-pearl inlaid doors to the Phra Mondop have circles enclosing characters from the Rama story.¹⁶

On the Vihan Yod, originally built during the reign of Rama I and rebuilt during the period of Rama III to house the *Nak* Buddha image, are mother-of-pearl inlaid doors showing images of a monkey, presumed to represent Hanuman given the posture of the figure. These doors are said to have come from Wat Pa Mok in Anghong Province and date from the reign of Borommakot in the Ayutthaya period.¹⁷ If this is true, it further shows evidence of the Rama story from an early period.

Ho Phra Monthian Tham [หอพระมณฑิยธรรม] (the Supplementary Library), originally built during the reign of Rama I to house various versions of the Buddhist scriptures, has several images of monkeys that could be related to the Rama story. These include the main door which has a mother-of-pearl inlaid depiction of a monkey in flying pose, holding up a sword, on the diamond shaped piece in middle of the door and the secondary doors flanking the main door with carved monkeys on either side and deities holding swords held up by monkeys. On the inside of the window panels,¹⁸ there are monkey figures identified as Hanuman, who is said to have been considered the symbol of the Front Palace.¹⁹

Wat Phra Chetaphon (Wat Pho)

Wat Phra Chetaphon (Wat Pho) is an important royal temple that was founded during the Ayutthaya period, but which was substantially expanded during the reign of Rama I and significantly renovated and further expanded during the reign of Rama III. At this royal temple, there are many places where the Rama story is depicted, most famously in bas-relief panels surrounding the *ubosot*, but also in the mother-of-pearl designed door panels of the *ubosot*, and in mural paintings inside pavilions surrounding the Phra Mondop that originally housed a copy of the Tripitaka.

Stone Bas-Reliefs around the *Ubosot*

Perhaps the best known and documented depictions of the Rama story at Wat Phra Chetaphon are the series of 152 stone bas-reliefs that surround the base of the platform of the *ubosot* of the temple that were installed during the reign of Rama III.²⁰ Each slab is about 45 centimeters square, with a short carved verse inscription below the image describing and elaborating the scene depicted in the panel, most of

15 Busaya, His Majesty King Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke Maha Raj, 112-119; Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 87.

16 Busaya, His Majesty King Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke Maha Raj, 111; Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 84.

17 Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 99.

18 Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 102-103.

19 Nidda, A Guide to the Thai Art and Architecture – The Temple of The Emerald Buddha and the Grand Palace, 33.

20 Niyada, The Ramakien Bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon; Cadet, The Ramakien.

which are unreadable at this time, and two additional inscriptions with no bas-relief panels that are no longer in place, but all of which are included in the *Collection of Inscriptions at Phra Wat Chetaphon*.²¹

The narrative sequence, running clockwise around the *ubosot* from the northeast corner of the eastern wall, covers only about 20% of the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*. The first panel starts well into the story with the abduction of Nang Sida, showing Phra Ram holding a dead deer and Phra Lak kneeling in front of him.²² Although many of the scenes are ones that seem to have been popular for performance in *khon* or *nang yai*, many popular scenes are skipped, such as Intharachit using his Phrommat Arrow and Sukhrip breaking the magic umbrella of Thotsakan. The last panel in the series depicts the battle with Sahatsadecha, the thousand-headed friend of Thotsakan, with Hanuman cutting off the head of Sahatsadecha. Thus the final battle and death of Thotsakan, along with the reunion of Nang Sida and Phra Ram, are not included, making one wonder if there was a plan to continue the narrative at another location, similar to the way the mural paintings in the pavilions surrounding the Phra Mondop seem to continue at Wat Phra Kaeo as discussed below. As well, the disjointed and partial depiction of the narrative leads one to believe that the primary purpose of installing the bas-reliefs was not to tell the story, but had some other symbolic motive, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Given that the narrative commences at a point before the start of the narrative in Rama II's version, as well as certain iconographic elements, such as Ongkhot holding the tray to catch Intharachit's head when Phra Lak decapitates him, it would appear the panels are likely based largely on *Rama I Ramakien*. However, there is at least one narrative element that appears to combine the two compositions. When Hanuman goes to search for Nang Sida in Longka, he meets and fights with the city guardian. In Rama I's version, this character is called *Suea Muang* [เสือเมือง], a male *asura* with four heads and eight arms. In Rama II's version, this character is named Nang Angkat Talai [นางอังกาศดலை], a female *asura* with four faces and eight arms described as a sort of demon spirit – *pisat* [ปีศาจ] – and also as city guardian or *suea muang*, who has a retinue of spirits that fight Hanuman. On the stone bas-reliefs, panels 22 and 23 appear to follow both versions, with Hanuman fighting a group of *asura* in panel 22,23 following Rama II and then, in panel 23, the *suea muang* is depicted as a male *asura* following the Rama I version. However, the inscription to Panel 23 refers to Angkat Talai following Rama II.²⁴

At one time, one could make rubbings from the bas-relief panels, which became popular souvenir items to be hung on the wall. Today, given the large number of visitors to Wat Phra Chetaphon, that is no longer allowed, but copies of some of the more popular panels were made and rubbings made from those are still sold in front of the temple.

21 Niyada, *Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Chetaphon*, 554-579; Niyada, *The Ramakien Bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon*, 324-325; Cadet, *The Ramakien*, 36.

22 Niyada, *The Ramakien Bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon*, 20; Cadet, *The Ramakien*, 43.

23 Niyada, *The Ramakien Bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon*, 61-62; Cadet, *The Ramakien*, 73.

24 Niyada, *The Ramakien Bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon*, 62-64; Cadet, *The Ramakien*, 74.

Mother-of-Pearl Doors on the *Ubosot*

Along with the stone bas-relief panels around the base of the *ubosot*, doors with mother-of-pearl inlay were installed during the renovation by Rama III, two on the east side and two the west.²⁵ Prince Naris was under the opinion that the same artisan who oversaw the creation of the bas-reliefs was also responsible for the mother-of-pearl doors.²⁶

On the four sets of doors, the narrative scenes are laid out as follows:²⁷

	North	South
West	<i>Right Hand Panel:</i> Phra Ram Releases the Uppakan Horse and Hanuman Tied Up; <i>Left Hand Panel:</i> Phra Mongkut Caught and Released.	<i>Right Hand Panel:</i> Montho's Celestial Elixir; Phra Ram - Thotsakan - the Fourth Battle; Hanuman Gets Thotsakan's Heart; <i>Left Hand Panel:</i> Thotsakan Bids Farewell and Dies.
East	<i>Right Hand Panel:</i> Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow; <i>Left Hand Panel:</i> Phra Lak Fights Intharachit and Death of Intharachit.	<i>Right Hand Panel:</i> Mulaphlam Fights and Dies and Sahatsadecha Fights and Dies; <i>Left Hand Panel:</i> Satthasun Fights and Dies and Wirunchambang Fights and Dies.

Again, it is evident that *Rama I Ramakien* was used as the basis for these depictions. In this regard, we can see the similar iconographic elements in the Death of Intharachit with Ongkhot holding the tray to catch Intharachit's head, which is not found in Rama II's narrative. We can also see that some of the favorite themes and images that can be seen on the lacquerware cabinets appear on these doors. This includes the Death of Intharachit, Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow and Wirunchambang Fight and Dies.

Ubosot Murals

While the subject matter of the murals inside the *ubosot* is not related to the Rama story, there is one mural that incorporates a related image. In Bay No. 2 between the two doors on the east entrance, there is a scene in which there a *khon* performance is being staged. While it is not clear what scene is being performed, it is interesting to note that the actor performing the role of Phra Ram is wearing a green mask. This would appear to indicate that perhaps at that time, all the characters – humans, monkeys and *asura* – wore *khon* masks, unlike today when human and celestial characters do not wear masks.

Phra Vihan Khot

Surrounding the *ubosot* are four separate L-shaped, corner pavilions called Phra Vihan Khot that were built to help define the area of the *ubosot* and house

²⁵ Bunchob, *The Ubosot of Wat Pho*, 44-61.

²⁶ Naris, *Royal Letters Volume 5*, 392-393; Naris, *Royal Letters Volume 18*, 260.

²⁷ See the complete list of episodes in Appendix 1.

Buddha images. On the two pediments of each building, there are wood carved, bas-reliefs painted in gold with blue, cut glass background containing *phap chap* fighting scenes from the Rama story.

To the northeast of the *ubosot* is Phra Vihan Khot Phra Chai (Khot Nen Toe) [พระวิหารคดพระฉาย (คดเนรเต๋อ)]:

- West facing pediment: *Phap chap* of Phra Ram and Mangkornkan, identifiable with his with naga crown; also Mangkornkan and Kesonthamala is depicted at the top, with other *wanon* and monkey troops engage in battle on both sides.
- South facing: *Phap chap* of Phra Ram (identified based on the green colored clothing) and an *asura* with a *kranok* or cock's tail crown, holding a mace like weapon, who could be either Wirunchambang or Maiyarap. Since in the narrative Phra Ram does not engage in hand-to-hand combat with either of these characters, this could either be another unidentified character or an interpretation by the artisan. Ongkhot can be seen on the left-hand corner fighting an *asura*, with other monkey troops fighting an *asura* in the other corner.

To the southeast is Phra Vihan Khot Phra Phuttachao Khao Nipphan [พระวิหารคดพระพุทธเจ้าเข้านิพพาน]:

- North facing pediment: *Phap chap* of either Phra Ram or Phra Lak fighting an *asura* with a victory crown, grimaced mouth and wide open eyes. Ongkhot can be seen in the left-hand corner fighting two *asura* and Hanuman at the top fighting an *asura*.
- West facing: *Phap chap* of Phra Lak fighting Kumphakan holding his Mokkhasak Spear. Other *wanon* and monkey troops fight various *asura* all around.

To the southwest is Phra Vihan Khot Samo (Khot Krom Luang Chumphon) [พระวิหารคดสมอ (คดกรมหลวงชุมพร)]:

- East facing pediment: *Phap chap* of Phra Ram and Mangkornkan. Mangkornkan can be seen in the upper corner being chased by two *wanon*, with *wanon* fighting other *asura* in the lower corners.
- North facing: *Phap chap* of either Phra Ram or Phra Lak fighting an *asura* with victory crown, grimaced mouth, wide open eyes and holding a mace like weapon. Sukhrip can be seen at the top fighting an *asura*, with other *wanon* and monkey soldiers engaged in battle.

To the northwest is Phra Vihan Khot Na Daeng [พระวิหารคดหน้าแดง]:

- South facing pediment: *Phap chap* of Hanuman and Thotsakhiriwan and Thotsakhirithon, the elephant faced sons of Thotsakan. To the lower right and left hand corners are foreign looking figures holding bows and at the upper corner, a *wanon* and *asura* engaged in a fight.
- East facing: *Phap chap* of Phra Lak and Intharachit. At the top, Sukhrip can be seen attacking an *asura* figure, with other monkey troops fighting *asura*.

The placement of these pediments is interesting as such pediments with similar depictions are rarely seen in other locations. Given that there is little narrative element, just *phap chap* images, it is not certain as to which narrative would have been used for these images. The purpose of these *phap chap* images could be similar to that as seen on the lacquerware cabinets, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Phra Wihan Thit

Surrounding the *ubosot* is a cloistered gallery with Buddha images. In the middle of each side are directional assembly halls, Phra Wihan Thit, that house important Buddha images. The pediments on both sides of the east and west halls contain carved figures of a crowned personage in green color holding a sword in one hand and a trident in the other, riding a monkey figure. Given the green color of the figure and trident, we might be inclined to identify this as Phra In. However, given the presence of the monkey, we are more want to identify this as Phra Ram, or perhaps Phra Lak, riding on Hanuman, with the presence of the trident being an anomaly. This identification is perhaps supported by the placement of Phra Narai (Vishnu) riding on Garuda that appears on the pediments of the north and south halls.

Within the halls to the east and west there are door guardians painted on the front and back doors, many of which can be identified as being characters from the Rama story. On the inside of the front doors of the western hall, there are four royal or celestial figures holding bows, riding on the shoulders of *wanon* – figures that could be identified as Phra Ram and Phra Lak, and perhaps his two other brothers, Phra Phrot and Phra Satarud. As well, on the outside of the doors, are gold on black lacquer paintings, with depictions at the bottom that appear to show scenes from the Rama story – the creation of the copy of the son of Nang Sida, Phra Lop, by the rishi; the two sons of Phra Ram, Phra Mongkut and Phra Lop, catching the Uppakan horse; the fight between Thorapha and Thoraphi; and Phra Ram or Phra Lak marching out with Hanuman.

In the east hall, there are depictions of *asura* on the inside of nearly all the doors and windows. These depictions include the common pairing of Thotsakan and Sahatsadecha and Intharachit and Suriyaphop, as well as many other *asura* characters.

The Vihan of the Reclining Buddha

At the bottom of each of the door panels in the Vihan of the Reclining Buddha, there are small paintings in black and gold lacquer from the Rama story: the accessible panels include, starting from the right hand door at the east side and moving counterclockwise around the vihan:

- Hanuman attacking Maiyarap;
- Phra Ram or Phra Lak shooting an arrow as monkey troops look on;
- Hanuman and the rishi, Phra Narot;
- Hanuman attacking Kumphakan blocking the water;
- Maiyarap visiting his mother or Wirunchambang and Nang Wanarin (?);
- Phra Ram holding the dead Marit transformed as a golden deer;
- Forest monkeys, possible going into the cave of Nang Wanarin (?);

- Thotsakan, with Nang Uma, meeting Phra Narai incarnated as an old hermit planting trees upside down;
- Phra Ram or Phra Lak meeting a rishi (?);
- Banlaikan Fights Hanuman transformed to be a buffalo;
- Phra Lak being struck by the Nagabat Arrow; and
- Phra Lak being struck by the Phrommat Arrow.

Also, at the base of several windows panels near the doors, there are the following:

- Phra Ram and Phra Mongkut, his son, shooting arrows at each other that turn into flowers;
- Nang Sida carrying her newborn child in the forest; and
- Phra Ram holding the false dead Nang Sida (?).

Phra Mondop (Ho Trai Chatturamuk)

The Phra Mondop (Ho Trai Chatturamuk) was first built during the reign of Rama III to house a copy of the Tripitaka that was created during his reign. At that time, four pavilions were built surrounding the Phra Mondop and, on the walls of the pavilions, mural paintings from the Rama story were installed, along with stone inscriptions describing the murals.

Unfortunately, the stone inscriptions are no longer in place, but the contents of 13 of the inscriptions were recorded and preserved by Niyada Lausunthorn in 1981 and then reprinted in the *Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon*.²⁸ It is interesting to note that, although most of narrative elements in the inscriptions can be found in *Rama I Ramakien*, there is some content that is not in the narrative and some names with different spellings.²⁹

The murals, said to be among the oldest existing murals of the Thai Rama story, are nearly gone, never having been restored, with just some fragments of the narrative readable. The paintings focus on the first part of the story covering the origin of some of the characters and ending with the birth of Phra Ram and his brothers, and then the birth of Nang Sida until Phra Chanok tries to unearth Nang Sida by plowing, which is where the large murals at Wat Phra Kaeo commence. Some of the episodes that were painted in these pavilions can also be seen painted around the gates at Wat Phra Kaeo. As well, Inscription No. 55 states: “For the rest of the story

²⁸ Niyada, *Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Chetaphon*, 235-239.

²⁹ For example, at one point Phra Ram meets an asura named Kumphon [กุมพอน], who was cursed by Phra Isuan to live on the earth until Phra Narai incarnated as Phra Ram to help him overcome the curse. *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 2, 6-9. In Inscription No. 39, more detail is provided about him and he is named Kunphanthanurat [กุนภันตณราช]. Niyada, *Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon*, 236. Also, interestingly, Inscription No. 45 has a complete list of the celestials who incarnated to become the Sip Phet Mongkut, the group of 18 leading troops of Phra Ram. See Niyada, *Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon*, 237-238. In *Rama I Ramakien*, there are only 15 celestials listed, which has created some confusion as to which wanon constitute the Sip Phet Mongkut. See, *Ramakien by Rama I*, Vol 1, 227; see also, Srisurang, *Monkeys Great and Small in Ramakien*, 51-55.

of *Ramakien*, go to see at the gallery of Wat Si Rattanasatsadaram [Wat Phra Kaeo], at the side of the north gate.”³⁰

The similarity of the subject matter of the murals in the pavilions around the Phra Mondop and the paintings around the gates at Wat Phra Kaeo, along with the reference to Wat Phra Kaeo in Inscription No. 55, leads one to suspect that this could be a relationship between these two sets of murals – either they were created in conjunction with each other, or those at Wat Phra Chetaphon were painted after those at Wat Phra Kaeo to complete the story. Further complicating this picture are the anomalies between the inscriptions and the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*, making all these matters of further interesting research.

As mentioned, when first built, there were four pavilions surrounding the Phra Mondop. However, the east pavilion was removed when an additional stupa was added to the three existing large stupas situated to the east of the Phra Mondop, the Phra Maha Chedi, during the reign of Rama IV. With respect to these stupas, when Rama I originally reconstructed the temple, he had the Phra Maha Chedi Si Sanphet Dayan [พระมหาเจดีย์ศรีสรรเพชดาญาณ] stupa built to house the Phra Si Sanphet standing Buddha image taken from Ayutthaya. As recorded in the foundation inscription dated 1788, surrounding the stupa on three sides was a gallery that contained murals based on the Rama story, murals that would have been installed before the composition of *Rama I Ramakien* in 1797.³¹

Rama III added two more stupas to the right and left of the original stupa built by Rama I, and expanded the covered gallery, but there is no indication whether murals from the Rama story were included.³² When Rama IV added another stupa to the collection of three existing ones, the east pavilion near the Phra Mondop was incorporated into the cloister gallery surrounding the stupas, leaving the three pavilions as can be seen today.

According to an old inscription, the pavilion to the east of the Phra Mondop had depictions from the beginning of *Rama I Ramakien*, starting with Hiran rolling up the surface of the earth until when Phra Isuan vanquishes Triburam. The narrative sequence continued in the south pavilion with the episode of Nonthok leading to the birth of Thotsakan; this pavilion was destroyed at one point and when rebuilt, the murals and inscription were not restored. The only visible murals remaining are in the west and north pavilions, with those in the west pavilion nearly completely gone, although there are inscriptions that describe the murals, so the content of the paintings is known. The murals in the west pavilion start with Wirunhok causing Mount Krailat to tilt over and then Thotsakan coming to straighten the mountain, and thereafter first taking Phra Uma as his reward, to be exchanged for Nang Montho after Phra Narai, incarnated as an old Brahmin planting trees upside down, convinces him to do so. The murals in this pavilion continue with Phali stealing Nang Montho, resulting in the birth of Ongkhot.

30 “เรื่องรามเกียรติ์ที่จะต่อไปจงไปดูที่พระระเบียงวัดพระศรีรัตนศาสดารามด้านประตูข้างเหนือโน้นเถิด”. Niyada, Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon, 238.

31 Niyada, Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon, 55; Chattri, “Symbolism in the Design of Wat Phra Chetaphon Wimonmangkharam (Wat Pho)”, 5.

32 Chattri, “Symbolism in the Design of Wat Phra Chetaphon Wimonmangkharam (Wat Pho)”, 32.

The murals in the north pavilion start with the scene of Thao Thotsarot going to the forest and then battling Pathutthanta, whereby Nang Kaiyakesi uses her arm to replace the broken axle on the chariot and thus gaining a boon from Thao Thotsarot, which she uses causing the 14 year exile of Phra Ram. The other readily identifiable scenes on these murals include when Nang Arunwadi goes to seduce the rishi, Kalaikot, to stop the drought in Romaphat; the ceremony calling for sons by Thao Thotsarot; and Thotsakan sending Ka Kanasun to steal the celestial rice whereby Nang Sida is born to Nang Montho.³³

It is interesting to note that many of the murals that were painted in these pavilions, both those lost and the few that remain, can also be seen around the gates at Wat Phra Kaeo. As well, it has been said that the former east pavilion at the Phra Mondop contained depictions of the incarnations of Phra Narai,³⁴ which can also be found at the gates at Wat Phra Kaeo. This leads one to wonder if, when the mural paintings in east and south pavilions were lost around the period of Rama V, efforts were taken to reproduce those murals at Wat Phra Kaeo in the available spaces around the gates, as can be seen today.

Another Rama related element at the Phra Mondop are *asura* door guardians holding clubs in the same manner as the *asura* statues at Wat Phra Kaeo that stand guard outside the two corner entrances to the west of the compound of the Phra Mondop – Maiyarap and Saeng Athit at the southwest gate and Sathasun and Khon at the northwest gates. These characters are, except for Maiyarap, relatively obscure and minor characters. At one time, however, there were similar statues at the two other gates – Thotsakan and Sahasadecha at the northeast gate and Intharachit and Suriyapop at the southeast gate, similar pairings as at Wat Phra Kaeo³⁵ – these later statues must have been removed when the pavilion on that side was changed to accommodate the new stupa built by Rama IV.

Somdet Phra Paramanuchit Chinorasa Tripitaka Hall

The Somdet Phra Paramanuchit Chinorasa Tripitaka Hall, located near Tamnak Wasukri and the living quarters of the abbot of the temple, is one of the five Tripitaka pavilions located in the area of the monk's quarters at Wat Phra Chetaphon, in addition to the Phra Mondop described above, all of which were built during the reign of Rama III.³⁶ Inside this building, there are mural paintings of various species of elephants from the Himmaphan Forest, as well as other animals such as horses, cats, buffalo, and star formations.

As well, along the base of the four walls, and four images beneath the windows on the east side, there is a series of *phap chap* images. In total there are 64 frames of characters from the Rama story, including the usual pairings of Phra Ram/Thotsakan and Phra Lak/Intharachit, but also many showing Phra Phrot and Phra Satarut fighting *asura* during the second war against Thao Chakkrawat, which are not

33 See, Chansita, "Study of Mural Paintings of Ramakien at the Sala Thit Mondop", 31-36; Niyada, "The Forgotten Mural Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Phra Chetaphon", 7-8.

34 Niyada, Collection of Inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon, 235, quoting Prince Damrong from an earlier printing of the inscriptions at Wat Phra Chetaphon.

35 As noted on a sign located in the cloister surrounding the Phra Maha Chedi at Wat Phra Chetaphon.

36 Niyada, Somdet Phra Paramanujit Jinorasa Tripitaka Hall, 9.

often displayed. In addition, there are a number of *phap chap* showing pairings of monkey/monkey and celestial/celestial or human/human, some of which may be showing dance poses as they are holding long feathers, or for those holding weapons, practice poses for fighting.

These images were chronicled by Niyada Lausunthorn in a book about this Tripitaka Hall, Niyada Lausunthorn, *Somdet Phra Paramanujit Jinorasa Tripitaka Hall: Study Site of Buddhism and Thai Knowledge at Wat Pho*. However, further study of the images would be warranted to see how they relate to the Rama texts and other depictions. Also, as a matter of note, this hall contains quite a number of lacquerware cabinets which also deserve to be chronicled and studied.

Wat Suthat

Of the Buddhist temples in Bangkok, after Wat Phra Kaeo and Wat Phra Chetaphon, one can find the most depictions of the Rama story at Wat Suthat, an important, first level royal temple that was considered the center of the city at one time. This temple, named after the city of Phra In in Tavatimsa Heaven, was started during the reign of Rama I, with the *ubosot* added during the reign of Rama III.³⁷

Inside the *ubosot*, which is said to be the tallest and longest in Thailand,³⁸ there are three places with representations of the Rama story. The first is in the form of triptychs above the windows along each side and above the two sets of doors at each end of the building. There are 90 paintings in total, in 30 sets of three, each showing depictions of *phap chap* with characters from the Rama story. The sequence of the paintings, starting above the doors behind the principal Buddha image, generally follows the narrative sequence from *Rama I Ramakien*, with just a few minor exceptions. However, since the paintings are all *phap chap*, not every episode is represented, with the focusing being just on fighting scenes.

According to a recent publication by the Fine Arts Department documenting these paintings,³⁹ the paintings were executed in two groups. The first was during the reign of Rama III when the *ubosot* was built in 1847; and the second during the reign of Rama IV when renovations were made to the temple complex. In addition, the Western style frames are said to reflect the growing Western influence on the artisans of that time.⁴⁰

The most significant deviation from *Rama I Ramakien* that can be seen is in panel “No. 31: Hanuman fights Akattalai (ภาพที่ ๓๑ หนุมานรบอากาศดไล)”. As previously described with respect to the stone bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon and at the mural painting at Wat Phra Kaeo, the character of Suea Muang in *Rama I Ramakien* here is called Akattalai [อากาศดไล or อากาศดะไลย์ as spelled in the inscription at Wat Suthat] and is depicted with a woman’s body having two arms and a man’s head with just one face.⁴¹

37 Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat, 41-47; Phiraphat, An architectural study of Wat Suthat Thep Wararam, 52-56.

38 Phiraphat, An architectural study of Wat Suthat Thep Wararam, 55-56.

39 Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat.

40 Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat, 65.

41 Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat, 132-133.

Another set of depictions from the Rama story are located on the door frames of the four doors at the front and back of the *ubosot*. While the mural paintings on the wall of the *ubosot* have been restored, these paintings remain in a state of deterioration, many unreadable. Those that can be deciphered show several scenes: the birth of Nang Sida, Hanuman wooing Wanarin and Suphanamatcha, and Ongkhot and Hanuman meeting Khobot to get the heart of Thotsakan.

The last place that shows a connection with the Rama story is on the inside of the windows and door panels in the form of celestial guardians.⁴² The eight door and 52 window panels depict Hindu deities, with the images primarily regarding the incarnations of Phra Narai (Vishnu). There are at least 11 panels, including one labeled “Phra Ram”, that can be associated with the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*. Although these images appear to have been taken from the various texts on *Narai Sip Pang (Ten Incarnations of Vishnu)*, as described in Chapter 3, and not directly from the narrative of the Rama story, this perhaps shows a common origin.⁴³

Wat Bowonsatansuttawat, Bangkok

Similar to the windows and doors inside the *ubosot* of Wat Suthat, the *ubosot* of Wat Bowonsatansuttawat has depictions of Hindu deities in the form of celestial guardians. Included among these are five that can be associated with the Rama story.⁴⁴ On one door panel there is an image of a female deity with a white *wanon* figure at her feet, which should be depicting when Hanuman was cursed by Phra Uma after damaging her garden.⁴⁵ On the window panels, one shows Phra Narai incarnated as a woman vanquishing Nonthok.⁴⁶ Another panel depicts Thotsakan carrying Phra Uma, with Phra Narai incarnated as an old Brahman planting trees upside down, an episode included in *Rama I Ramakien*.⁴⁷ Next to this panel is one that shows Phra Ram holding a bow standing on the body of Thotsakan, with Hanuman below. Finally, there is a window panel showing Phra Isuan cursing Thotsakan and throwing an elephant tusk at him that remains in his body until he dies.⁴⁸

Buddhaisawan Chapel, Bangkok

In addition to the large lacquerware cabinets previously described in Chapter 4, incorporated into the mural paintings along the walls of the Buddhaisawan Chapel at the National Museum of Bangkok are some images related to the Rama story.

42 Arunsak, *Hindu Deities, Guardians of Buddhist Sites*, 108-173; Phiraphat, *The architectural study of Wat Suthat Thep Wararam*, 81.

43 See Arunsak, *Hindu Deities, Guardians of Buddhist Sites*, specifically door panel 6 (page 116-117) and window panels 6 (124, 126), 9 (128, 130), 27 (146-147), 28 (146-147), 29 (148-149), 32 (150, 152), 33 (153-154), 34 (153, 155), 38 (158-159), 40 (160-161).

44 See Arunsak, *Hindu Deities, Guardians of Buddhist Sites*, door panel 7 (page 188-189) and window panels 2 (204-205), 3 and 4 (206-207), 19 (222-224).

45 *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 67-71.

46 *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 43-51.

47 *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 104-126.

48 *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 142-144.

These murals were first executed during the reign of Rama I in 1795, but were continually restored and updated until the reign of Rama IV.⁴⁹

While the murals depict the Life of the Buddha, there are three places where images associated with the Rama story can be seen. The first is in Bay No. 5 on the north wall, showing Prince Siddhartha leaving his wife and child. To the left of the sleeping wife is a partition screen depicting the scene of Supanamatcha giving birth of Matchanu.⁵⁰ The second depictions can be found in Bay No. 7, along the north wall of the hall, showing the scene of the Buddha Overcoming Mara. As part of Mara's army, Hanuman, Sukhrip and Ongkhot can be seen marching along. Then, after Phra Thorani has caused the flood by wringing her hair, Hanuman is shown in a *phap chap* pose with Matchanu, and Phali can be seen fighting Thoraphi.⁵¹ The last depiction can be seen in Bay 32, in the scene of the fighting over the relics of the Buddha where on the shield of one of the soldiers the face of Hanuman is depicted.⁵²

Manuscript Hall, Wat Rakhang, Bangkok

Wat Rakhang, located on the west side of the Chao Phraya River in Thonburi, was substantially built during the reign of Rama I. At this temple, there is a wooden manuscript hall, *ho trai* [หอไตร], said to have once been part of the residence of Rama I before he became king.⁵³ This hall contains what are considered perhaps the oldest remaining murals paintings of the Rama story from the Rattanakosin period in Bangkok, executed early in the reign of Rama I, thus before the composition of *Rama I Ramakien*.⁵⁴

Although the murals are only faintly visible now, traces of figures of Sukhrip and Kumhakan can be seen, including Sukhrip pulling up a large tree, thus depicting the fight between these two characters, indicating such an episode existed before the composition of Rama I. As well, there is a celestial figure in green color riding a multi-headed elephant. While this could just be Phra In, given the theme of the paintings, this is more likely a depiction of the scene of Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow, with Intharachit transformed to be Phra In riding the false Erawan. There are also other *wanon* and *asura* figures, including Hanuman, Ongkhot and Ramasun, depicted in undecipherable scenes.

Wat Mahathat, Bangkok

Wat Mahathat, located on the west side of Sanam Luang, between the Grand Palace and the National Museum of Bangkok, is one of the oldest temples in Bangkok. Originally from the Ayutthaya period, the temple was rebuilt during the

49 Alongkon, Mural Paintings, Buddhaisawan Royal Throne Hall, 15.

50 Alongkon, Mural Paintings, Buddhaisawan Royal Throne Hall, 56.

51 Alongkon, Mural Paintings, Buddhaisawan Royal Throne Hall, 75-77.

52 Alongkon, Mural Paintings, Buddhaisawan Royal Throne Hall, 199.

53 Naengnoi, The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok, 319; Skilling, "For merit and Nirvana", 83.

54 Buntuean, Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat, 35; Boisselier, Thai Painting, 97; Skilling, "For merit and Nirvana", 83.

reign of Rama I.⁵⁵ On the Phra Mondop, there is a pediment with a wood carving of Phra Lak riding Hanuman.⁵⁶

Wat Arun, Bangkok

Wat Arun, located on the west side of the Chao Phraya River, was started during the Ayutthaya period, but substantially built during the reign of Rama II. Similar to those found at Wat Phra Kaeo, *asura* characters from the Rama story can be seen placed as door guardians.

Wat Phutthaisawan, Ayutthaya

What is considered the oldest evidence of mural paintings from the Rama story can be found in the Residence of Somdet Phra Phutta Khosachan at Wat Phutthaisawan, Ayutthaya.⁵⁷ Dated from the end of the Ayutthaya period, a part of one wall contains a painting depicting Intharachit, clearly distinguishable by green color and small, downward fangs, holding his bow above his head. The faint outline of a human, crowned figure can be seen facing Intharachit, which should likely be Phra Lak, given the close association between these two characters. The other mural paintings in this building are unrelated to the Rama story.

Wat Ratchaburana, Phitsanulok

Wat Ratchaburana, *the* oldest temple in Phitsanulok, can be originally dated from the Sukhothai period, but was continually resorted and expanded during the Ayutthaya period and then renovated during the reign of Rama IV. It was during this last renovation that the mural paintings inside the *ubosot* depicting scenes from the Rama story were added.⁵⁸ This is perhaps the only temple in Thailand where the Rama story serves as the theme of the principal murals inside the *ubosot*, a place usually reserved for more Buddhist-themed depictions such as the Life of the Buddha and the *jātaka* tales.

The walls of the *ubosot* are divided into 18 panels, six on each side wall and three each of on the front and back walls, with multiple scenes on some of the panels. Generally, the panels start about half way up the wall and then are split into two sections, the lower about half-way up the window, and the upper reaching the ceiling, with a caption at the bottom of each panel.

The scenes depicted are from the last part of the war between Phra Ram and Thotsakan. The paintings start from when they battle for the third time up until Hanuman is able to trick the rishi, Khobut, and obtain the heart of Thotsakan. The paintings ends with Thotsakan going to fight for the last time in the guise of Phra In and being killed by Phra Ram.

While generally following the detail in Rama I's narrative, there are a few deviations that perhaps add a flavor of localization. One is an imaging showing

55 Naengnoi, *The Grand Palace and Old Bangkok*, 187.

56 Buntuean, *Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat*, 18.

57 Buntuean, *Paintings of Ramakien at Wat Suthat*, 29.

58 Khwanchai, "A Study of the Ramayana Mural Paintings of the Ubosot of Wat Rajaburana, Phitsanulok".

Hanuman, after he has pretended to join forces with Thotsakan, holding Phra Ram and Phra Lak in the palm of his hands, showing them to Thotsakan. The other is that the heart of Thotsakan is shown as a real, red heart, rather than being enclosed in a casket, as in the narrative.

Wat Pho Bang O, Nonthaburi

On the inside of the windows of Wat Pho Bang O, Nonthaburi, a temple built during the Ayutthaya period and renovated during the reign of Rama III, are *phap chap* images from the Rama story.⁵⁹ These include the usual images of Phra Lak/Intharachit and Phra Ram/Thotsakan, along with other pairings, some showing the *asura* character in the upper position while fight, which is quite unusual. There is also a *phap chap* image of Phali, Montho and Thotsakan, similar to that often seen on the lacquerware cabinets, indicating that knowledge of *Rama I Ramakien* may have been used in creating these images.

Wat Kaeo Phichit, Prachinburi

Wat Kaeo Phichit, Prachinburi, was built in 1879 by a Prachinburi millionaire. In 1918, Chao Phraya Abhaibhubate built a new *ubosot* and incorporated several images from the Rama story.⁶⁰ These include bas-relief stucco *phap chap* images of Phra Ram/Thotsakan and Phra Lak/Intharachit on the front and back walls, albeit with Thotsakan and Intharachit depicted in blue color and Phra Ram in white, a deviation from their usual green. Also, there are stucco images of Hanuman under each window and, on one of the window panels, an image of a monkey figure with closed mouth and three-petal crown, which appears to be Ongkhot. If so, that would make this quite an interesting choice of character to be depicted in this position.

Wat Phra Mahathat, Nakhon Si Thammarat

Wat Phra Mahathat is an important temple in the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The main stupa, built as a symbol of Theravada Buddhism, can be traced to the early 13th century.⁶¹ Beneath the main stupa, there are a series of about 70 paintings of characters from the Rama story, including *wanon*, *asura*, celestial and human figures.

The Buddha Overcoming Mara

In a number of Buddhist-themed murals, characters from the Rama story appear as part of the scene, most prominently in the scene of the Buddha Overcoming Mara, where Hanuman and other characters are often depicted among the troops in Mara's army. In addition to the murals previously described at Wat Phra Kaeo and Buddhaisawan Chapel Hall, other examples of such murals are those inside the *ubosot* at Wat Suwannaram, Wat Bot Sansam, Wat Thong Thammachat and Wat Hua

⁵⁹ "Wat Pho Bang O".

⁶⁰ "Wat Kaeo Phichit, Prachinburi".

⁶¹ "Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan, Nakhon Si Thammarat".

Lampong in Bangkok; Wat Mahathat in Phitsanulok; and Wat Ko Kaeo in Phetchaburi. Further discussion of these murals is included in Chapter 7.

***Nang Yai* – Large Leather Shadow Puppets**

In addition to *khon* masked play performances, the Rama story is integrally associated with the performances of the large shadow puppets, or *nang yai* [หนังใหญ่] in Thai, which can be translated as ‘large leather or hide’. These large leather cut puppets, between 50 and 100 centimeters in size, are made from the hides of animals, generally cattle or buffalo, and cut and scored with holes to create the outline and shape of a character, or characters. The leather cut figures are typically manipulated before a screen with a light source behind, thus creating a shadow that is seen by the audience. There are also variations with the puppets shown in front of the screen, or even in combination with *khon* masked play performers.

The *nang yai* puppets used in Thailand are static figures, without moving parts, as can be seen in the smaller leather puppets called *nang talung* [หนังตะลุง] that can be found in the south of Thailand and in the Malay and Javanese tradition. The puppets are manipulated by long poles that are attached to the figure, either one or two depending on the size of the puppet.

History of *Nang Yai*

It is commonly asserted that live presentations of the Rama story in many areas of South and Southeast Asia likely started with performance of some sort of shadow puppets. First migrating from the southern part of India, the shadow theatre was well developed by the Malay, Javanese and Khmer communities before reaching the areas of present day Thailand.⁶² Which of these three areas exerted the most influence is the subject of much debate amongst historians, leading one to conclude that perhaps the *nang yai* performance media that developed in the area of present day Thailand was an absorption and adaptation from many sources.

References in the literature from the late Sukhothai and early Ayutthaya periods indicate that shadow puppet performances were well established at that time. The Palace Law appears to make reference to shadow theatre performances as part of certain festivities, with references to “...set up screens [ติด หนัง]” and “have screen dancing [เล่นหนังระบำ]”.⁶³ As well, the first part of *Samutakhhot Kham Chan* [สมุทรโฆษคำฉันท์] by Phra Maha Ratchakhru [พระมหาราชครู] makes reference to carving leather skins for use in performance based on the ancient ways.⁶⁴

While there are a number of forms of shadow puppet theatre, *nang yai* is the best known in relation to performance of the Rama story. Prince Dhani notes that *nang yai* must have been popular at one time given the number of leather puppets that

⁶² Sarkar, “The Ramayana in South-east Asia: A General Survey.” 213; Chandra, “Rāmāyana, The Epic of Asia.” 651; Dhaninvat, Shadow Play, 5; Mattani, Dance, Drama, & Theatre in Thailand, 45-46; Nang Yai Wat Khanon, 3.

⁶³ Winai, Palace Law, Royal Anniversary Version, 111, 160.

⁶⁴ “History of Phra Maha Ratchakhru (ประวัติพระมหาราชครู)”.

exist in Thailand and abroad.⁶⁵ In this regard, he published an article chronicling a collection in Germany with over 200 figures.⁶⁶

There is evidence that some of the more popular episodes for performance included Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow and Maiyarap, as well as an episode from the early part of the story involving Thut, Khorn and Trisian, bothers of Thotsakan, who go to fight Phra Ram to avenge the mutilation of their sister, Samanakha. Dhani notes the popularity of this scene:

It is said that the exhibition starting at dusk usually reached the fall of Khorn at midnight when it was a signal to put an end to the screening. Hence the phrase *lomkhorn*, the “fall of Khorn”, came to be used in popular parlance for the “conclusion” of anything.⁶⁷

While Dhani makes a well-reasoned argument that the shadow puppets were the predecessor of *khon* masked play,⁶⁸ Mattani Rutnin makes the argument that these two forms of performance could have developed together.⁶⁹ In any event, the existence of a form of “*khon* before the screen” appears to indicate some blending or transition of the two performance arts.⁷⁰

Mainly the prevue of the royal palace during the Ayutthaya period, during the Rattanakosin period, *nang yai* became more associated with commoners. Many nobles and temples maintained performing troops that were used in celebrations, festivals and ceremonies.⁷¹ Until the early part of the 20th century, *nang yai* performances were a regular part of ceremonies and celebrations. After the introduction of modern forms of entertainment during the reign of Rama VI, performances of *nang yai* became quite rare, having also been mostly superseded by the popularity of *khon* and the difficulty of maintaining a large repertoire of shadow puppets and skilled performers. Only a few museum collections remain, along with the preservation efforts by some temples, such as that of Wat Khanon.

Wat Khanon

Wat Khanon, located on the Maeklong River in Ratchaburi Province, is a well-known temple that was likely built sometime at the beginning of the Rattanakosin period. Almost since its inception, the temple has been associated with *nang yai*. The first significant effort at creating a set of shadow puppets started toward the end of the 19th century, with the first recorded set being that of “Hanuman Offers the Ring” when Hanuman goes in search of Nang Sida in Longka after she has been abducted by Thotsakan. Eventually, after developing a technique to preserve the figures from being damaged by rain and heat, more than 400 shadow puppets from the major characters and scenes to minor figures were created, of which 313 remain today.⁷²

⁶⁵ Dhanivat, *Shadow Play*, 9.

⁶⁶ Dhani, “Hide Figures of the Rāmakien at the Ledermuseum in Offenbach, Germany”.

⁶⁷ Dhanivat, *Shadow Play*, 24.

⁶⁸ Dhani, “The Shadow-Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play”.

⁶⁹ Mattani, *Dance, Drama, & Theatre in Thailand*, 45-46.

⁷⁰ Dhani, “The Shadow-Play as a Possible Origin of the Masked-Play”, 30.

⁷¹ *Nang Yai Wat Khanon*, 5.

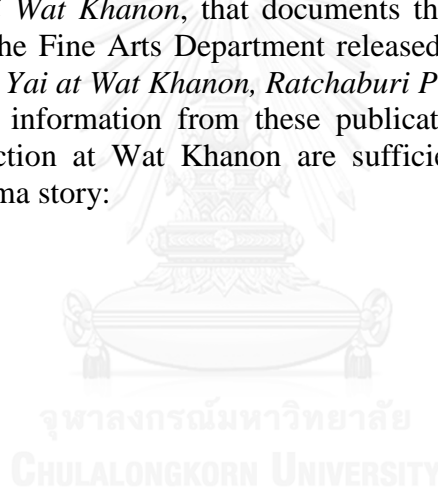
⁷² *Nang Yai Wat Khanon* 11-14.

In 1989, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn initiated the production of a new set of large shadow puppets at Wat Khanon. In total, 313 new figures were created by a team led by Silpakorn University, completed in 1995, and the old figures were preserved in a museum at the temple that was built in 1999. These collections represent the largest and most complete collections of *nang yai* shadow puppets that exist today.⁷³

Since it has already been fairly well-established and accepted that the artistic rendition of the depictions on the lacquerware cabinets is likely related to the artistic depiction in other formats, what is interesting to explore in relation to this research is the narrative episodes that have generally been chosen for performance, as well as the iconic elements that appear on the *nang yai* shadow puppets. Given the focus of this research which is on the narrative aspects of the depictions, comparison of the artistic elements between *nang yai* shadow puppets and the lacquerware cabinets will not be undertaken.⁷⁴

In this case, the collection of *nang yai* shadow puppets from Wat Khanon will be used. Extensive information about Wat Khanon and the collection is available in two publications. This first is a recently released work published by Silpakorn University, *Nang Yai Wat Khanon*, that documents the entire collection of shadow puppets.⁷⁵ As well, the Fine Arts Department released *Compilation of Literature of Performance of Nang Yai at Wat Khanon, Ratchaburi Province*.⁷⁶

Based on the information from these publications, it can be seen that the puppets in the collection at Wat Khanon are sufficient to perform the following episodes from the Rama story:



73 *Nang Yai Wat Khanon* 15-17.

74 In this regard, see the publication by the Fine Arts Department, Ramakien on Lacquerware Cabinets, includes a side-by-side comparison of the depictions on lacquerware cabinets with the stone bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphon, in which the similarity between the posture and manner of the depictions on the lacquerware cabinets and the carvings is detailed. The reason for such similarities can be attributed to the use of master stencils or other forms of master motifs that were likely employed in executing these depictions, and perhaps others. Buntuean, Ramakien on Lacquerware Cabinets, 222-242. Such comparison has also been made with respect to the stone carvings at Lara Jonggrang and shadow puppets in Indonesia. See, Saran, *The Ramayana in Indonesia*, 81-82.

75 *Nang Yai Wat Khanon*.

76 Phaop, *Compilation of Literature of Performance of Nang Yai at Wat Khanon, Ratchaburi Province*.

□

Table 6-1: Comparison of *Nang Yai Wat Khanon* and the Rama Cabinets of the National Library Collection¶

Episode or Scene from <i>Nang Yai Wat Khanon</i> □	Number of Shadow Puppets□	Depicted on National Library Lacquerware Cabinets□	Number of Cabinets with this Scene or Episode□
1.→ Hanuman Offers the Ring□			
▪ Paklan□	8□	Yes□	1□
▪ Hanuman Meets Butsamali□	4□	Yes□	3□
▪ Sambadi□	5□	Yes□	2□
▪ Hanuman fights Phi Sura Samut□	4□	Yes□	1□
▪ Hanuman Meets Phra Narot□	5□	Yes□	1□
▪ Hanuman Fights Akattalai□	4□	No□	-□
▪ Hanuman Searches Longka□	5□	No□	-□
▪ Thotsakan Goes to Nang Sida□	2□	Yes□	1□
▪ Hanuman Offers the Ring□	3□	Yes□	3□
▪ Sahatsakuman Goes to Fight□	11□	Yes□	1□
▪ Hanuman Burns Longka□	19□	No□	-□
▪ The First Battle with Intharachit□	11□	Yes□	4□
▪ Mangkornkan Goes to Fight□	17□	Yes□	14□
▪ Battle with Wirunmuk□	16□	No□	-□
▪ Nagabat□	15□	Yes□	5□
▪ Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow□	25□	Yes□	10□
▪ Fifth Battle with Thotsakan□	12□	No□	-□
▪ Hanuman Volunteers□	□	□	□
▪ Hanuman Gets Thotsakan's Heart□	5□	Yes□	1□
▪ Hanuman Pretends to Fight Phra Lak□	9□	Yes□	5□
▪ Hanuman Tricks Thotsakan To Go Fight□	2□	Yes□	5□
▪ Thotsakan Bids Farewell and Dies□	10□	Yes□	6□
▪ Battle with Banlaikan□	10□	No□	-□

¶

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

As can be seen from Table 6-1, some of these episodes have many scenes that make up an entire episode, such as Hanuman Offers the Ring, although the number of scenes does not necessarily strictly follow the standard narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*. As well, some episodes are no longer performed either because the old libretto is too difficult or there is a belief against performing that episode, particularly Thotsakan Bids Farewell and Dies, which is never performed today in *khon* as well.

Of these ten episodes, only seven appear in whole or in part on the Rama Cabinets in the National Library Collection, with no depiction on the cabinets of the Battle of Wirunmuk, the Fifth Battle with Thotsakan or the Battle with Banlaikan. For the seven episodes that do appear in part or in whole, only two appear on the cabinets in any significant number, Mangkornkan Goes to Fight and Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow. This would appear to indicate that there is little link between the narrative element of *nang yai* and the depictions on the lacquerware cabinets that are the subject of this research. This may be because the *nang yai* puppets are from a later period, having been first created toward the middle of the Rattanakosin period during the reign of Rama V, while the lacquerware cabinets are mainly from an earlier period. Accordingly, the popularity of certain episodes might have changed.

However, what is clear from the scope and type of episodes in the *nang yai* collection at Wat Khanon and the Rama Cabinets is the emphasis on battle scenes, especially showing direct fighting between the main characters in *phap chap* poses. Other than scenes of Hanuman Offers the Ring and Hanuman Volunteers, all the *nang yai* scenes are of fighting. This is similar to the episodes depicted on the cabinets, where a large portion of the episodes are of fighting scenes.

For the two scenes that were analyzed in Chapter 5 that also appear in the *nang yai* of Wat Khanon – Mangkornkan Goes to Fight and Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow – a comparison of the puppets and cabinets indicates that there are some iconic elements that appear in both, showing that these particular elements are quite important in portraying these episodes.

For Mangkornkan Goes to Fight, the most represent iconic element on the Rama Cabinets is the image of *phap chap* between Mangkornkan and Phra Ram, appearing on 66.67% of the cabinets with this episode. As well, for the *nang yai* puppets, there are three separate shadow puppets showing similar *phap chap*, indicating that the image of hand-to-hand combat between these two characters is quite well-developed. Another iconic element on the cabinets and the shadow puppets is the presence of the *wanon* character, Kesonthamala, which, as previously discussed, is an extra-textual element included in the depictions of this scene. On the lacquerware cabinets, this element appears four times, and there are five shadow puppets in the *nang yai* of Wat Khanon that have some connection with Kesonthamala. This would appear to indicate that this iconic element was quite strongly connected with this episode.⁷⁷ One narrative element that appears in the shadow puppets, as well as the Rama II narrative, but not on the Rama Cabinets, is the manifestation by Phra Ram as Phra Narai with four arms holding his attributes after he is struck by the arrow of Mangkornkan that pierces his armour. Since this element is not part of *Rama I Ramakien*, this would appear to indicate that the Rama I narrative was used more to create the depictions on the Rama Cabinets, while the narrative of Rama II may have been used for the creation of the *nang yai* episode.

For the episode of Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow, Intharachit as Phra In on the false Erawan appears on two shadow puppets, as well as there being one shadow puppet that shows Hanuman attacking the false Erawan, which are also the most represented depictions on the Rama Cabinets. As well, the image of Phra Lak being struck by the Phrommat Arrow and/or fallen on the battlefield is well represented in both the *nang yai* puppets and on the cabinets. Another iconic element of this episode is Hanuman carrying the mountain with the medicinal herbs needed to cure Phra Lak, which appears on several cabinets and three shadow puppets. However, one significant departure between the narrative as depicted on the cabinets and in the *nang yai* puppets of Wat Khanon is that on the cabinets there are a few depictions of the scene of Nang Sida riding the Busabok Kaeo chariot in which she is taken to the battlefield to see Phra Ram and Phra Lak fallen on the battlefield in the hopes by Thotsakan that she will think they are dead and acquiesce to his advances. In

⁷⁷ It is interesting to note, however, that in the recent royal khon performance of the scene of Mangkornkan, in this case as part of the production of the Phrommat episode following the narrative of Rama II, Kesonthamala does not appear. See Royal Khon Performance “Battle of Indrajit: Episode of Prommas”.

an apparent local adaptation, this element, which is in *Rama I Ramakien* and Rama II's narrative, is included in the episode of Nagabat at Wat Khanon.

Therefore, we can see that while there is some overlap in the narrative focus and in the iconic elements used to depict these episodes, there is quite a bit of departure as well. The lacquerware cabinets that form the basis for this research appear to follow the textual narrative sources more closely, while the *nang yai* shadow puppets of Wat Khanon have more deviation and adaptation. This perhaps can be explained by the fact that the shadow puppets are for dramatic performance purposes, thus more dramatic elements have been introduced, particularly ones that have become a standard part of the performance repertoire. The shadow puppets are also primarily for entertainment purposes, although sometimes used in sacred or ceremonial settings, while the lacquerware cabinets were created to hold the sacred Buddhist scriptures.

Another factor that might impact the depictions on the cabinets and the shadow puppets is that fact that the shadow puppets are intended to present narrative sequence in the form of a performance. However, the cabinets, for the most part, only show one scene of an episode in a representative manner. Thus many more elements of the narrative are presented in the shadow puppets than on the cabinets, allowing for a fuller development of the depiction of the episode.

Having looked at the background of the Rama story, both in general and in a Thai context, as well as having detailed the depictions on both the lacquerware cabinets and elsewhere, attention will turn to the significance of the Rama story as used in these settings.

Chapter 7: Significance of the Rama Story on Thai Lacquerware Cabinets

As detailed in Chapter 3, the Rama story has had a long and intimate association with Thai identified societies, having been both an influence on, and been influenced by, the culture and social environment. We have also seen that the Rama story has been used extensively in depictions on both lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scriptures and in and around Buddhist temples. The question then arises as to why this story, notwithstanding its 'Hindu-identified' nature, has been used so widely in such clearly Buddhist settings. Of course, we can never be exactly sure of the reason since the artisans and sponsors did not leave any records of how or why they chose any particular element to adorn their work. However, if we look at certain factors and circumstances, a reasoned hypothesis can be formulated. In order to do that, we first need to look at the close association between this tale and Buddhism, and then at the association between the ruling monarch in Thai society, Buddhism and the Rama story, particularly the lead character, Phra Ram.

The Association of *Rama I Ramakien* with Buddhism

Unlike in India, where most of the texts associated with the Rama story are considered to be of a 'religious' nature, and perhaps even 'sacred', the Thai Rama story does not have any such clear religious or sacred association. However, given the fact that Buddhism, particularly Theravada Buddhism, has so thoroughly infused Thai culture and society, it is not surprising that *Rama I Ramakien* has taken on many elements associated with Buddhism.

As with many elements of Thai culture, tradition and customs, including many pieces of Thai classical literature, there is considerable adoption, absorption and adaptation of outside elements, both religious and otherwise. This is clearly evidenced by the presence of many Hindu identified deities in sacred Buddhist settings, such as Buddhist temples, with Phra Narai (Vishnu) and Phra In (Indra) being the most prominent examples. Justin McDaniel notes: "Hindu images in Thailand are part of Buddhist culture...Thai Buddhists have long been open to honouring and imaging a panoply of religious figures, regardless of religious affiliation. Buddhist shrines in Thailand commonly mix Hindu and Buddhist deities...."¹ Nathan McGovern puts this succinctly by stating: "Thailand, in particular, provides an excellent example of the way in which the boundaries between 'Buddhism' and 'Hinduism'... are often strained in an actual Asian context."²

Many scholars are want to label this situation 'synchronization', although others have objected to this term and would rather consider this as creating something new out of many disparate elements. While that subject is a much larger and more complex topic than can be addressed here, there are a number of elements associated with the *Rama I Ramakien* that illustrate this point. It should be noted that there are

¹ McDaniel, "This Hindu holy man is a Thai Buddhist", 317-318.

² "Intersections Between Buddhism and Hinduism in Thailand".

other texts in Thai associated with the Rama story that have clearer connections with Buddhism, such as those in the north and northeast. However, given the fact that the depictions on the lacquerware cabinets that are the subject of this research can be fairly clearly associated with *Rama I Ramakien*, as detailed in Chapter 5, the following discussion will focus on that narrative.

Rama I Ramakien is, for the most part, a description of one of the classic Hindu incarnations of Phra Narai (Vishnu) as Phra Ram (Rama) to overcome some trouble or problem in the world, similar to the other incarnations of Vishnu in Hindu mythology. The story includes prominent roles for the important and familiar gods in the traditional Hindu pantheon: Phra Isuan (Shiva), Phra Narai (Vishnu), Phra Phrom (Brahma), Phra In (Indra), and Phra Athit (Suriya). As well, *Rama I Ramakien* is full of Hindu associated elements, such as *rishi*, brahmins, other major and minor Hindu deities, as well as description of other incarnations of Phra Narai. There is no overt mention of the Buddha, Buddhism, or other elements of Buddhism, such as Buddhist monks. In fact, the composers of the narrative appear to have gone out of their way to avoid explicit references to Buddhism.

However, Rama I was a devotee Buddhist and undertook many important and serious activities to foster and uphold Buddhism, including restoring the Tripitaka, the Buddhist canon, and Traiphum, the Buddhist cosmological text. Furthermore, while the identity of the actual authors of *Rama I Ramakien* are not known, it is likely most of them were devotee Buddhist as well, although some court Brahmins may have been included in this group. Accordingly, it is not surprising that certain elements of Buddhism have seeped into the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien*. Mattani Rattanin writes: “Given the strong religious philosophical aspect of Valmiki’s Ramayana, particularly being Vishnuism, if the local people were not followers of Hindu Vishnuism, then they were less likely to adopt the written texts, but rather to accept oral renditions that would be adapted to suit the local religious beliefs...,”³ those local beliefs in a Thai context being Buddhism.

Phra In (Indra) and *Rama I Ramakien*

Phra In (Indra) has a long association with Thai identified societies, appearing in literary works even before the Sukhothai period.⁴ In traditional Thai cosmology, Phra In is considered the most important deity, residing in Tavatimsa Heaven atop Mount Sumaru, the center of the universe, where he sometimes preaches the Dhamma.⁵ In Thai Buddhism, he is the primary supporter of the Buddha in his last life, as well as previous lives as the Bodhisattva, helping him in times of need.⁶

In *Rama I Ramakien*, Phra In has a varied and active role, similar to his role in traditional *jātakas*. He appears in about 20% of the scenes, far more than any of the other deities, such as Phra Isuan. He acts in a wide variety of roles: as a facilitator presiding over ceremonies, such as Phra Ram’s wedding and coronation, or acting as witness and attester of the truth; as a messenger, including waking up Phra Narai when it is time for him to incarnate as Phra Ram; as a saviour, primarily helping Phra

3 Mattani, “An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana, Part 1”, 119

4 Kuapan, “The God Indra in Sanskrit, Pali and Thai Literature”, Abstract.

5 Reynolds, Three Worlds According to King Ruang , 217-238.

6 See: Santi, Phra In.

Ram or Nang Sida in times of need; as a creator overseeing the formation of the city of Ayuthaya, as well as other cities; and even in his traditional Indian role as a fighter doing battle with, and losing to, Intharachit, the son of the principal antagonist, Thotsakan (Ravana), as a result of which, Intharachit (Indrajit) obtains his name. However, the composers of *Rama I Ramakien* appear to have recognized the Hindu nature of the story and retained the traditional Hindu hierarchy of deities, with Phra Isuan at the top, Phra Narai and Phra Phrom next, with Phra In at a lower position.

Sathiankoset in *Upakon Ramakien* notes: "...in *Ramakien* there are some unique aspects. For example, when some serious incident occurs in various episodes, Phra In will come down to help...it seems this takes and incorporates Buddhist concepts that have permeated the thoughts."⁷ All of this suggests aspects of Buddhist sensibilities in this rendering of the Rama story.

Buddhist Principles Reflected in *Ramakien*

Perhaps reflecting the thoroughly infused nature of Buddhism in Thai culture and society, most pieces of classical literature in Thai, including *Rama I Ramakien* and *Inao*, contain frequent references by many of the characters to some of the basic tenants of Buddhist philosophy. While some of these philosophical principles, including impermanence, suffering and karma, can perhaps be interpreted in a Hindu context, they often appear to be more representing core Buddhist concepts. Mattani points this out by stating:

"The fun and exciting parts of *Ramakien* conceal the true message that life is suffering and this is true for everyone, including Phra Ram and Sida, who are avatars of gods, who are also subject to the suffering. The other strong element of Buddhist philosophy that is emphasised in *Ramakien* is 'actions have consequences', which every character realizes and professes as the truth in the end. Even Thotsakan knows this in the end, showing that he is not just the personification of evil, but realized the Dhamma in the end."⁸

Satya Vrat Shatri and Pandit Manmohan Nath Dar have made an interesting point regarding the principle of karma as it relates to Hinduism and Buddhism, which highlights the point of how Buddhist tenants are represented in *Rama I Ramakien*:

One may argue that the Hindu society believes in the Law of Karma also, yet the meaning of Karma in Hinduism is different from the Buddhist Karma. The obvious difference can be seen from the Hindu notion that different varnas follow different dharmas and hence doing the same thing may not have the same result...in Buddhism, the law of Karma is the same for everyone"⁹

In *Rama I Ramakien*, the various types of characters, from the highest to the lowest, proclaim the principles of impermanence, suffering and fate govern their lives.

⁷ Sathiankoset, *Upakon Ramakien*, 151.

⁸ Mattani, "An Analysis of the Path of Ramayana, Part 1", 131.

⁹ Shastri, "The *Ramakien* and the Valmiki *Ramayana*: A Study in Comparison", 29.

This would appear to indicate that the concept of karma is expressed in a Buddhist, rather than a Hindu sense, and supports the notion that Rama I's narrative has strong Buddhist sensibilities.

Rama as Bodhisattva

With respect to renderings of the Rama story other than *Rama I Ramakien*, there is evidence that there is a more overt association of the narrative with Buddhism. In addition to certain regional tellings of the Rama story, including the Khmer and certain versions in the north and northeast part of Thailand, in earlier renditions of the Rama saga in Ayutthaya, Phra Ram was recognized as a Bodhisattva. In the Ayutthayan texts, Phra Ram is referred to as “Phra Phutta Phong [พระพุทฺธพงศ์]”,¹⁰ which might be roughly translated as ‘one in the lineage of the Buddha’. Furthermore, U Aung Htin, in describing Burmese drama, states:

Rama was taken to be a Future-Buddha...therefore, whereas the Hindu *Ramayana* was a religious epic, the Siamese play became merely a dramatized *Jataka* Birth Story...when the Burmese conquered Siam in 1767, they were able to take the play [the Rama epic] with them for various reasons. The play was to both nations a *Jataka* story.¹¹

In Myanmar, there are some renditions of the Rama story today in which Rama is considered a Bodhisattva, which most likely is a legacy of certain texts brought back from Ayutthaya, thus further indicating that the Rama story, with elements of a *jātaka* and Rama as the Bodhisattva, was more widespread during the Ayutthaya period. Additional evidence of the more overt Buddhist nature of the Rama story during the pre-Rama I period is the *Taksin Ramakien*, of which Prince Dhani says that, while the poetry is crude, is noteworthy for its “frequent allusions to Buddhist metaphysics in the dialogues.”¹²

A Hindu-Identified Narrative with Buddhist Sensibilities

Therefore, we can see that *Rama I Ramakien*, while being ostensibly and on its surface a Hindu-identified narrative, has many associations and connections with Buddhism. Not only references in the narrative to common Buddhist tenants and beliefs, but also the use of the Rama story in sacred Buddhist settings, such as temples and on lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scripture. As Forest McGill and Pattaratorn Chirapravati put it: “...the legends of Rama could be interpreted in Buddhist terms and seen as occurring in a Buddhist context... .”¹³ Accordingly, it is perhaps not entirely accurate to call *Rama I Ramakien* a ‘non-Buddhist’ narrative given its history and how it has been perceived. One might venture to classify the narrative as a ‘Hindu-identified narrative with Buddhist sensibilities.’ For this reason, it is not surprising that the Rama story has had a

¹⁰ Sujit, “A Ramakien Dance Drama from the Ayutthaya Period”, 23.

¹¹ Htin, *Burmese Drama*, 37, 43.

¹² Dhani, “Review of Books-The Ramakien of King of Thonburi”, 83.

¹³ McGill, *The Kingdom of Siam*, 166.

significant impact and been widely accepted and adopted in Thai Buddhist culture and society.

The Association between Phra Ram, the King and Buddhism

Having established that the Rama story, particularly *Rama I Ramakien*, is a tale thoroughly infused with Buddhist elements, the implication of this in relation to the role of the king in Thai society will now be explored. This necessitates an understanding of the role of the king with respect to Buddhism, the king in his divine role, as well as the relationship between the king, Phra Ram and the Rama story.

It has long been established that the Thai kings could be looked at to carry out a number of roles in fulfilling their duties as the ruling monarch. Three of these can be identified as *Devaraja*, *Buddharaja* and *Dhammaraja*.

***Devaraja* – The King as Identified with Phra Narai**

The recognition of kings in South and Southeast Asia as having divine origins, particularly being associated with the Hindu deities, either by comparison with or as an incarnation of, has been well established. Robert Goldman makes this clear by stating Asian rulers are “a *bhumyam devah*, a god on earth – who may be viewed as a composite of the *lokapalas*, the divine world guardians...”¹⁴

In a Thai context, the aspect of the king’s divinity is connected with the Brahman influenced coronation ceremony for kings in which the principal gods, Phra Isuan and Phra Narai, are invited ‘to animate’ the new king.¹⁵ As part of the coronation ceremony, the eight weapons of sovereignty are presented to the king, including “Trident and Discus...attributes of the gods Siva and Visnu, and symbolize the king’s identification with those gods.”¹⁶

Phra Narai is the one who incarnates, including his incarnation as Phra Ram, to bring peace and order to the universe and protect the people from evil and injustice. This is the traditional role of the Thai king as well, and thus the connection between Phra Narai and the king is clear. Suchit Wongthet explains one way of seeing that this concept was well established in the early Ayutthaya period is by examining the use of royal ceremonial barges in the form of a naga used for the funeral ceremonies of the kings: “Accordingly, when the ruler passed away, a naga boat would be built to carry the body along the river, similar to Phra Narai sleeping on the back of Anantanakkarat.”¹⁷ Furthermore, in the current Rattanakosin period, the very name of the current ruling dynasty, Chakri [จักรี], comes from a reference one of his attributes of Phra Narai, the discus (*chakra* – จักร), and shows another close connection between the kings and Phra Narai.

14 Goldman, “A Tale for All Regions, A Text for All Seasons”, 17.

15 Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, 31; Reynolds, “Sacral Kingship and National Development”, 101.

16 Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, 106.

17 Suchit, *Royal Barges and Barge Processions, Where Do They Come From?*, 42-44.

Buddharaja – The King as a Bodhisattva

The Thai kings have frequently been recognized, or even self-identified, as a Bodhisattva, a superior person who has accumulated enough merit to be not only the supreme ruler, but also a buddha to be. This idea of the king as a Bodhisattva, as a descendant of the Buddha, or even as the Buddha himself, has a long history. The beginning of the chronicles of a Dutch merchant named Jeremias Van Vliet entitled “The Short History of Occurrences in the Past and the Succession of the Kings of Siam as Far as is Known from the Old Histories”,¹⁸ who wrote about Ayutthaya between 1636 and 1640, recounts how the people believed that the first king of Ayutthaya was the Buddha and, accordingly “...the Siamese kings are not addressed with anything less than with the name of Phra Phuttha Chao.” He explains how the people believed that the first king also made the law and established the religion and how the subsequent kings were accepted as the successors of the Buddha.¹⁹

Rama I is a prime example of a ruler who took his role and duty to foster and protect Buddhism to heart. He was a devout Buddhist and undertook many important and serious activities to uphold Buddhism, which he considered to be in decline when he assumed the throne. Some of his first acts were to restore the Tripitaka, the Buddhist canon, and Traiphum, the Buddhist cosmological text. Baker and Pasuk make this further clear when they state:

The new Bangkok monarchy was celebrated as defenders of Buddhism against the destruction (though Buddhist) Burmese...The king thus had not only to build and protect Buddhism from enemies, but also to undertake other ‘royal duties.’ Most of all, he had to prevent the decline and eventual eclipse of Buddhism as foretold in the texts, especially by periodically purifying the Sangha, and making corrected recensions of the texts.²⁰

Rama I not only saw that it was his royal role to restore Buddhism, but he appears to have fully embraced the idea of being a Bodhisattva. David Wyatt states, when discussing the efforts of Rama I in the early part of his reign:

As the patron and protector of Buddhism in his kingdom, the king considered it his responsibility to provide a framework, legal and institutional, in which monks could fulfill their responsibilities in order that the moral decay of the age might be arrested and Buddhism might again flourish...Particularly striking are the parallels drawn between the Bodhisatta – the King, the Great Elect – and King Rama I. Both arose out of troubled times in order to create moral order.²¹

As further evidence of how the Thai kings during the early Rattanakosin period embraced this role, both Rama I and Rama III were very active sponsors of the building and restoration of many important temples, including Wat Phra Kaeo, Wat

¹⁸ Baker, Van Vliet’s Siam, 195-244.

¹⁹ Baker, Van Vliet’s Siam, 197.

²⁰ Baker, A History of Thailand, 32. See also: Dhani, “The Reconstruction of Rama I” and “The Old Siamese conception of the Monarchy”.

²¹ Wyatt, “The ‘Subtle Revolution’ of King Rama I of Siam”, 23, 26.

Phra Chetaphun and Wat Suthat. In this regard, it should be noted that these temples incorporate depictions and representations of the Rama story into their design and adornment, as previously discussed. It is also during this part of the early Rattanakosin period that most of the gold lacquerware cabinets that form the basis of this proposed study were created.

Dhammaraja – The King as Protector and Guardian of Buddhism

It has long been established that the rulers of Thai-identified territories during the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods have been looked at and expected to govern with dhamma. They have been expected both to propagate and protect Buddhism as part of their role and duty as the ruler. In this role, the ruling monarch has typically been the primary force in fostering and ensuring that Buddhism flourishes in the areas under their command. In addition to the propagation of Buddhism, the king has been tasked with preserving the religion from evil forces bent on making the faith impure or from decay from within.²² The activities he might engage in include building monasteries, sponsoring the production of Buddhist texts, and overseeing the proper conduct of monks.

Furthermore, as part of the royal coronation ceremony, the king makes a pledge to protect the religion. H. G. Quaritch Wales, in describing the coronation ceremony of Rama VII, noting that this ceremony was likely very similar to those of earlier kings, explains that at one point in the long ceremony:

The Pandit for this point advanced to the foot of the throne, and having made due obeisance addressed the King in Pali to the following effect – ‘...may he remain on earth further protecting the kingdom, as well as her Buddhist Religion and her people.’²³

Reference to these three principals, *Devaraja*, *Buddharaja*, and *Dhammaraja*, can all be found in the Invocation to *Rama I Ramakien*, emphasizing and affirming the application and recognition of Rama I in these roles:

- *Devaraja*: There is a comparison between Rama I and Phra Narai: “...like Phra Narai.”²⁴
- *Buddharaja*: As a Bodhisattva: “Cultivating the path of a śraddhādhika bodhisattva, one predominate in faith, Having the intention to be the omniscient one.”²⁵
- *Dhammaraja*: As a defender of Buddhism: “His Majesty is the defender of the faith.”²⁶

²² See Reynolds, “Sacral Kingship and National Development”, 100-101.

²³ Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, 78-79. Also, Baker and Pasuk, in their translation of the *Palace Law of Ayutthaya*, state: “The ceremony today is based on a form recreated by King Rama I from memories of the practice in late Ayutthaya.” Baker, *The Palace Law of Ayutthaya and the Thammasat*, 70.

²⁴ *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 1: “ปางพระนารายณ์”.

²⁵ *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 1: “ศรัทธาธิกบำเพ็ญ, ปองเป็นพระสรรเพชญ”.

²⁶ *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 1, 1: “พระองค์เป็นศาสนูปถัมภก”.

These references, so clearly associated with the narrative of the Rama story, as well as many other elements, can lead to the identification of the Thai king with a fourth element – *Ramaraja*.

***Ramaraja* – The King as Identified with Phra Ram**

The connection between Phra Narai and the king in a Thai context clearly highlights the association with Phra Ram, the incarnation of Phra Narai. Srisurang Poolthupya, the well-known scholar on Thai culture and *Ramakien*, makes the observation regarding this concept by stating: “In addition to Buddhist virtues, the king should strive to make his rule resemble Ramarajya or the ideal reign of Rama regarded as the golden age... the king is divine like Rama in the Ramayana and the Ramakien and he must strive to be as good as Rama.”²⁷

This idea can be seen both symbolically and through various pieces of literature that have been composed over the years. As noted earlier, one of clear symbolic connections has been with the selection of names which incorporate some reference to Rama or Phra Narai as used by the royal rulers of the Thai-identified kingdoms, from the most famous of the rulers of the Sukhothai realm, King Ramkamhaeng, to the monarchs of the recent Chakri reign.

As detailed in Chapter 3, we can see that Phra Ram has been associated with the ruler in many pieces of Thai literature, from the Ayutthaya period onwards. One such piece is *Lilit Defeating the Yuan* where the king is compared to Phra Ram. In *Verses in Homage to the Ruler of Thonburi*, the fighting ability of Taksin is compared to Phra Ram. There are many references from the early Rattanakosin period, including *Verses in Homage to King Rama I* and *Nipphan Wang Na*, showing the close connection with the Rama story at that time.

Another interesting connection between the king and Phra Ram can be seen in the tradition of the royal barges previously described. Given the many barges with head ornaments representing the simian army that assisted Phra Ram in his fight, the symbolism of the king riding in such a procession is obvious.²⁸ In this regard, it might be noted that Rama I was quite active in restoring and establishing the tradition of many of the vessels that we see today.

With respect to *Rama I Ramakien*, John Cadet described this narrative as the “scepter”, that is, the royal imperial power or authority of the Thai monarchy.²⁹ As well, many have pointed out the portrayal of Phra Ram as the ideal king, a ruler who upholds the ten kingly virtues, essentially making Phra Ram and Rama I, the sponsor of this rendition of the Rama story, and subsequent rulers, one in the same.

Some further quotes from leading researchers on this subject reinforce this concept:

Srisurang: “The Ramakien reflects the custom of reverence for the king in the form of Rama.”³⁰

27 Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 271.

28 See Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, 113.

29 Cadet, *The Ramakien*, 23.

30 Srisurang, “Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien”, 5.

Quaritch Wales: “With an education still almost confined to the religious sphere, and bred up on the exploits of the Indian hero Rama, the conception of a king as a superior being, to be obeyed implicitly, is the only one known to the ordinary Siamese.”³¹

Maneepin: “The most important element between Ramakien and the political structure governing Thailand is the fact that Thai people uphold the king as a ruler in the same family lineage as Phra Ram...Thais will praise the king that he is intelligent, courageous, capable like Phra Ram. In fact, for Thais, the Thai king is Phra Ram.”³²

Frank Reynolds: “...the fact that at a very early point in its history the Chakri dynasty chose to identify itself with the figure of Rāma.”³³

Another factor that should be taken into account when analyzing the relationship between the king and Phra Ram is the fact that the Rama story has been generally considered as a part of the king’s royal regalia. In Thai this is usually referred to as “*rachupaphok* [ราชูปโภค] or *rachopaphok* [ราชูปโภค]”, literally, “equipment of the monarch”.³⁴ This is evident from an early period when performances of the Rama story were only undertaken in the royal palace as part of the *lakorn nai*, inner court plays. This is also evident, particularly from the time of Rama I, by versions of the Rama story in Thai being almost exclusively royal compositions, *phra ratcha niphon* [พระราชนิพนธ์]. Other than some libretto for *khon* and *nang yai* performance, all the major texts, other than regional and local versions, of the Rama story were written directly by or under the sponsorship of the ruling monarch.³⁵ In this regard, the Rama story was considered intimately associated with the monarch, making use of the narrative a form of high art, as well as something venerable and auspicious. This also further highlights the connection between the king and Phra Ram.

Phra Ram as the Guardian of Buddhism

While the role of the Hindu deities with respect to Buddhism is varied, what is certainly clear is their role as a guardian and protector. Dietrick Seckel, when discussing deities in Buddhist art, notes:

Ancient Indian deities were taken over by Buddhists, who entrusted them with various functions: to bring good fortune and aid in times of distress, to promote good and ward off evil, to ensure due order in the natural and moral world, and above all to protect and worship the Buddha, his doctrine and the Buddhist community.³⁶

31 Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, 32.

32 Maneepin, “The Ramakien and Thai Cultural Life,” 169.

33 Reynolds, “The Holy Emerald Jewel”, 185.

34 Dictionary of the Royal Institute, 951: “เครื่องใช้สอยของพระราชอา”.

35 See Chapter 3.

36 Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, 243-244.

In the Thai context, it has been noted that “this situation came about from the belief that Hindu deities have great power and sacred force giving them the necessary attributes to act as guardians defending against evil elements.”³⁷ In this regard, the role of Phra In, as discussed above, and Phra Phrom is well established, as well as the clear role of the relationship between Phra Narai and Buddhism, as can be seen in the many uses of his image on the Buddhist temples and elsewhere.

Furthermore, the role of Phra Narai, in his incarnation as Phra Ram, as a guardian and protector, is quite well established, and can be traced to the origin of Vishnu in Indian Hinduism. One of Vishnu’s 1,000 names, and the one that forms the basis of his popular name in Thai, is Narayana, which is said to mean “...he who is the abode of ‘*nār* (= ether)’, i.e., the whole universe’s shelter.”³⁸

The principal reason for Phra Narai to incarnate as Phra Ram, as well as in his many other incarnations, is to bring peace and order to the world and vanquish the evilness causing some sort of trouble. Thus, Phra Narai in his many incarnations is always looked upon as the great preserver of the world, protecting all living beings from wickedness. This is continually reinforced in the narrative of *Rama I Ramakien* by the use of the suffix *rak* [รักษ], meaning “defend, protect, safeguard [ป้องกัน]; preserve, conserve [สงวนไว้],”³⁹ that is added to some of the many variations of the name for Phra Ram.⁴⁰ As well, Phra Ram is often referred to as “the preserver of the world [พระทรงภพโลก]”.

As seen in the water oath ceremony established in the early Ayutthaya period, Phra Ram is called upon to be a witness and thus give legitimacy and protection to those taking the oath. As well, there have been many pieces of literature from many periods that stress his power and, thus protective quality, of Phra Ram. Examples include *Verses in Homage to King Rama I*, *Nipphan Wang Na*, and *Nirat Verses of Chachoengsao*.⁴¹

Celestial Door Guardians

A possible further clue to the recognition of the role of Phra Ram as a guardian and protector lies in the use of his image in the form of a ‘celestial door guardian’. Such celestial door guardians, *thep thewaraban* in Thai, have been used since the early Ayutthaya period, frequently appeared in many forms and manner on the outside and sometimes inside the doors and windows of sacred and important buildings.

As detailed in Chapter 6, the Rama story, in some form or another, has been used as the basis for the depiction of many celestial door guardians appearing on the windows and doors of numerous temples. This includes Wat Phra Kaeo, Wat Suthat,

37 Arunsak, *Hindu Deities, Guardians of Buddhist Sites*, 15.

38 “Vishnu sahasranama”.

39 Dictionary of the Royal Institute 2542, 938; Tianchai, *A New Thai English Dictionary*, 847.

40 This includes Phra Harirak [พระหริรักษ], Phra Kritsanurak [พระกฤษณรักษ], Phra Phitsanurak [พระพิษณรักษ], and Phra Saritrak [พระสฤษฐ์รักษ / พระสฤษฐดิรักษ]

41 Chamniwohan, *Verses in Homage to King Rama I*; “Nipphan Wang Na”; “Nirat Verses of Chachoengsao”.

Wat Phra Chetaphun, Wat Bowonsatansuttawat, Wat Pho Bang O, Wat Kaeo Phichit, and Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. Wat Suthat is particularly interesting in the use of both celestial door guardians on the inside of the doors and windows of the *ubosot*, mainly taken from the many incarnations of Phra Narai, as well as the placement of *phap chap* images from the Rama story above the windows: “These figures serve the purpose as guardians of the temple, similar to those in the wihan.”⁴²

Given the similarity between the doors on the cabinets and doors on a temple, and the sacred nature of what was contained inside the cabinets, that is the Buddhist scripture, the concept of door guardians was adopted for use on the lacquerware cabinets, appearing on about 10% of the cabinets. As detailed in Chapter 5, the image of Phra Ram in the form of celestial door guardian appears on nine of the Rama Cabinets.

One could say that these celestial door guardians were included on the cabinets in order to act as guardians of the sacred scriptures contained inside the cabinets, and by analogy, to guard and protect Buddhism in general. Helmut Loofs-Wissowa, describing the development of door guardians from the early periods, noted: “Thus, door-guardians were guarding something very important and very precious. Not unlike the later development in Buddhism, where they were supposed to guard the Buddha Himself, *dvarapala* were thought in Hinduism to guard nothing less than a divinity.”⁴³

Similar to the celestial door guardians on the windows and doors of temples, the placement of statues at the gates to the Buddhist temples can be considered to have equivalent meaning and purpose. Seckel notes the origin of these figures, called *Dvārapāla*, from ancient India and the Far East having been derived from the Indian *yaksa* and “...is the protector of the Buddha, of his sanctuary and his doctrine... [that] ...stand in pairs to the left and right of the entrance to a temple.”⁴⁴ This would appear to be the origin of the placement of the *asura* characters from the Rama story in Thai Buddhist temples.

Therefore, to the extent the Thai king undertakes his role as *Ramaraja* being closely identified with Phra Ram, then Phra Ram would conversely also be closely identified with the Thai king, including his role to guard and protect Buddhism. Accordingly, this leads one to conclude that Phra Ram, representing the ruling monarch or *visa versa*, as well as in his general role as guardian and protector, would also be considered a protector or guardian of Buddhism in general.

The Association between Phra Ram as the Protector of Buddhism and Depictions of the Rama Story

To answer the question of why depictions of the Rama story were used on the lacquerware cabinets, we must first look at some of the theories as to the meaning and purpose of classical Thai painting and the use of images in sacred settings. Combining

42 Phiraphat, *The Architectural Study of Wat Suthat Thepwararam*, 81: “ทำหน้าที่เป็นเทพผู้พิทักษ์รักษาพระอาราม คล้ายกับการเขียนภาพสิ่งบนหน้าต่างของพระวิหารหลวง เช่นกัน.”

43 Loofs-Wissowa, “Reflections on Door-Guardians”, 331.

44 Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, 246.

these theories and views with the above analysis of the association of the king with Phra Ram will help support the hypothesis of Phra Ram as the protector and guardian of Buddhism.

While there is certainly a decorative aspect and purpose to the use of images to adorn walls and spaces, this does not help explain the choice of subject matter used in various settings. Accordingly, other purposes for the use of specific depictions must exist. These purposes can generally be classified as either being for didactic, teaching purposes, or for their symbolic function. While the didactic purpose of mural paintings and other depictions has been well discussed and generally exposed,⁴⁵ the symbolic function has been less explored. Neperud and Stuhr, in a study of Native American art, note that “traditional visual cultural art forms hold social, ceremonial, or spiritual symbolic significances... .”⁴⁶ This concept can certainly be applied to classical Thai painting as well.

Robert Brown, an eminent art historian, analyzed a number of Buddhist monuments from India, Indonesia and Thailand and concluded that, in many cases, the use of depictions and images was not intended for decorative or didactic reasons: “these visual images...are not present on the monuments to tell stories at all, but are there with an iconic function.” He concluded that the placement and organization of the depictions, mainly images of *jātaka* tales, were there “...functioning within the context of the monument as a whole and with particular non-narrative roles defined by their location and uses.”⁴⁷ He notes that many of the depictions could not readily be seen by the viewer, and even if they could be seen, there is often such a lack of narrative content that they could not possibly be understood by anyone who did not already have an intimate knowledge of the story; “...in other words, no one could look at the images and sit down and write a story that would be close to the actual word text.”⁴⁸ This would mean that the viewer did not need to be ‘taught’ the story or moral lesson since they already knew it, thereby minimizing the didactic function of the depictions.

Brown goes on to discuss the concept of the manifestation of a deity in the Indian Hindu sense and applies that idea to the function of the images to manifest the Buddha, that is, make the Buddha readily apparent to the viewer. He explains: “They certainly refer or relate to stories, but their recognition by the worshiper is not to allow them to be read but to make the monument meaningful by clearly manifesting the Buddha.”⁴⁹

This symbolic use of narrative images in Buddhist settings is echoed by Charlotte Galloway in a study of the Buddhist narrative imagery at Pagan in Myanmar. She notes the location and setting of many of the carved reliefs being situated in high places or where there is insufficient light to see them, concluding: “In

45 See Piriya, *Buddhist Art of Thailand*, 406; Ringis, *Thai Temples and Temple Murals*, 87; Wyatt, *Reading Thai Murals*, 1-4.

46 Neperud, “Cross-Cultural Valuing of Wisconsin Indian Art by Indians and Non-Indians”, 250. In this regard, the framework espoused by Neperud and Stuhr was used in a paper presented by Ampai Tiranasar entitled “Thai Traditional Art and Art Education”. Ampai, “Thai Traditional Art and Art Education”.

47 Brown, “Narrative as Icon”, 65.

48 Brown, “Narrative as Icon”, 98.

49 Brown, “Narrative as Icon”, 77.

this position the Jatakas became symbols of the merit-making process rather than being objects of close study.”⁵⁰ Interestingly, Galloway also notes the use of Hindu deities in protective roles on many of the temples in Pagan.⁵¹

Added to this is the general notion of using narratives for other than decorative purposes. Many scholars have noted this exists in various cultures and artistic traditions throughout the world. Julia Murray explains that in places of Catholic worship, altarpieces of certain narrative scenes were intended to inspire the worshiper, more that to provide narrative content. She also notes that in Chinese settings: “By conducting their affairs surrounded by screens depicting exemplary Chinese rulers, the shoguns identified themselves with Confucian role models and China’s cultural prestige, thus reinforcing their charisma in interactions with potential rivals.”⁵²

The well-known Thai art historian, Jean Boisselier, provided a conceptual framework for analyzing classical Thai painting in his seminal work, *Thai Painting*. Boisselier stated that essentially all classical Thai painting, of which he unequivocally includes lacquerware, rather than being merely decorative, has two primary purposes. One is didactic to teach moral lessons, mostly of a Buddhist nature, and the other is symbolic, which he describes as including “...an expression of Buddhist apologetics and worship, but above all it is symbolic,” that is, expressions of a formal defense or justification of Buddhism. He goes on to state: “Thai painting never lacks deliberation; nothing is depicted without a profound reason.”⁵³

Ramakien – The Didactic Element

In addition to the symbolic role described below, the Rama story as depicted on the lacquerware cabinets could be said to have didactic elements as well. The analysis in Chapter 5 of the depictions on the cabinets indicates that a large portion of the images appear to fit into a common and consistent theme of the triumph of the side of moral good and righteousness or truth – as represented by Phra Ram, his younger brothers and his supporters – over immoral evil and unrighteousness, or ignorance – as represented by Thotsakan, his family and allies. Srisurang makes this clear by stating: “The Ramakien is, therefore, the symbol of victory of the good over the evil. Rama is also the symbol of good kingship, of sacred power of the king whom everyone must obey, serve, and show absolute loyalty.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, this can be seen as one of the primary didactic elements of the images.

The way this element is generally portrayed is in the choice of episodes, albeit likely chosen for their popularity and familiar, that depict scenes of triumph of the side of Phra Ram, the side of truth, over that of Thotsakan, the side of evil or ignorance. With an emphasis on scenes of battle, where the side of Phra Ram always triumphs, this idea is reinforced.

50 Galloway, “Buddhist Narrative Imagery during the Eleventh Century at Pagan, Burma”, 166.

51 Galloway, “Buddhist Narrative Imagery during the Eleventh Century at Pagan, Burma”, 163.

52 Murray, “Keynote Address: Narrative and Visual Narrative across Disciplines and Cultures”, 14, 19.

53 Boisselier, *Thai Painting*, 19; 23.

54 Srisurang, “The Influence of the Ramayana on Thai Culture”, 275.

***Ramakien* – The Symbolic Element**

However, a more profound reason for the depictions on the lacquerware cabinets, following Boisselier, can be understood if we combine Brown's analytical framework, as described above, with the concept of Phra Ram as the guardian and protector of Buddhism. By doing so, we can clearly see a symbolic function for the use of the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets by using Brown's approach.

Discussion of the Symbolism Found in the Images

When we examine some of the standard images on the cabinets, other than those that are strictly related to a particular scene or episode, such as Ongkhot floating in the sky, holding the tray to catch Intharachit's head, we can see that there are several categories the various standard depictions can be assigned to that serve a symbolic function conveying the idea of the protective role of Phra Ram, as well as conveying a moral message of right/truth overcoming wrong/ignorance. For purposes of this analysis, these categories have been labeled as: Images of Power and Force; Images of Conquering; Images of Transformation; and Images of Triumph. Each of these categories has a parallel in the *Rama I Ramakien* narrative, which helps to support the relationship between the images and the written narrative.

Images of Power and Force

One of the most common standard images that appears on the cabinets is that of "Marching Out", whereby the armies of the two combatants are shown in battle formation marching out to fight, as described in Chapter 5. (See the lower part of Figure 3, Appendix 2). There are numerous such scenes on the Rama Cabinets, as detailed in Table 5-2, some of which relate to an identifiable narrative scene or episode, but many of which stand alone as isolated depictions. In each of these scenes, the power and formidable force of each side in the conflict is shown through the commanding, dignified pose of the main combatants, generally either Phra Ram/Phra Lak or Thotsakan/Intharachit, their head held high, foot raised in a charging posture, staring intently at their opponent. In addition, they are typically surrounded by their army of powerful troops, all holding war weapons raised up ready to engage the enemy. What is interesting to see is that in nearly all the depictions on the cabinets of these images, there is an equal balance of the forces on each side shown. For example, if the side of Thotsakan has four *asura* troops marching with him, the side of Phra Ram will also have four *wanon* or monkey troops. While one could see this as merely an artistic convention to create balance in the presentation, it could also be an attempt to show the nearly equal forces that are to be engaged in battle and that need to be overcome.

With reference to *Ramakien Rama I*, the discussion of such power and force can be seen in the frequent descriptions of the armed forces assembled by each side before marching out to battle.⁵⁵ For each such type of engagement, of which there are more than 40 in the entire Rama I narrative, a detailed account including a listing of the attire and weapons of the troops that make up each army is included – with

⁵⁵ See for example, *Ramakien of Rama I*, Vol 3, 13, 26. See also Appendix 1.

generally four units for the *asura* side, including elephants, horses, chariots and marching troops and, for the side of Phra Ram, a listing of the *wanon* commanders and their position in the battle formation, such as in the leader of the vanguard, reserve unit, and as commissariat. Such discussion is equally as detailed for each side conveying the message that the opposing forces are significant and will need a serious and strident effort to conquer.

In terms of the symbolism of such images, this conveys a message that the power and force of the threat on each side of the conflict is nearly equal; in other words, the threat to the world order and, by extension, to Buddhism, is significant and formidable, nearly equal to the power and force of the defender, in this case Phra Ram, in association or as identified with the king. In this case, the king, as represented by Phra Ram or someone on his side, is the only one who has the necessary power and force that able to overcome and defend against these forces.

Images of Conquering

Another one of the most prevalent images that can be seen on the cabinets is that of *phap chap*, the stylized form of hand to hand combat between an *asura* character and Phra Ram or one on the side of Phra Ram. (See Figure 5, Appendix 2). These images are included very frequently on the cabinets, sometimes as part of the depiction of a narrative scene and sometimes as an isolated image. As described earlier, when the image includes a royal character, such as Phra Ram or Phra Lak, the royal character is always depicted on top, in the superior position. When included as part of a narrative scene, such *phap chap* images are part of the sequence of the fight, after the combatants have shown their power by Marching Out, and before the final act of execution, thus showing the conquest by the side of Phra Ram.

With respect to the description of *phap chap* as part of the Rama written narrative, nearly every battle scene includes such an encounter.⁵⁶ After engaging in several rounds of exchange of weapons, typically overcome by the side of Phra Ram, the *asura* character, having exhausted his supply of weapons, will resort to hand-to-hand combat. The narrative describes how one character or the other will rise up on the knee or shoulder of the other. However, in the text, as mentioned earlier, sometimes the *asura* character will gain the advantage in the fight and be in the superior position, something that is never shown in the *phap chap* images, either on the Rama Cabinets or elsewhere. This perhaps shows how the imagery that was created was done with special emphasis on the message to be conveyed.

That message, from a symbolic view, is intended to show that the side of the 'good' will always be able to conquer the side of the 'bad', or that truth always wins out over ignorance. Showing the side of Phra Ram always on top reinforces the message that he has the power and strength to conquer and defeat the forces of ignorance, thereby defending against any threats to Buddhism. This can also be read in terms of ignorance being a threat to the maintenance and welfare of Buddhism, which needs to be protected by agents of truth, in this case the side of Phra Ram representing the king, who is tasked with the promotion and propagation of the religion.

⁵⁶ See for example, Ramakien of Rama I, Vol 2, 574-576. See also Appendix 1.

Images of Transformation

Another of the common images seen on the cabinets are scenes of chasing, most prevalent with Hanuman and Benyakai, in the episode of Nang Loi, or Hanuman and Suphanamatcha. In these scenes, as described in Chapter 5, Hanuman and Benyakai or Suphanamatcha will be depicted in a series of images as Hanuman chases after them in an effort to catch and subdue them after they have caused a threat to the side of Phra Ram. (See Figures 9 and 12, Appendix 2). The series of images will always end with Hanuman catching them, at which time he will be shown in an amorous embrace having seduced them.

These scenes are described in great detail, particular the act of subduing and seducing, in the written narrative and are always a favorite subject of performance.⁵⁷ In the scene, Hanuman will start out with an angry intent to eliminate the threat posed by Benyakai or Suphanamatcha, who are enacting some devious ruse on behalf of Thotsakan. He will pursue them with great vigor and energy, until he is able to catch them, at which time he becomes infatuated with the allure of their beauty. He then will engage in an elaborate attempt to seduce them, which always succeeds, and they fall in love with Hanuman.

One can read a symbolic aspect of these scenes in that they show the transformation of agents of evil/ignorance to become agents of good/truth. Both Benyakai and Suphanamatcha start out with evil intent to do the bidding of Thotsakan in an attempt to best the side of Phra Ram. After Hanuman catches them, seduces and makes love to them, they come to work for the side of Phra Ram – Benyakai is used later in the story to help overcome one of the schemes of Thotsakan and Suphanamatcha helps rebuild the causeway which has been dismantled by her retinue. As well, both bear children by Hanuman who serve as important soldiers for the side of Phra Ram later in the narrative. Thus, one can say that these images show the ability by the side of Phra Ram to be able to transform elements of ignorance to truth, an important aspect of protecting and propagating Buddhism.

Images of Triumph

The last of the common and standard images that is seen frequently on the cabinets is Phra Ram or Phra Lak shooting an arrow to attack or execute an *asura* character. (See Figure 6, Appendix 2). This is typically part of a narrative scene involving some battle that will almost always include the use of an arrow as the culmination of the events to eliminate the enemy. The most frequently seen depiction of this image is with Phra Lak shooting an arrow to decapitate Intharachit, finally taking his life and eliminating the threat he posed. The image of Phra Ram/Phra Lak shooting is displayed in the familiar stylized format, one foot raised in a dignified pose projecting power and strength, bow raised up high and drawn back, with the arrow released. These same forms of images can be seen in many mural paintings of similar scenes and on the *nang yai* shadow puppets.

In the written narrative, the bow and arrow is the only form of weapon used by Phra Ram and his brothers. When they were young, they were bestowed with

⁵⁷ See for example, Ramakien of Rama I, Vol 2, 205-206; 210-212; 230-234. See also Appendix 1.

powerful bows, along with special arrows, created by Phra Isuan, all with fantastic qualities, such as being able to turn into rain to douse flames or transform into a Garuda to chase away nagas.⁵⁸ It is through their archery abilities and use of these arrows that they are eventually able to overcome each and every adversary or threat posed by the enemy that comes along. In fact, the description of the fantastical weapons used by the side of Thotsakan and the ability of the side of Phra Ram to neutralize each of them is one of the most interesting and entertaining aspects of the narrative.

In terms of the way these depictions can be seen in a symbolic way, these images show the ultimate triumph of the side of good/truth over evil/ignorance. By shooting an arrow and eliminating the source of the threat, Phra Ram, representing the king, is able to provide the final barrier to protect the side of truth, eliminate ignorance and thereby, protect Buddhism from deterioration.

Conclusion

The images on the lacquerware cabinets can be read with many meanings to convey the idea of Phra Ram, representing and/or in connection with the king, acting as the protector and guardian of Buddhism. Projections of power, conquering, transformation and triumph can be seen in various standard and frequently repeated images – Marching Out, *phap chap*, chasing, shooting. In this regard, as described in Chapter 5, the most frequently depicted narrative scenes identified on the cabinets include all or some of these images. Therefore, while the mere presence of Phra Ram – or any character associated with him, primarily, Phra Lak or Hanuman – can serve to manifest a protective force, this manifested force is enhanced by the form and manner in which the written narrative has been translated into a visual narrative, all serving both a didactic and symbolic role of Phra Ram as the protector of Buddhism.

In addition, the concrete element that supports the hypothesis of Phra Ram as the symbolic guardian of Buddhism is the physical location of the images from the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scripture, as well as in other Buddhist settings. On the cabinets, the images literally surround the sacred contents inside, not only at the primary point of entry, the front doors, but also on the sides, and even the back at times, creating an impenetrable barrier to anything that could cause harm or destruction to the sacred words of the Buddha and to Buddhism.

Furthermore, we can apply Brown's thinking with respect to some Buddhist sites to the lacquerware cabinets. In this regard, first, while the position of the images on the cabinets does not make them difficult to see, other than perhaps those on the back, one might wonder whether the cabinets were kept in a place that were readily accessible by the general viewer. It seems likely that, to the extent they were used to keep sacred manuscripts and other precious items, they would have been kept in separate areas with limited access, such as a *ho trai* or manuscript library, or perhaps in a senior monk's quarters. Second, as detailed in Chapter 3, the level of knowledge of the Rama story was likely very high given the widespread dissemination of the story in Thai society. Most people would have been intimately knowledgeable of the

⁵⁸ See for example, Ramakien of Rama I, Vol 3, 1. See also Appendix 1.

story, and would not have necessarily ‘learned’ anything by viewing the images on the cabinets. Third, as detailed in Chapter 5, while some of the depictions have fairly complete narrative detail as might be found on a mural painting, a large number of the images have limited narrative content, very often just an image of marching out, *phap chap* or a single character. Given the knowledge of the story, such images would have been sufficient to identify the presence of the Rama story, and thereby, the presence of Phra Ram.

A similar concept of surrounding or protecting the point of entry from harm and danger can also be applied to the depictions of the Rama story in other Buddhist settings. The images are almost universally placed in a position to guard the entrances, either doors or windows, or to provide a protective barrier surrounding the sacred space. This can be seen most prominently at the *ubosot* of Wat Phra Chetaphun with the placement of images on the doors and the bas-relief frieze that surrounds the building. John Bell, in his PhD dissertation regarding Wat Phra Chetaphun, noted this factor:

The sculpted frieze encircles the bot to create a sheltered zone. Rama’s moral clarity and his force of arms allow the pacifistic world of the Sangha to exist unhindered within. The symbiotic relationship between royal and monastic authority is rendered symbolically clear. The frieze protects the temple... .59

This idea can also be applied to other depictions at Wat Phra Chetaphon, such as the mural paintings in the pavilions that once surrounded, and thus symbolically protected, the Phra Mondop holding a copy of the Tripitaka. As well, the many depictions on the doors and windows of the various buildings in the form of door guardians speak to this same principle.

Similarly, at Wat Phra Kaeo, the famous mural paintings of the Thai Rama story surround not only the *ubosot* with the highly revered and sacred Emerald Buddha image, but also the Phra Mondop with a copy of the Tripitaka, which itself is housed in a cabinet with images of the Rama story surrounding it on all four sides. At Wat Suthat, the doors and windows of the *ubosot* are protected by images of Phra Narai and *phap chap* depictions from the Rama story.

Another manifestation of this concept of Phra Ram’s protective role of Buddhism can perhaps be interpreted from the depictions of the scene of the Buddha Overcoming Mara on the walls of many Buddhist temples that include characters from the Rama story. Typically, the characters can be seen on one side orderly marching within Mara’s army, and then, after the flood caused by Phra Thorani, fighting against Mara’s troops. Alexandra Green notes: “The large size and prominent position of this mural not only add force to Theravada Buddhist tenets, but also indicate the king’s power and ability to protect the kingdom.”⁶⁰ Accordingly, these images, which show some similarity with the images of Marching Out on the lacquerware cabinets, mean that the placement and use of this mural can perhaps be interpreted as a symbolic representation of Phra Ram providing support to defend Buddhism – the forces of good/truth fighting the forces of evil/ignorance.

⁵⁹ Bell, “Wat Phra Chetaphon”, 117-118.

⁶⁰ Green, “Creating Sacred Space”, 179.

Therefore, with reference to Brown's analytical framework, as well as Boisselier's view that Thai paintings have a symbolic purpose, we can conclude that the presence of images from the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets had an iconic function which was to 'manifest' the presence of Phra Ram. Through standard iconic images, along with well-known narrative scenes and episodes, his symbolic manifestation would allow him, in association and identification with the king, to fulfill his role as protector and guardian of the Buddhist scriptures inside the cabinet, and thus by extension, as protector and guardian of Buddhism.



Chapter 8: Conclusion and Discussion

After this rather long and detailed examination of the Rama story in Thai culture and society and its depiction on lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scripture, there are a number of conclusions that can be reached, as well as observations that can be made. Some of the findings are specifically related to the data and information gathered as a part of this research and some are more general in nature about the Rama story, *Rama I Ramakien* in Thai society, and about the lacquerware cabinets themselves. As well, reflection on certain aspects of ‘Thainess’ can be drawn from this study, aspects that relate to the history of the Rama story and the development of the lacquerware cabinets.

Specific Findings from this Research

This study has focused on examining the depictions from the Rama story on lacquerware cabinets, cabinets that were intended to hold the sacred Buddhist scriptures. The cabinet collection that is held by the National Library of Thailand was selected as the target group for review. The depictions on the cabinets were examined to determine which cabinets included images that could be related to the Rama story, either single images or ones that could be related or identified as depicting a specific scene or episode from the Rama tale. In this regard, *Rama I Ramakien* was primarily used as a reference narrative given the complete nature of that narrative and the fact that many of the depictions have images or iconic elements that can only be related to *Rama I Ramakien*.

One of the clearest findings from this study is that the Rama story, and most specifically *Rama I Ramakien*, is the source of the narrative depictions on the largest number of lacquerware cabinets in the National Library collection. While this, in and of itself, would not necessarily appear to be a startling discover, a review of the identifiable literature regarding lacquerware cabinets, many from leading art historians and scholars, indicates that there is generally an emphasis on and discussion of the use of traditional Buddhist narratives, such as the Life of the Buddha or the *jātaka* tales, for the depictions on the cabinets. Scholars and researchers appear to give less recognition of or discussion regarding the depictions from the Rama story, with only casual mention made, perhaps assuming that since the cabinets are designed to hold the Buddhist scripture, the depictions that adorn the outside of the cabinets should be clearly Buddhist in nature, similar to what can be found on the murals inside most Buddhist temples.

However, this study has shown that this is not the case as images from the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets from the early Rattanakosin period that are included in the collection at the National Library are, in fact, the most represented of any identifiable grouping, more than those from the traditional Buddhist narratives. Either through specific, identifiable episodes and scenes, or just inclusion of isolated images of characters or groups of characters, depictions that can be associated with the Rama story comprise the largest group of the identifiable narratives on the cabinets in the National Library collection. Given the nature of this collection and how it was compiled, it seems more than likely that a similar finding would likely

be obtained if the entire corpus of lacquerware cabinets existing in various museums, Buddhist temples and private collections were surveyed.

With respect to such depictions from the Rama story, the images tend to be predominantly scenes of fighting, with a large percentage showing the stylized form of hand-to-hand combat called *phap chap*. In addition, there are many generic scenes of the armies Marching Out with one or both sides of the conflict in ready battle mode, typically riding a chariot, surrounded by their respective armies. In this regard, it has also been observed that the Rama story in Thai, particularly *Rama I Ramakien*, is predominately a story of fighting and battle, much more than other versions, particularly *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, thus scenes of battle would naturally be used to represent the story.

Of the identifiable narrative episodes, the most frequently depicted is the ‘Death of Intharachit’, in which Phra Lak executes Intharachit by severing his head as Intharachit flies in the air. The depictions of this episode can be positively associated with *Rama I Ramakien* as this is the only text in which certain elements are included that also appear in the depictions on the cabinets, as described in Chapter 5. The frequent depiction of this episode, along with general scenes of Intharachit Marching Out and *phap chap* of Phra Lak/Intharachit, reveals that the character of Intharachit is disproportionately represented on the lacquerware cabinets as compared to his role and presence in the entire Rama narrative. The possible reasons for this are discussed below.

With respect to the selection of narrative scene depicted on the cabinets, the most frequently presented episodes, other than the ‘Death of Intharachit’, are those that appear to have been the most popular for performance, and are episodes and scenes that typically involved some sort of fighting or combat. This is perhaps because of the familiarity of the scenes among the artisans and sponsors, as well as being related to the didactic symbolism intended by the use of the depictions, as discussed in Chapter 7. The connection between performance and narrative depiction on the cabinets can also be seen in the stylized postures and costumes of the characters.

With respect to the depictions on most of the cabinets, there are typically only a few representative elements taken from the narrative, similar to the bas-reliefs at Wat Phra Chetaphun, instead of full detailed images as can often be seen in mural paintings on the walls of the Buddhist temples, such as at Wat Phra Kaeo. One factor, naturally, is the limited space available given the size and form of the cabinets. Another factor is perhaps the strong integration of the Rama story in Thai society, as discussed in Chapter 3, meaning that there was perhaps no need to include elaborate narrative depictions. The story would have been very well known to any viewer and thus only a few iconic elements and images would have been needed to allow for easy identification of both the Rama story and usually the scene and episode being depicted. In addition, to the extent the depictions were intended to have a symbolic function, that is, to create a sphere of protection, as described in detail in Chapter 7, there would have been no need to present a full narrative since the mere presence of the story, in any form or manner, would have served this purpose.

This symbolic function is perhaps the more important and significant conclusion that can be made as a result of this research study. The Rama story, as depicted on the lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the sacred Buddhist scripture

from the early Rattanakosin period, appears to have been used in such a manner so as to create the symbolic presence of Phra Ram and convey the message of Phra Ram acting, either in association or conjunction with the king, as the protector and guardian of Buddhism. While this role for the king has been well understood, along with the close association between the king and Phra Ram, the role of Phra Ram as a guardian of Buddhism has been less recognized. However, given the significant and persistent depiction of Phra Ram, or other characters representing Phra Ram, on the cabinets designed to hold the Tripitaka, the sacred Buddhist scripture, and other holy manuscripts, this role becomes evident, especially when considered in conjunction with Phra Ram's presence and depiction in other Buddhist settings. The physical location of the narratives is important in this regard, being situated such that they literarily surround the intended object, forming a protective barrier. In the case of the cabinets, the depictions are located on three or four sides; in temple settings, the images encircle the central shrine or are set at the points of entry on the doors and windows.

In this regard, there are a variety of images on the lacquerware cabinets that can be read with various meanings to convey this idea – Marching Out, *phap chap*, chasing, shooting. These standard and frequently repeated images, all seen in the most commonly depicted episodes, can be read as projections of power, conquering, transformation and triumph. These images, which serve to reinforce the symbolic function of the manifested force of protection offered by Phra Ram – or any character associated with him, primarily, Phra Lak or Hanuman – are enhanced by the form and manner in which the written narrative has been effectively translated into a visual narrative.

Along with this symbolic meaning, one could also read a didactic message through the depictions of the Rama story, that being to convey a lesson of the triumph of good/truth, represented by the side of Phra Ram, over evil/ignorance, represented by the side of Thotsakan. This is often reinforced by the scenes of triumph, such as showing Intharachit being executed by Phra Lak, or in the *phap chap* images where the side of good/truth is always shown in the top, superior position and the side of evil/ignorance in the bottom, subordinate position.

From this analysis, however, it seems clear that there is quite a bit of overlap between the symbolic and didactic functions of the depictions of the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets. While a lesson of correct moral action can be read from the images, to a greater extent, such images appear to have the purpose merely to remind the viewer of the idealism as projected in the story using standard and recognizable images. Such reference can serve the purpose of conveying the lessons to be learned from the story without the need to present any overly detailed depiction. One could say this is a kind of 'didactic symbolism', combining the elements of a symbolic function with the elements of a didactic function.

In this regard, the disproportionate representation of Intharachit is interesting to consider. It is generally said that in classical Thai literature, no character is completely good or evil. They typically have some redeeming quality or character flaw that makes them more rounded and interesting. In the Rama story, Phra Ram and Thotsakan can be considered prime examples of this idea. While these two characters are generally the leading 'good' and 'bad' characters, they both have some aspects that can be considered to mitigate this portrayal. Phra Ram, usually considered the

epitome of honesty, righteousness and truth, is sometimes criticized for being indecisive, impetuous and unable to control his anger. This is particularly evident in the case of his faithful wife, Nang Sida, when he orders her to be banished and killed after he finds she has drawn a portrait of Thotsakan. Thotsakan, on the other hand, while portrayed as having primarily ‘evil’ qualities of greed, ruthlessness and dishonesty, also has some qualities that could be considered as ‘good’, such as can be seen in his devotion to his friends and family, along with his steadfast love for Nang Sida, even his willing to sacrifice himself and die for her.

However, when looking at the case of Intharachit, it is harder to find those redeeming qualities to mitigate his evilness. His character tends to be one that is more one-dimensionally wicked, intent on destruction of the enemy at all costs. As well, unlike Thotsakan and Kumphakan, when Intharachit dies, he does not repent his evil actions, nor show any remorse or repentance for his wicked ways or for his past misdeeds. In fact, Phra Ram even remarks on Intharachit’s continued defiance, with his mouth opening and shutting even after his head has been severed.

Although one might say that the scene of farewell to his mother and family when he laments and shows sadness at his impending death and separation shows another side to Intharachit’s character, this seems to be quite minor, included more as a standard literary convention rather than a true insight into his character. It is also possible that the scene of Intharachit nursing at this mother’s breast that was added to later tellings of the story was intended to serve the purpose of rounding out Intharachit’s character. However, unlike for other major characters, such as Thotsakan or Kumphakan, there are no other scenes showing Intharachit greeting friends or family, showing regret or remorse, or in any way questioning his own bad deeds. Therefore, it seems possible that the emphasis on Intharachit in the depictions on the lacquerware scripture cabinets was intended to focus on a character that was more clearly ‘evil/ignorant’.

As previously mentioned, while some of the scenes that are most frequently depicted, such as ‘Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow’ and ‘Mangkornkan Fights and Dies’, were long popular for stage production and performance, the most frequently represented scene on the cabinets – the ‘Death of Intharachit’ – seems to be an anomaly as there is little evidence of this scene being performed with any regularity, certainly not in the more modern era. One can thus hypothesize that this scene became popular for depiction on the cabinets as it was a clear and unequivocally portrayal of the concept of the triumph of good/truth over evil/ignorance and the ultimate protective aspect of Phra Ram. One might argue that this could have been achieved by using the scene of Thotsakan being executed by Phra Ram, which does appear on a number of the cabinets. However, it is possible the artisans considered the Death of Intharachit to have more dramatic appeal for depiction, with Intharachit flying in the air, Phra Lak in a stylized, but elegantly dignified pose shooting his arrow to execute him and Ongkhot floating with a tray to catch Intharachit’s severed head.

It is interesting to note the apparent paradox presented by the extensive use of scenes of fighting and combat in such a sacred religious setting. The message of the Buddha as conveyed in his teachings is one of serenity and peacefulness; loving-kindness and non-violence being one of the major tenants of his message. The use of scenes of war and fighting would appear to contradict this message. This would seem

to have a parallel in the way it became popular to include a large mural of the scene of the Buddha Overcoming Mara that contains violent battle scenes in Buddhist temples. However, if one accepts the fact that the purpose of the images on the cabinets was to manifest the presence of Phra Ram as protector and guardian, this paradox can perhaps be explained. The scenes of fighting project an image of power and force and reinforce the idea of Phra Ram being able to safeguard Buddhism.

General Observations on Lacquerware Cabinets

Notwithstanding the many academic arguments and theories that can and have been developed for the use of narrative depictions on lacquerware cabinets, which has been the primary focus of this study, the cabinets themselves have many interesting aspects that can be connected with Thai culture. While many of these aspects relate to both the function and form of the cabinets, there are also some more general observations that can be made.

One of the most significant and readily apparent features of the lacquerware cabinets is the extensive use of gold in their design and presentation. Gold, being a rare and precious material, plays a significant role and is important in creating objects of both great beauty and great value. Gold is also something that can be thought of as being pure and auspicious, and thus appropriate for the making of great merit. Many Buddha images or other objects that are donated to temples in merit making efforts are either made of or adorned with gold. Gold leaf is regularly bought and applied as a matter of gaining merit in the Buddhist context.

It is also interesting to note that many Thai people either wear, or used to wear, some object of gold ornamentation on their bodies both for decorative purposes and to show off their wealth and stature in society, as well as some have said for protection. It is for these reasons that the use of significant amounts of gold on the lacquerware cabinets lends them a special and unique quality, particularly relating to Thai society and culture. The gold, along with the intricate and elaborate designs, makes the cabinets objects of both profound beauty, as well as objects of significant value, along with creating an air of auspiciousness, all worthy of the valuable objects that are held within, the Tripitaka and other sacred Buddhist texts.

In addition to the gold aspect, the delicate and intricate design features of the cabinets makes them objects of great admiration and value. As detailed in Chapter 4, the elaborate and time consuming process to create the gold lacquerware depictions involves significant levels of skill and many hours of dedicated work and effort. The difficult process and learned expertise needed to produce the final objects, of which many thousands have been created, is a testament to the dedication of the master artisans of that time. It is more than likely that the designs were patterned after standard templates, especially given the repetition of many of the design features, including the poses and layout of the narrative elements. Therefore, the skilled work exhibited on the cabinets does not necessarily represent artistic expression in the modern sense. However, the execution of creation is one that would have required many long and arduous hours of commitment and great skill only learned after many years of practice and execution. For the artisans, this naturally would have required a considerable amount of dedicated time and attention; for their sponsors, this would have required a considerable amount of resources given the expense involved. This

devotion of time and resources only adds to the value and merit-making aspect of the lacquerware cabinets.

Another general aspect of the cabinets is as objects for making merit by devote Buddhists. Many have argued that in the earliest periods, the lacquerware cabinets, in some form or another, were originally made for household use and then, in order to gain merit when the owner died, were donated to the temples to hold the Buddhist manuscripts. However, it seems clear that eventually most of the cabinets were made specifically for donation and use by the temples.

As detailed in Chapter 4, the dedication colophons on the cabinets indicate that they were specifically created to make merit. The names of the donors included in the colophons shows that there was a wide range of sponsors, from royalty and nobles, to members of the sangha and commoners. This provides some insight into the social and cultural aspects of Buddhist merit making in traditional Thai society. The unique features of the lacquerware cabinets, that would have required significant resources in terms of providing for the use of precious gold and skilled artisans needed to produce the elaborate designs and highly crafted work, show another aspect of the serious level of devotion to making merit that has continually existed in Thai society.

But this is true not only relating to lacquerware cabinets, there is also a long history of the sponsorship of the creation and donation of manuscripts, generally the Tripitaka, to Buddhist temples. From famous efforts undertaken by many of the Thai kings, including Rama I, to more modest donations by lay Buddhists, this has been a long held and deep tradition in Thai culture that continues today. Along with the creation and donation of the Tripitaka, most often the sponsors would have a cabinet created to house the work. The cabinets in the Phra Mondops at Wat Phra Kaeo and Wat Phra Chetaphon are prime examples of such undertakings.

By such efforts, particularly in more modern times, the Tripitaka has become something auspicious and worshipped as an object in itself, sometimes such that it considered sacred and rarely used and read, thus making the cabinets holding the manuscripts also objects of worship – what one might call ‘vessels of veneration’. To the extent that this was the case in earlier periods, the typical narrative depictions on the lacquerware cabinets, either narratives directly related to the Buddha or the Rama story, provided images that could also be worshiped and venerated.

Another significant aspect of the lacquerware cabinets that should be noted is their durability and long lasting nature. The very process of applying lacquer to the wood, notwithstanding the artistic aspect, helps to preserve the material from the natural elements, especially from high humidity and other destructive forces. In addition, the fact that these cabinets are kept inside, away from the elements, has also contributed to their remaining intact for such a long period.

With respect to the form of creating the design and decorative element, the lacquer and gold application process does not readily deteriorate as do fresco murals on temple walls that are subject to slow, but steady destruction from humidity and other elements, or cloth paintings that deteriorate easily. This has, therefore, helped to preserve the art work that was created, resulting in a repository of a large amount of works from the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin period, a much larger repository than is available for mural wall paintings or other forms of art works.

Some Thoughts on the Rama Story

A further reason for the extensive use of images from the Rama story on the lacquerware cabinets is likely embodied in the sacred and moral symbolism of this tale. This is made abundantly evident by the importance of this piece of secular literature as described in detail in Chapter 3. The encyclopedic nature of *Rama I Ramakien* renders it both a reflection of and a reflection on classical Thai culture and tradition.

There would appear to be a number of reasons and factors that have made the Rama story, and particularly *Rama I Ramakien*, resonated so strongly and be so readily adopted by the Thai people throughout the ages. The first is that *Rama I Ramakien* is thoroughly infused with elements that are familiar and comfortable to Thai people. This ranges from inclusion of local customs and traditions, to the manner of dress and detailed descriptions of architecture, landscape, geography, flora and fauna. All of these elements make the story, either in visual depictions, performances or as read, comfortable and appealing to Thai readers.

The second reason is because Thai people can so easily identify with many of the characters in the Rama story. Phra Ram, the exemplary ruler, has been closely identified with the Thai king as one who is above reproach because of his deep moral integrity, sense of duty to the people and his ability to bring peace, prosperity and protection to the realm. Nang Sida is the faithful and dutiful wife, sacrificing and enduring in the name of her love and devotion to her husband. Phra Lak is the loyal and obedient younger brother, upon whom Phra Ram can depend upon for unwavering allegiance. Hanuman, the loyal soldier, is one who shows unquestioned duty to the ruler and realm, even though he also plays the obligatory role in Thai classical literature of the flirtatious playboy with many amorous exploits. These reflect the deeply held beliefs in social hierarchy, including the roles and position in Thai society that Thai people are so familiar with and can identify.

Even Thotsakan, the apparent embodiment of evil, is one whose actions allow the reader to have an enemy to root against, but who also has some redeeming qualities so that he is not universally reviled, and is sometimes even pitied. In fact, some could say that Thotsakan is a much more ‘human’ character in that he expresses many different emotions and feelings, much as the average reader or viewer might experience.

As previously mentioned, each major character in the story has some aspect of good and evil. In terms of performance, this has been noted in the creation of *khon* masks for the *asura* characters, such as Thotsakan. The masks combine beautiful art work and colorful designs, with long terrifying fangs and ferocious mouth and eye features typical of the *asura*. This makes the masks both beautiful and ugly. This is why each of the characters are ones that the Thai reader can identify with, root for, or against, and emulate as necessary and desirable.

Third, and perhaps most important, is that the Rama tale, in addition to all its symbolic, moral and didactic aspects, is an adventure story that appeals to all audiences in all its forms: written, performed and visually depicted. This is perhaps one of the reasons that this tale has been adopted and adapted into nearly every culture and society in South and Southeast Asia.

The universal nature of its themes, right over wrong, faithful love and devotion, the triumph of honesty and integrity, enhances the wild adventure and

fantastic imagination of the authors – perhaps most evident in the Thai rendition above all others – and this makes the story so enjoyable to read and watch. Notwithstanding the classical nature of this piece of literature, which many Thai people struggle to read with its ancient words and poetic nature, the story continues to resonate and be appealing to audiences. This is evident by the constant printing of editions of the full text, along with many publications that are intended to appeal to a wider audience, such as cartoon versions and full color reproductions of the mural paintings, particularly at Wat Phra Kaeo.

Finally, this ostensibly ‘non-Buddhist’ story has been infused with many Buddhist elements such that it can be easily understood and accepted by the predominantly Thai Buddhist society. This is perhaps also the reason the story has been so readily adapted with depictions and representations into traditional Buddhist settings. As well, this provides further reasoning for why it has been so significant to and influential on Thai audiences. It is for these reasons that the Rama story, particularly the version composed under the direction of Rama I, has been so successfully integrated into Thai culture and society and makes the Rama story truly an integral part of Thai society, culture and tradition.

These reasons for the integration of the Rama story in Thai society and culture both support and reinforce the symbolic aspect for the use of Rama related images at important Buddhist sites and, most prominently, as one of the primary sources of depictions on lacquerware cabinets. Even though the Rama story has been used relatively sparingly for wall murals inside Buddhist temples, in comparison to traditional Buddhist narratives, the extensive use of the Rama story as the narrative source for depictions on lacquerware cabinets designed to hold the Buddhist scripture and in other traditional Buddhist settings highlights an important and significant connection between this piece of secular literature and the use of images from narrative texts in sacred spaces. Given its deep rooted nature and connection with the society, the mere presence of the Rama story, in any form or manner, is enough to convey the intended didactic symbolism of Phra Ram as the guardian and protector of Buddhism.

Looking at the Rama story more universally, from the survey of the versions and renditions of the Rama story in South and Southeast Asia as detailed in Chapter 2, we can see that there has been widespread and diverse adoption, absorption and adaptation of the saga, both in the place of its birth in India and throughout South and Southeast Asia. Given the universal themes in the tale, good triumphing over evil, love conquering all, honesty and truthfulness winning out, the basic outline of the story has shown a remarkable flexibility to be able to sustain change and adaptation, both in interpretation and interpolation. In addition, the story, which started as a clear Hindu narrative with sacred and religious nature, has been successfully absorbed into a wide variety of spiritual or religious environments as it was introduced to diverse cultures and societies – Rama could be Hindu, Jain, Buddhist or Islamic. The story, being so universally understandable, has shown a remarkable flexibility to absorb and adapt as necessary to become accepted by each different society and culture.

With respect to Southeast Asia, there is a relationship between the many tellings of the Rama story in the various cultures and localities of the region. In some cases, such as Javanese/Malay and Khmer/Thai, the relationship appears to be quite strong, while in others, it is more tentative. In this regard, many have expressed

opinions and views regarding the relationship between the many versions and renditions in Southeast Asia, trying to show a progression of transmission. Such relationships, rather than merely showing differences between various cultures and traditions, also show a commonality and basis for potentially creating ties between the many societies. Someone who is familiar with the Rama story in their own culture comes with some background and understanding when exposed to the story in another culture and setting. This is quite evident in the many conferences on the Rama story that have organized performance of the entire story using episodes from each different country participating, creating an interesting and diversely entertaining evening, but one in which the audience can understand and relate to the story.

With respect to the Rama story in a purely Thai context and the numerous versions present in the area in present day Thailand, many researchers have noted the connections with other renditions and versions in Southeast Asia, as well as India. Some have noted that a close reading and study of the narrative would indicate that the Thai Rama story had a conduit from India through the Khmer at Angkor, having first come through the Javanese areas. Others have noted the connections between the Malay and Javanese readings, as well as those from the north and northeast part of Thailand. All of these opinions attest to the close relationship between the many renditions and versions of the story in the Southeast Asian region.

While there are numerous opinions as to the origins of the Rama story in a Thai context, there is no definitive proof as to which opinion is true. This leads one to conclude that there were many sources, each having some influence, although some stronger than others. This also attests to the fluid and transportable nature of the Rama story making it easy to be taken from one area to another without necessarily losing its fundamental and universal nature.

This also means that given the shared tradition of the Rama tale among nearly all the cultures of Southeast Asia and the Indian Subcontinent, this story has the ability to serve as a cultural peace ambassador promoting mutual understanding among the people of this region. This was clearly shown at the International Ramayana Festival, held in Bangkok in December, 2011, where dance and music troops from eight countries held such a performance as previously mentioned of the entire story, each performing a separate scene. This gathering highlighted and reinforced the sense of cultural pride and appreciation for each other that the Rama saga has been able to foster as it has spread.

The Rama story in Thailand, as with the *Ramayana* in India and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, has endured the ages to remain both popular in performance and captivating in depiction. Given its enduring qualities and universal themes, it is likely to continue to do so for time immemorial.

Possible Further Research

This study has focused on the depiction of images from the Rama story on lacquerware cabinets from the collection housed at the National Library of Thailand. Naturally, there are many similar type cabinets housed in other museums, Buddhist temples and private collections. Therefore, further study could be undertaken on a wider collection of cabinets to expand upon the findings from this study.

Another potential area of study could be the use of the Rama story on other objects, such as ceramics, wood carvings, statues and other forms of artistic

expression. While such objects might be limited in number, the history and manner of application of the Rama narrative might be interesting to explore.

In addition, there are many other areas where the Rama story has been applied in Thai culture and tradition. While one area, shadow puppetry, was briefly touched upon, this, and other areas of performance, such as *khon* and other forms of puppets, could be researched. The relationship between the various forms of performance would be interesting to explore.

Finally, the history and background of the development of the Rama story in a Thai context could be explored in greater depth. This might include a comparative study of other versions and renditions of the story that can be found in neighboring countries and the immediate region. While a truly in-depth study might encounter some language issues, to the extent more effort is made to translate the various versions into a common language, such as English, this effort could be facilitated and perhaps reveal interesting connections and commonality between the many cultural traditions that can be found.

It is hoped that this study and the research findings included in this dissertation will help to facilitate potential research projects. It is also hoped that the information and data gathered here will stimulate interest in other areas to expand the range of academic study on the Rama story in a Thai context, especially by researchers outside Thailand.

Final Reflections

As previously discussed, the breath and scope of academic research with respect to *Rama I Ramakien* or the Rama story in general as the primary focus of research, along with the many publications regarding lacquerware cabinets, attests to the depth of interest in these topics by researchers, albeit primarily Thai scholars and academics. This, naturally, speaks to the fact that the Rama story is both a deep reflection of and is reflected on Thai society, customs, and traditions as mentioned above. As numerous scholars have noted, the story of Rama in Thailand is the perhaps the most important and influential literary work, rendering it a piece of national literature that is deeply woven into the hearts and minds of Thai people.

This research study has combined various elements of Thai Studies, including Thai literature, Thai art, Thai history and Thai Buddhism. While there has been previous research on black and gold lacquerware cabinets and on the use of the Rama story in connection with those cabinets, the previous research has focused primarily on the artistic and aesthetic aspects, rather than the use of narratives, upon which this research has focused. Thus, this research adds a new dimension to this topic and, accordingly, can serve to extend the reach of Thai Studies. In addition, there has been little serious academic research written in English on the Rama story in a Thai context and/or lacquerware cabinets, and thus this research can serve to open this area of Thai Studies to a potentially wider audience.

This study can also serve to highlight one of the commonly recognized aspects of Thai society and culture, that is the ability to adopt, absorb and adapt – which can perhaps be considered one of the very essences of ‘Thainess’. This ability, which is sometimes difficult to recognize without stepping back to take a wider view, can help explain the dynamic nature and flexibility of Thai culture and tradition, an aspect that is sometimes forgotten in the effort to conserve and preserve ancient traditions. This

can also help explain how and why the Rama story could have been adopted, absorbed and then adapted for use in so many diverse and varied ways, from literature to performance to artistic expression, including as we have seen so extensively on lacquerware cabinets.

The Rama story has gone through a long and winding transition from a sacred Indian tale to a secular story; from the story of a hero who became a god to the story of a god who became a hero. The tale was reconceptualized in the Thai context to become intimately associated with the power and protection of Thai kings, and intimately associated with Thai Buddhism. The Rama narrative is widely represented in Thai culture and is an important manifestation of long-established Thai social customs. From abstract ideas of ‘ideal’ behavior, to concrete representations of paintings on walls, this tale is a true reflection of traditional Thai society. However, the Rama story in Thailand has also been continually adapted to modern settings, used for promotion and identification, as well as contemporary renderings in performance and publication. This is a tale that is seemingly both a dusty volume on the shelf and living literature reflecting the face of Thailand.

Another feature of this aspect of Thai culture can be seen in the use of common household objects, in our case, cabinets that were likely originally adopted from a foreign source. These cabinets were re-imagined into a unique art form that were then transformed to become ‘vessels of veneration’ to hold sacred Buddhist texts. To adorn these cabinets, the concept of protective guardians, adapted from ancient customs developed by foreign cultures, and as used on doors and windows of sacred sites, was incorporated into the structure of these cabinets. Lastly, the cabinets became a forum for high artistic expression through the use of intricate and delicate artwork using black lacquer and gold leaf, but with a unique Thai technique to apply the design to the surface. This technique was refined and adapted to become something singularly ‘Thai’.

All of these features highlight complex and profound features of Thai society through the use of a secular tale in sacred space, thus accentuating the capacity of Thai culture and tradition to adopt and absorb from the outside what is deemed appropriate and then adapt it to local use and conditions. This study has detailed a particularly vivid aspect of this defining feature of ‘Thainess’ by exploring the symbolic use of a Hindu-identified story to adorn lacquerware cabinets holding sacred Buddhist scriptures with intricate and elaborate images in gold on black – a rich legacy of ‘Literature in Gold’.

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Appendix 1: Rama I Ramakien

Below is a complete list of the episodes from *Rama I Ramakien* that have been assigned by the author of this research based upon a reading and translation of the text. Those in **bold** are episodes represented on one or more cabinets in the National Library Collection, with the cabinet number assigned by the National Library on which the scenes from that episode appear listed as well. For the eight most frequently represented episodes, a full translation from *Rama I Ramakien* describing the scene depicted is included. The translation, including any mistakes or misreading, is solely that of the author, who takes full responsibility for this work.

1. Founding of Ayuthaya
2. Founding of Longka
3. Asura Phrom
4. Saha Maliwan
5. Triburam
6. Nonthok and the Birth of Thotsakan
7. Thotsakan Fights Orachun
8. Birth of Phiphek and Samanakha
9. Khodom Conjures Kala Atchana
10. Birth of Phali and Sukhrip
11. Founding of Khit Khin
12. Maha Chomphu
13. Birth of Hanuman
14. Hanuman Goes to Khit Khin
15. Mani Mekkhala
- 16. Ramasun; Phali, Sukhrip Straighten Mt Meru** (7: R 40; R 69; R 113; R 220; R 257; R 301; R 304)
17. Birth of Montho
18. Nagas Attack Badan
- 19. Thotsakan Straightens Mt. Krailat** (10: R 40; R 93; R 113; R 130; R 210; R 231; R 243; R 252; R 272; R 346)

The ten-headed *yaksa* saw the lovely young *Montho*, to which no angel in heaven could compare – beautiful shape, beautiful body, beautiful youth; beauty to be praised, beauty to be glorified; beautiful face with a visage of exceeding loveliness; everything graceful, all of her body. Extremely deep affection rose up in his heart – the more he scrutinized her, the more the *yaksa* was dazzled. He lowered his head in obeisance to *Phra Suli* and, gathering the lady in his arms, flew away. Traveling along while caressing her, he supported her snugly, kissing her with affection. Passing through the fog, out of the clouds with great might, they passed over the city of *Khit Khin*.

Phaya Phali was holding court at the audience window together with his councilors, prostrate all around as far as the eye could see. While speaking of the affairs of the realm in the audience hall, he glanced up and saw the-ten faced one holding a maiden, flying along in the middle of the sky, passing his territory, crossing right over his great palace. With furious anger, he stamped his feet, making an earthshaking display of power: “Hey, that wicked one, *Thotsakan*, showing contempt for me, not afraid for his life.” Saying thus, he grabbed his sword. Gnashing his teeth, he flourished his sword with a display of valour, aiming to destroy the *asura* leader, as he charging up into the sky.

Glancing about, he saw a beautiful woman with a complexion like an angel, engendering a feeling of deep infatuation and lust. He shouted out: “Look here, *asura*, you have made a great insult, showing no respect, carrying this lady while crossing over my city. I shall have to strike you down, have you dead.” The ten-headed *yaksa* saw the *wanon* blocking the way, challenging him. The *asura* was enraged like lightning: “Hey, hey, beastly one, such bold words you have, exceeding your place. The sky is a place for travelling; I was just passing through the air. I am not looking to step on your *wanon* head. Since you are so arrogant and want to fight, we can see about that right now.”

The son of *Thao Makkhawan* replied: “*Woei, woei*, wicked *asura*. This lady will become my wife and you, thinking you are so smart, will be destroyed.” Saying thus, he flourished his mighty trident, advancing to chase the *kumphon*. Both stabbed, both slapped, both scrapped; circling cunningly like churning *chakra*. Both solid, both strong, neither stepping back; both thrashed, both slashed, both hashed.

The fearless, ten-headed royal one, fighting against the son of *Thao Makkhawan*, lost half his body strength. One arm held the beautiful woman – nineteen arms fought to strike him down. Thrusting and stabbing, they battled in a tumult, the noise reverberating up to *Solot*. Weapons whirled, clashing together creating sparks. Both were brave, both were valiant, neither holding back. Stalwartly strong *Phali*, with a breathtaking leap, pounced, stabbing and slashing, charging, twisting as he chased the *asura*. Not giving him a chance to defend himself because of the nimble strength of the great *krabi*, he stabbed *Thotsakan* many times – the *krabi* lord was able to snatch away the lady.

For the ten-headed *yaksa*, losing his wife was as if he losing his life, tears filled his eyes. Full of love, full of remorse, full of regrets, not thinking about his own body, he dashed, springing, stabbing and striking to wrest back the maiden. Fighting closely, with a sense of great urgency, not backing away, they both dodged, both chased, neither giving in; both stabbed and jabbed, back and forth.

Phaya Phali, his left hand holding the lovely lady, his right hand holding his trident, fought, kicking and hitting the ten-faced *yaksa*, pointing his finger in derision. Raising his eyebrows, narrowing his eyes, snapping his teeth, he said: “*Woei*, twenty-armed *Thotsakan*, this lady will be the wife of whom, so beautiful beyond the angels in heaven?” He said this while kissing the beautiful woman. The *wanon* tormented, belittling the *asura*. The ten-headed *yaksa*, fighting in battle with *Phali*, was at a loss of how to oppose his power. He was at the end of his wits, the end of his might, nearly at the end of his life; at the end of any way to wrest back his wife, he fled from the *wanon*.

20. Birth of Ongkhot
21. Thotsakan as Crab; Thotsakan Removes his Heart; Thotsakan Steals Busabok (4: R 40; R 136; R 203; R 306)
22. Birth of Ronaphak
23. Ronaphak Fights Phra In
24. Thoraphi, Thorapha; Maiyarap Removes Heart
25. Kaiyakesi Goes to Ayudhya; Thotsarot Becomes King
26. Atchaban Gives His Body
27. Thotsarot Tours the Garden
28. Thotsarot Fights Pathutthanta
29. No Rain in Romaphat
30. Thotsarot Makes Ceremony to Get Sons
31. Thotsarot Fights Heranthut, Birth of Phra Ram and Brothers
32. Birth of Nang Sida
33. Nang Sida Buried, Phra Ram and Brothers Get Arrows
34. Phrot and Satarut Go to Kaiyaket, Phra Ram Phra Lak fight Ka Kanasun
35. Nang Sida Unearthed
36. Bow Lifting Contest
37. Marriage of Phra Ram and Nang Sida
38. Phra Ram Defeats Ramasun
39. Thoraphi (1: R 247)
40. Birth of Mangkonkan
41. Exile of Phra Ram
42. Phra Ram Meets Kukhan and Rishi (1: R 57)
43. Phra Phrot Follows Phra Ram
44. Phirap
45. Saowari
46. Phra Lak Gets the Sword of Kumphakat
47. Samanakha (1: R 243)
48. Phra Ram Kills Khon, Thut and Trisian
- 49. Abduction of Nang Sida** (7: R 7; R 86; R 93; R 106; R 164; R 218; R 235)
50. Sadayu Fights Thotsakan (2: R 86; R 224)
51. Phra Ram Follows Nang Sida (1: R 164)
52. Kumphon
53. Nang Atsamukhi
54. Phra Ram Meets Hanuman; Death of Phali (2: R 86; R 274)
55. Mahachomphu
56. Phra Ram Dispatches Hanuman to Longka
- 57. Adventures on the Way to Longka** (5: R 60; R 164; R 246; R 243; R 338)

58. Hanuman Meets Phi Sura Samut and Phra Narot
 59. Hanuman Searches for Nang Sida; Thotsakan Goes to Nang Sida (4: R 55; R 56; R 124; R 161)
 60. Hanuman Burns Longka (2: R 55; R 124)
 61. Hanuman Returns; Phra Ram Starts for Longka
 62. Phiphek Expelled from Longka (1: R 136)
 63. Thotsakan Sends Sukonsan to Spy on Phra Ram
 64. Thotsakan Changes to be a Rishi
65. Nang Loi (12: R 60; R 66; R 85; R 93; R 135; R 161; R 220; R 257; R 260; R 294; R 304; R 346)

Hanuman saw the female *asura* soaring up to escape, following the clouds of smoke, swift as if the wind was carrying her. The *wanon* was livid, his body shaking. Flourishing his diamond trident like the apocalyptic fire, he flew up after the *asura*. When he caught up to her, he pounced quickly, one hand reaching out to seize her hair. Having caught her, he came down with his mighty strength and took the female *asura* to present to *Phra Narai* amidst the army of troops, waiting to hear the royal command. After *Benyakai* had been punished and confessed, *Phra Ram* ordered the son of *Phra Phai*: “You must lead *Benyakai* back to *Longka*.” *Hanuman* bowed in obeisance and quickly said: “See here, precious *Benyakai*, at this time, His Royal Highness, the four-armed lord, will not take your life. His command is to have me take you away from the army of great *krabi* soldiers.” Saying thus, while holding the female *asura*, he flew up into the clouds.

Gliding along, floating in the sky, he had a feeling of loving affection. When they had reached *Longka*, he descended to the ground and said with sweet words: “Beautiful woman, most unfortunate one, I was so worried about you, young one, that you would take your very last breath. I was thinking and thinking how I could ask for kind forgiveness, when His Royal Highness announced his royal pardon, putting an end to my anxious concern. Then he asked me to take you, young lady, as I so much hoped. As for this feeling of great joy and happiness, it is as if receiving a lovely treasure from *Dusit*. It is our destiny as we must have been close companions once before. We two should be near each other, side by side – together in love, together in sweet affection; together living in happiness, together until the end of our lives.”

Nang Benyakai heard the *wanon* and felt embarrassed. Giving him a cold stare, she replied: “It is likely you are just using flirtatious language. Since I did not die, thus you have cleverly composed these words. By no means am I so gullible that I do not see through your tricks. Do not try to play like this. I am a woman; I understand what you are trying to do.”

“Dearest, oh dearest sweet one, most charmingly beautiful, most adorably loveable thing, I adore you, I cherish you, delightful woman. Why do you protest like this, fair maiden? It is the truthful truth; I would not deceive or trick you. Oh, enticing one, such slender and delicate loveliness. As for the fantastic realm of *Longka*, I can get it for your faithful father. We two then can enjoy each other and be content with honest happiness and joyful joy.” Saying thus, while clutching her close, the *krabi* leader teased the young woman.

Beautiful *Nang Benyakai* slapped at his hand, giving him a cold, sideward stare: “Indeed, acting so rude with no consideration for me. This is because I am a woman here alone on a secluded path; how can I put up a protest? I feel distressed nearly ready to die.” Saying thus, she turned and pushed him away, not showing any interest.

“Young, oh lovely young one, nimble nymph, oh cherished winsome woman. Why do you turn your back on me, lovely lady? Have some pity please, charming maiden.” He said this, while stealthily snuggling closer, kissing her with passionate tenderness. Supporting while stroked the flowering lotus bud with a fragrant, subtle perfume. The bee circled and landed with a delicate touch – a hot trembling echoed. Caressing, becoming saturated in the sweet, soft pollen – a celestial rain thundered over the land.

Nang Benyakai experienced the taste of tender feelings with the powerful *krabi*, a rapturous delight. The loving feeling was nearly as if she would die; she did not want to leave the side of the *wanon*. With intimate intoxicating adoration, bewitched by that soldier of the bow-bearing lord, she forgot her fear of the twenty-armed lord; the beautiful woman was in joyful bliss. *Hanuman* felt intense intimacy with *Benyakai* as joyous as if being in a celestial abode. He embracing her, fondling and kissing her cheeks while stroking her face: “Beloved, most compassionate one, I never want to be apart from you, lovely woman. However, there is still to be a war, so I must take leave from you at this time. Sweetheart, do not be upset with me. Please, most lovely lady, return now to *Longka*.”

Nang Benyakai heard the son of the wind and nearly took her last breath. Tears wash down her face as she bent her head and bowed while sobbing: “Alas, why should I not grieve? You would just throw me away; make me ashamed; such a waste being born as a woman. Fooled and dishonored, deceived by your bewitching words; misled nearly to the point of death. All because I felt so at ease. It is my mistake, who else can I blame.” She said thus, while weeping woefully.

The son of the wind saw *Nang Benyakai* pouring out her bemoaning grief. So he cradled her in his arms, taking her into his lap, kissing her face to console her: “Do not grieve with such longing lament, weeping woefully, being so upset. When the war is over with the *yaksa*, I can again be close to you, my love. Endeavor to preserve yourself. Do not let anything trouble or disturb you.” *Benyakai*, that most lamentable one, heard these words of *Hanuman* and the sadness of the lovely lady gradually abated. Getting down from the lap of the *wanon*, she said: “I would ask to entrust my father to you. You must think of me as a loyal servant.” Saying this while heaving a great sigh, not wishing to be separated from the great *krabi*, she bowed her head and raised her hands in reverence. The lovely lady then quickly went into *Longka*.

66. Marking out the Causeway (2: R 27; R 114)

67. Suphanamatcha (14: R 42; R 48; R 114; R 130; R 161; R 163; R 200; R 201; R 206; R 213; R 249; R 294; R 323; R 333)

A company of *yaksa* on watch saw the *krabi* gathered in a great commotion, carrying blocks of stone, hurling them in the sea like a torrential rain, which was creating a causeway by filling up the water. The *asura* were in a panic and quickly went to *Phichai Longka* and informed *Thao Rapphanasun*: “At this time *Phra Ram Chakri* has the *krabi* bringing stones, throwing them into the ocean to build a causeway. Within about another eight thousand *wa*, they will reach the water’s edge here.” The fearless, ten-headed one heard *Saran* report on these matters and thought deeply: ‘Damn these human beings, so capable; brazenly marking out a causeway with stones. If they cross over and reach *Longka*, the people will have trouble throughout the realm. I think I should have the shoals of fish in the sea destroy this causeway; they should be able to eliminate it.’ Thinking thus, he ordered *Mahothon*: “You must go and find *Suphanamatcha*. Invite my daughter to come here.” *Mahothon* took the order, bowed in obeisance and went out to the edge of the waters.

Reaching the abode of the young lady in the middle of the ocean, he informed her: “Your royal father had me come to invite you, lovely maiden.” *Nang Suphanamatcha*, informed by the courtier, quickly went forth. Upon arriving, she bowed her head to His Majesty, her father, there amidst the court ladies, waiting to hear the command of the *kumphan*.

The twenty-armed lord saw his daughter as if he was in heaven: “See here, adored one, at this time those daring human beings have marched out an army of *wanon* and come to the edge of the water. They are having the *krabi* carry rocks to fill in the middle of the sea and will cross over to fight with father. You can help put an end to this threat and bring peace to all of your family and clan. You should order your fish followers to carry away the stones and throw them into the gulf. Do not allow the causeway to be built. Father will reward you, lovely one, with anything you want.”

Beautiful *Nang Matcha* accepted the command: “Just only this is not a problem. I will gladly agree. I will not disappoint you. Father, please stay in peace.” Saying thus, she paid reverence to the feet of the *yaksa* lord. Upon reaching the middle of the sea, she ordered her fish retinue to carry away the blocks of stone and throw them into the great gulf.

The fish entourage swarmed forth, carrying away the stones in a great furor. They swam, while flipping chaotically, interweaving with a noisy bustle. The waves splashing all over as they destroyed what was there in the deep waters. As for the *wanon* not realizing anything was happening as the fish energetically carried away the stones, the *krabi* threw in more.

The son of *Phra Athit* looked about and saw that the blocks of stone were strangely disappearing. He scrutinized for a long moment: ‘See here, I think there is something amiss.’ So he said to *Hanuman*: “I am quite baffled. Why do the stones that are thrown in disappear, they do not seem to stick? Even though they have brought nearly the whole mountain, a great mass already, I see them shift and move beneath the sea. Nearly full already, but now where did they go? What would make it happen like this? Can you go see what is happening in the ocean?”

Hanuman heard mighty *Sukhrup* and replied: “I am also confused seeing this strange strangeness as you have pointed out, dear uncle. I think there must be some reason under the sea. I will go down to see for myself.” Saying thus, he made a display of his great might, and slipped into the ocean with his prodigious power. Looking around the middle of the sea, he saw the shoal of fish carting away the

stones. Enraged like the cataclysmic fire, he pulled out his diamond trident and flourished it about, creating a flash like the rays of the sun. Tumbling forth in the water, he went to chase them.

Many died all around there from the fighting might of the *krabi*. The schools of fish dispersed, swimming away to escape the confusion. The son of the wind pursued them and, looking about, saw a mermaid, a tail that of a fish and the body of a lovely woman. Her figure and face so sweet and graceful, slender and delicate like a heavenly angel. Furiously incensed like the apocalyptic fire, he gnashed his teeth and shouted: “*Woei, woei*, see here, you damn scaly scoundrel, you have led your gang of foul fish followers to carry away the stones, why is this? Do you not have fearful fear for your life? Do you not know that *Narai* has incarnated, come to annihilate the *yaksa*.” Thus said, he pursued her in a furor.

Sweet *Suphanamatcha* looked up and saw the mighty *krabi*. The lovely lady was terrified making her quiver in fear. Face ashen, body shaking and trembling, she made a break, quickly swimming away to escape, going into the shoal of fish. The brave son of the wind, grabbing at her as he chased closely behind, was able to seize the lovely fish maiden. *Nang Suphanamatcha*, petrified, nearly out of her mind, yelled out, begging for her life.

The mighty son of *Phra Phai*, raising his diamond trident, angrily questioning her: “You, here, what is your name, boldly bold one? What is your lineage, damnable finned thing, leading your entourage of fish, coming to carry away my solid stones so they will not become a great causeway? Who was the one to have you come here? You must speak only the truth, damn despicable one. If not, you will lose your life.”

Nang Matcha, fearing that the *wanon* would kill her, raised her hands and informed him: “I am the daughter of *Thotsakan*. My name is *Suphanamatcha*. My father had me come and have these schools of fish carry away the blocks of stone so they could not be used in the causeway. He is afraid *Phra Ram* will cross his army over and go to fight at *Longka*. Thus I have done this out of fear. Punish me with execution. But if you will bestow me with my life, as for the blocks of stone, I will order the fish to carry them back. I beg of you, one of great might, you should have pity on me.”

Hanuman heard the lovely lady beg for her life. Such polite words, uttered so sweetly. He felt the thrill of lust and affection tighten around his heart. His anger dissipated, dispelling his harsh thoughts. He studied her face, then spoke: “Lovely, oh lovely lady, pretty and charming, beautiful young, most adorable one. You should not feel fearful fright. I will tell you of these matters. A first, I came here with indignation, extremely angry, as if I could not control myself, intent on striking you down, have you dead here in the great sea. When I came and saw you, lovely young one with a face like a celestial angel, slender and delicate, having such soft skin, this engendered feelings of affection for you. Because of past merit, we thus can come to meet. We two ought to share our sorrows, share our joyful happiness until the end of our lives.”

Nang Suphanamatcha heard the words of the son of the wind, making her shy and abashed. Giving him a cold stare, she replied: “Why do you come flirting with me like this? You ought not to have any feelings of affection for me, one who should be punished with their life. This would not exonerate me from any wrong and I have no intention to save my life in that way. Do not pretend, intending some scheme, increasing my shame; I would be unable to overcome the slander. You would delight in love with me, a being of a different species? It is of no use; it is not possible we can be together. I apologize, do not be too upset.”

“Loveliest, oh loveliest one, you are most beautifully beautiful, most enticingly endearing. The words you speak are so adorable. Where could one find such a lovely maiden as this? Beautiful in all respects – graceful bearing, keen and clever. Beautiful figure, beautiful body, beautiful face – making my affection for you blossom. As for being of a different species and race, perhaps, but we are the same as the venerable ascetic with the *kiniri*, we can sustain our happiness. We two ought to have intimate relations; share our love.” Saying thus, he embraced her: “My beloved do not reject my feelings.”

Beautiful *Nang Matcha*, peering out of the corner of her eye, slapped his hand away. Sharply disdainful, she turned her face away: “Alas, the more I say, the more you take liberties; so exceedingly rude and insulting. Indeed, have you no pity? Because you are a warrior, without any shame, you do this.” Saying thus, while pinching and scratching in a fracas, she shoved him away with no compassion.

“Most, oh most beloved, most marvelous maiden, I adore you as my own life; do not pinch and scratch me, making me hurt. These are my deepest feelings, beautiful one. You must believe me, do not show such disdain. I would not deceive you, most lovely lady. Sweetest one of mine, you should have

mercy.” Saying thus, while snuggling close to her, he kissed her cheek and nose with affection. Slowly support her breast with his hand, a raging, turbulent wind blew. *Phra Samut* flashed in a foamy flood; crests crashed on the coast in a clamorous commotion. Clouds obscured the sky in every direction; there was a celestial rain of *phloi phrom* flowers. The bud of the lotus blossom separated, opened up to release its pollen. Those two closely enjoyed their passion together; each content with joyful bliss.

Nang Suphanamatcha having tasted the pleasure of intimacy with the son of the wind, snuggled close to him, in a daze, bedazzled with affection – such extreme love, such extreme affection to take away her breath. The lovely lady forgot her fear of her father; forgot about her activity in the middle of the sea; forgot about her finned entourage; forgot about her shyness; forgot about herself; such was the overwhelming passionate affection.

Hanuman, feeling tremendous love for the beautiful woman, was entranced with joy. Raising his hands, he kissing her face: “Sweetest, most beloved one, at this time, the lord of all three worlds has ordered me to fill in this roadway, to be completely finished within seven days. If this is not done in time, I will be punitively punished. You should order your shoal of finned fish to bring back the solid stones in the great gulf to place in the sea-bed so they can serve as a causeway. I will then escape the punishment. My beloved, you should have pity on me.” *Nang Matcha*, hearing the words of *Hanuman*, took leave and swam off. Reaching the gulf, she ordered her retinue: “You must go carry the stones back to where they were before.” Finished with this order, she floated away, swimming with grace and beauty, as she returning to him.

The flock of fish took the order of the lovely lady and swam forth immediately. Reaching the gulf, they retrieved all the blocks of stone. Cutting through the water, there was a great noisy contest as they placed them in the formation of a causeway, creating a bustling confusion in the sea until all the stones were returned. *Hanuman*, when he saw her fish followers carry back the stones, was delighted as if receiving a treasure from *Phra In*. The *krabi* leader tightly hugged the lovely maiden and said with sweet words: “See here, most beloved one of mine, fate must forsake and have us sadly separated. If I did not have to carry out my royal duties, I would stay and enjoy this joyful bliss. But if I were to tarry, I fear some punishment as the *Garuda*-mounted lord will be angry. You remain here, lovely maiden, most beloved one of mine. When the war is finished in *Longka*, I will return to find you, young lady.”

Most pitiable *Nang Matcha* heard this with a burning agitation as if a fierce flame had come to singe her body, increasing her lament for the son of the wind. She bent her face, her spirit disconsolate as she hugged the feet of the *krabi* and bemoaned: “Alas, you do not love me for real, tossing me away; it is most pitiful; fooling me with tricky, sweet words until I have been dishonored and disgraced. My careless heart fell for a companion who came to deceive me with love until becoming bored, then flees. It is in vain I was born as a woman, fooled into having to care for myself for a long time.”

The courageous son of the wind saw the lovely mermaid so sad as if she would pass away. So he cradled her into his lap, kissing her face as he comforted her: “Please don’t be so sad and weep with such heavy hearted lament. It is not that I am bored with you, young, beloved one. It is necessary that I must be far from you. Lovely lady take care of yourself well.”

Nang Suphanamatcha heard the words of the son of the wind and was unable to speak. Sliding down from his lap, she gave a cold stare and turned away. With a shove, she pushed him, not letting him touch her: “Do not waste time with words of understanding. Please, do not say you love me. Who knows what love you have? Who could we blame for one’s own fate? Gone already, it can not come back.”

Hanuman heard the lady pour out her grief; his loving affection doubled over. So he hugged, stroking and kissing her face: “Young one, do not be angry with me. Wait and take care of yourself, I must take leave.” Saying thus, while making a display his great might, the sea was all in confusion. Rising up from the middle of the great ocean, he went straight to the causeway. Reaching there, he raised his hands in reverence to the son of mighty *Phra Suriya* and described all the events about meeting the fish maiden. *Phaya Sukhrip* was delighted. Quickly he had the *krabi* troops assemble to fill in and complete the great causeway. There was a noisy uproar throughout the sea as the *wanon* worked together in a great ado.

68. Matchanu (4: R 42; R 161; R 206; R 323)

69. Phra Ram Crosses to Longka

70. Ongkhot Goes as Envoy to Longka

71. Sukhrip Breaks the Magic Tiered Umbrella of Thotsakan

72. Maiyarap Abducts Phra Ram (2: R 67; R 114)

Thotsakan sat down upon the bejeweled throne amidst the group of colossal *asura* who were bowing in obeisance all around and commanded the courtiers: “As for this army of the humans that have marched out, they are quite fearless, bold and adept. This is because of *Phiphkek*, my younger brother, going there as a traitor. How can I eliminate that one, have him dead and gone? In all the lineage of the *Phra Phrom*, who is the one with the skill and power; someone who could sneak in alone and kill those humans, both of them? Then it would not be necessary to march an army out to fight.”

Paowanasun bowed and replied: “In your own family, there is but *Maiyarap*, the offspring of *Sakkayawong*, who rules over *Badan*. An expert in disappearances, he can hold his breath and make himself invisible. Even more, he can hypnotize an entire army who can be made to sleep by the incantations of this *yaksa*. Please invite this *asura* to come and think of some plan to eliminate *Phra Ram* and *Phra Lak*. I think this will be quite easy and convenient.”

The ten-headed *yaksa* heard *Paowanasun* and was delighted. Clapping his hands, he laughed with happy joy: “I had forgotten about this ally who is an intimate one of mine. As for those in *Badan*, they are of the lineage of radiant *Phra Phrom*. Since *Thao Saha Maliwan* died and passed away, I have not had a chance to go there until now *Maiyarap*, my nephew, has grown up. *Nonyawik* and *Wayuwek* should go down to *Badan* and tell my nephew of the disturbance up here, that *Longka* has a troublesome war. Invite this nephew of mine to come here at once.”

Nonyawik and *Wayuwek* took the order, bowed in reverence and went to their palace. They ordered the *asura* to harness the assiduous *Nilaphahu*, along with the ably adept *Waikraison*: “We will go to *Badan*.” The keeper of the horses bowed his head, took the order and dashed forth. He harnessed *Nilaphahu*, that fiercely strong and powerful one, along with the noble steed, *Waikraison*, decorated with harnesses of the nine radiant gems. These two animals were like regal lions, high spirited, standing tall and bold. Swaggering with vigorous pride, they neighed energetically, like mighty imperial steeds. Prepared according to the royal command of the nephews of the ruler of *Longka*, they were brought and both of those royal ones mounted their horses and departed from *Longka*. Slipping through the surface of the earth, four feet paced proudly, pounding forward straight to *Badan*.

Upon reaching there, the two *asura* dismounted and walked to the pavilion of the senior court officials. They explained to the senior attendants that the ruler of *Longka* issued an order having them come to see the *asura* lord. *Chitrakut*, along with wise *Chitraphairi*, heard this and led them inside. They bowed in reverence and informed *Maiyarap*: “The ten-headed *asura* lord who rules over *Longka* has had *Nonyawik* and *Wayuwek*, his senior nephews, the sons of *Phaya Marit*, come here for an audience with Your Majesty.” *Phaya Maiyarap* looked about and saw the two good-looking Highnesses. The *yaksa* lord thus asked: “The ruler of the great realm of *Longka*, he who is the greatest in the world, is he in abundant well-being, or is His Majesty dissatisfied? What has happened that he has had you come all the way down here?”

Nonyawik and *Wayuwek* replied: “*Longka* has experienced some calamity because *Lak* and *Ram*, two brothers in the lineage of *Thotsarot*, the grandsons of *Thao Atchaban* who ruled over *Si Ayudhya*, have come and struck down *Ka Kana Asura*, who was our grandmother, along with our uncle, *Sawahu*, and *Phaya Marit*, our father. Then they eliminated many in our royal family: *Phaya Trisian*, *Thut* and *Korn*. At this time, they have mobilized an army of *wanon* and crossed over the ocean, establishing a camp threateningly close to the city; a bold and intrepid battlement – there will be a great war. His Majesty had us come to invite you to go to see him.”

Phaya Maiyarap heard and was furiously enraged like a dreadful fire: “Hey, these contemptible, disgusting human beings, what sort of might could these ones have, bolding coming to create trouble, looking down upon the family and lineage of the *yaksa*, thinking they can strike down and destroy us.” Saying thus, he told the two *kumphan* boys: “You should go and inform His Majesty, as for this trifling war, he should not trouble himself. Tomorrow, I will go see him. I will offer my services to go catch this enemy; strike them down, have them dead.” The two strong, brave young royal ones, receiving the command of the *kumphan* lord, bowed in reverence and left.

Phaya Maiyarap, when the savvy sons of *Marit* had gone, asked *Chitrakut*, along with *Chitraphairi*: “You, sirs, are senior ones who know of all sorts of matters. As for *Longka* and *Badan*, in the case of a war, have we ever gone to help in the fight sometime in the past?” *Chitrakut*, along with *Chitraphairi*, bowed in obeisance and informed him: “We have lived for countless years, but this has never occurred before as we know. As for this matter, it is a bit mysterious so we cannot give you any counsel. Please, Your Majesty should go ask your mother.” *Phaya Maiyarap* heard the two *asura* so he said: “See here, senior charioteer, you should prepare my chariot. I will go to see my mother at her

palace.” *Triphat*, the diligent attendant, received the order, paid obeisance and left the audience hall. He prepared the chariot, hitched with one thousand royal lions, along with a powerful army of troops.

Phaya Maiyarap bathed and donned his royal attire, so handsome, resembling his royal father, his right hand grasping his sword as he proceeded directly to the palace of his royal mother. Upon arriving, he bowed his head in respect to the feet of Her Majesty, asking her: “Regarding *Longka* and *Badan*, before, if there was some adversary who marched out threatening the city, have each other ever gone to assist in fighting? Whose city has stayed in peace? Whose city has endured suffering? Mother, you should tell me so I can understand what has been the ancient custom.”

His wise mother replied: “At the time of *Latsatian Phrom*, the father of the ten-faced *yaksa*, along with your mighty grandfather, these *asura* were of the same family. Should some war or battle arise, each of them would assist in fighting. When *Thao Latsatian* passed away, *Thotsakan* inherited his empire. He has not stayed within the virtues of rulers, doing things that were very mean and base. *Thao Saha Maliwan* was not content. When he conferred the realm to your father, he ordered him not to have any dealings with the deceitful ten-faced one, just to respect him as a family relation. But for a long time there has been no contact. Why do you come to ask of these matters of the past? What I hear makes me wonder. What has happened, my beloved one, thus you come to talk of this?”

Phaya Maiyarap replied: “The matter concerns the ruler of *Longka*. He had his two nephews inform me that some human beings, two wicked brothers named *Ram* and *Lak*, the grandsons of *Thao Atchaban* who previously ruled over *Ayudhya*, had struck down members of his family, then boldly marched an army of *wanon* marking out a causeway, crossing over to encamp at Mount *Morakot*. I am asking you, should I go help him fight this enemy?”

Nang Chanthaprapha heard her son uttering the name of His Royal Majesty, *Atchaban*, then say he would go and fight *Phra Ram*, his grandson. This made her agitated, as if sleeping in a dreadful flame. The lovely lady covered her ears fearful that her son would lose his life. Bending her face, she gave a great sigh as her face turned ashen. Stupefied, she nearly fell unconscious. *Maiyarap* saw the condition of his mother making him feel bewildered. He bowed to her feet: “May it please Your Majesty. I spoke the name of *Phra Rama*, grandson of the great *Atchaban*. You turned your face down without uttering a word. Please tell me what is the reason? Your hands have covered your ears. What is the cause of this, mother?”

His mother informed him of the matter from the deep past: “As for *Thao Atchaban*, he is in the lineage of *Phra Harirak*, with great might like the apocalyptic fire making all quailed from heaven to hell. Once there was *Asura Phak*, swollen with pride, very base, bold and brazen, wandering about causing devastation everywhere; no one could withstand his might. His Royal Majesty went and cut off his head and placed it to guard over his garden. As for *Phra Ram*, he is the four-armed *Phra Chakri*, incarnated, coming from the *Kasian* Ocean with tremendous fighting strength from his great bow. He will pacify the world, making it peaceful. Thus, you would go to fight with him? How can you stand up to his might? Just uttering his name gives me a feeling of dread. Your mother does not wish to hear, so I closed my ears from fear of the might of conch-carrying *Phra Chakkrit*. Son, do not go make trouble with him. Stop and think what would be best.”

Phaya Maiyarap replied: “Why would you sever relations with our lineage, is it possible? How will we be able to maintain our dignity? The three worlds will speak ill of us. You only extol the humans, saying they have great might to fight, so brave and fearless, able to overcome the *asura*. Do we have no strength or ability? Regarding the ruler of *Longka*, he has blazing might in all ten directions. As for *Lak* and *Ram*, grandsons of *Thao Atchaban*, how could they dare challenge him in battle? Your son also has formidable might, able to subdue all the heavens up to *Dusit*. I do not fear the power of any adversary. I will go and destroy them, take their lives.”

His mother, beating her chest, said: “You should not be so arrogant proclaiming your greatness. Listen, mother will tell you about the time the ten-faced *yaksa* was with *Nang Montho*. They were seated at a window and a pair of sparrows came to perch directly in front of the face of the *yaksa*, making love according to the manner of birds. *Montho* bend her face in shyness. The ten-faced one roared like a lion, ten mouths bellowing. Those birds refused to fly away. *Montho* thought that this was very astonishing, thus, she said to *Thotsakan*: ‘This is a serious omen foretelling something will arise. Sometime from now, it is likely that the tremendous power of the *yaksa* will decline. The humans will prosper with their great might and power.’ The ten-faced lord was angry, not believing his wife. Therefore, she raised her hands and prayed, uttering the name of *Atchaban*. In an instant his sword floated down and cut off the heads of the birds. As for mighty *Phra Chakkrit*, even his grandfather can not compare. If you go up and fight, how will you be able to escape from death?”

Phaya Maiyarap heard his mother and was livid like the eternal fire. However, since she was his mother, he controlled himself from striking her down. Stamping his feet, gnashing his fangs, grinding his teeth, he rose up, turned and left. Grabbing the *ngon* of his royal chariot, he brandished it about, bashing it down. The noble lions, all one thousand, perished from his great agile might. Then he strode away like a valiant lion, along with the company of attendant troops. Upon arriving at his palace, he ordered the senior *yaksa* official to prepare an army of troops: “We will march to *Longka*.”

The *yaksa* courtier received the order, paid obeisance, and went out from the audience hall. Conscripted was an army of bold soldiers – formed into companies of troops. Elephanteers harnessed elephants, choosing all that were rutting, fierce and fiery; *asura* rode their necks, hands holding hooks, brandishing them back and forth. Horsemen harnessed handsome horses, prancing and dancing, kicking and flicking, vigorous and rigorous. Charioteers hitched chariots, standing powerfully, hands holding throwing spears. Captains inspected the *asura* conscripts, who pressed forth carrying spears, swords, poison guns and maces, awaiting the *asura* leader. *Phaya Maiyarap*, when the troops had been mobilized, grabbed his great mace and mounted his royal chariot hitched with regal lions; four thousand all of noble breed. With a breathtaking, spirited leap, they drove briskly upwards. Upon reaching *Longka*, he had the army halt and went to see the *asura*.

The ten-headed *yaksa*, who was out in the audience hall seated amidst his courtiers, looked around and saw *Maiyarap*, his beloved nephew. Rising from his throne, he went to take the arm of the *kumphan* and had him come to sit together underneath his white tiered umbrella. Handsome like *Phra Phrom* and *Wetsuwan*, both *asura* paid respect to the other. Then he had these pleasant words: “See here, prosperous nephew of mine, your father was one of my family, a faithful compatriot. Me, I just now have a chance to meet you. You rule over the subjects, servants and soldiers there in *Badan*. As for your family and relations, are they all still in good health and happiness?”

Phaya Maiyarap heard these warm words and replied: “I, your beloved nephew, rule my realm where the people prosper in pleasant peace. Along with my family and relations in *Badan*, all are well and content, with no worries. But Your Majesty came to call for me since some adversary has marched here – where are they? What sort of fierce battles have been engaged here in this war being fought?”

The twenty-armed *yaksa* was pleased, so he replied: “As for the army of the humans that have marched here, even though they have bold strength, were I to march out to fight, how could they withstand my might? But, as for combat such as this, with each side having great strength, it would be similar to spraying water at each other – do not think that some will not get wet. For sure there would be deaths on both sides. You, one who has great skillful powers, clever at chants and adept incantations, could go and cast a sleeping spell; catch these humans to strike them down, have them dead.”

Maiyarap, that cleverly calculating one, replied: “As for this little conflict, it is really nothing; your beloved nephew will offer his services to catch the humans according to the command of Your Majesty. I will take leave to go first perform a ritual ceremony. Your Majesty, oh mighty lord, please do not have any concern.”

Phaya Maiyarap bowed in respect and took leave from the ten-headed one. He mounting his chariot and had the powerful troops move out, slipping beneath the surface of the earth, down to *Badan*. Upon arriving at Mount *Surakan*, he ordered his courtier to build a ceremonial pavilion: “Gather some magical poison mushrooms. Also find skulls of spirits to be blocks for the fire stove, placed where I can set up a tray to boil the potion.” *Chitrakan* ordered the four *asura* guards, along with every company, to build a ceremonial pavilion according to the orders of the *asura* lord. Erected was a ceremonial pavilion, broad and spacious, long and tapered, elegantly beautiful, with thirty-nine sparkling rooms, bright red, emitting a rosy radiance. In the center, an ornate seat was placed, along with incense, candles and poison vines, all arranged according to the treatises.

Maiyarap dismounted from his chariot and went to cleanse himself in the river and anointed himself with perfumed water. Donning red, bright and beautiful, and a cover garment of silk, he then put on a *thuram* string and applied powder tying up his hair into a topknot as a *rishi*, bound with a beautiful *kopinam*, along with jeweled prayer beads. His hand held his ruby stone pipe as he proceeded into the ceremonial pavilion. He placed a metal tray upon the tripod of spirit skulls, making a ferocious sacrificial fire, offering flowers, incense and candles. Finished thus, he went to the ornate seat and sat in mediation, relaxing his breathing. Eyes closed, he chanted incantations while composing his mind. When finished one thousand verses, the earth quivered and quaked. Brilliant bright flames rose up as the large tray became a great red inferno. Then, grabbing the ruby stone pipe and chanting, he blew three times according to the prescript of the ritual. Two beautiful women rose up, their faces pure white

like heavenly angels, with waists beautifully slender. The *kumphan* gave his hand to the two lovely ladies, to have them sit on the bejeweled seat, snuggling close, so joyously happy and tender. Teasing and joking in amusement, the *asura* stroked and caressed them. Then he stopped, regained his composure and released himself from the desirous attraction. Brandishing the powerful pipe, he eliminated them in an instant.

Then he returned to sit upon the ornate seat. Raising his hands above his head, he recited a chant, composing his body. Competed one thousand times, he then blew out. A pair of *khotchasi* appeared, sitting on the large metal tray, brandishing their tusks in the middle of the flames. Seeing that this was not in conformity with the ritual, the *asura* was furiously angry. Thrash them with his gemmed pipe, they vanished in the blink of an eye.

Thereupon he sat composed, eyes closed, uttering a magical chant. Finished one thousand times, the *yaksa* blew out three times. The power of the chant was successful – two powerful noble lions rose up, fighting together in the middle of the ritual site. Seeing that this conformed with the treatises, he was delighted, clapping his hands in joy. Brandishing the splendid pipe, the regal lions were killed from the might. He then slit them open to take their hearts, which were arranged together with leaves, seven kinds of *ru nitthra* that cause sleep, along with the magical mushrooms, placed in front of the shining emerald mortar. Then he read out one thousand chants with a controlled mind, as he ground them together.

When all was finished, the *asura* lord laughed merrily: ‘I will try so I can know the power of the potion.’ He rubbed some on his right shin and blew on it. A huge snarling tiger rose up on four feet, its two eyes like blazing fire, whiskers quivering as it roared. Then he took and smeared his left foot, which produced a striped kitten, every strand of fur lustrous, ears and tail twitching like a toy, running around the feet of the *asura*. Then once more the potion was rubbed along the left arm of the *yaksa* – a regal *naga* rose up with seven enormous heads. Then he smeared his right arm with the potion, which became a *garuda*, wings unfurled, flapping in a furor as if it would seize the *naga*. Then he rubbed the potion over his whole body and his entire body and shadow disappeared. The *asura* smiled broadly achieving as he intended.

The company of *asura*, not seeing their lord, shouted out noisily, wondering what was wrong: “*Woei* our leader, where has our master disappeared to?” Each of them were shocked as they ran searching for the *asura* lord. *Maiyarap*, seeing the soldiers running around in turmoil, clapped his hands in delight and called out: “I am here, I have not gone anywhere. Why do you strain so to find me?” Saying thus, the *asura* lord washed off the ritual potion. The company of powerful *asura* troops saw the *asura* lord and called to their comrades as they talked together: “Just now, our leader disappeared. Alarmed, we went in search trembling.” Some ran in and bowed in obeisance. The *kumphan* was joyously delighted.

Phaya Maiyarap, when finished mixing the potion, mounted his chariot and returned to *Badan*. Upon arriving, he went into his palace and, lying upon his bed, grew drowsy and slept. When toward the end of the night, as birds chirped a clear song, he dreamt of a brilliant moon with a shining halo, bright and clear in the sky. Then there was one small star rising up, floating in the horizon, shining brightly with bold light like the rays of the sun, flying up above the sky, rising higher than the moon, a large orb, the glowing color blocking out the light of the moon. When he awoke, he reflected on the dream with concern, thinking that it must be an important omen. So he bathed and went out to the audience hall and asked the senior astrologer: “Last night, I had a strange dream,” which he related from beginning to end. The senior ranking astrologer pondered the dream carefully and knew that it was not welcoming. He bowed his head and informed him: “Your Majesty, as for this dream with the moon shining on the earth, this is Your Majesty, one with great power. Regarding the star more brilliant than the moon, this is one of your relatives who will rise up to rule over the great realm of *Badan*.”

Phaya Maiyarap heard the divination of the astrologer, making him agitated. He sat thinking deeply for a long time, then asked: “As for my family, far or near, who would be a foe to oppose us? Sir, you should examine some more to see clearly. Who will become the leader over the *kumphan* to rule over my land?” The *yaksa* brahmin astrologer received the order and examined everyone’s horoscope and knew that *Waiyawik* would rule over *Badan*. Thus, he bowed his head and informed the *yaksa* lord: “*Waiyawik*’s destiny is most excellent. I see that he will rule over the realm because his birth year is better than that of Your Majesty.” *Maiyarap* heard as if someone had come to slice him open. The *kumphan* thought deeply: ‘If I should leave him free now, a great calamity will arise in no time.’ Thinking thus, he ordered the courtier: “Take *Waiyawik* and imprison him. His mother is named

Phirakuan. You should place them in shackles in the big jail. If and when I get the humans, I will execute them all together.” *Nonthasun* received the order, bowed in obeisance and went out. He imprisoned *Phirakuan*, along with *Waiyawik*, placing them together in chains according to the command of the *asura*.

Meanwhile, glorious *Phra Harirak* lay back upon his bed in the royal pavilion. As dusk approached and the sun slide behind the mountains, a flood of stars spread across the sky surrounding the moon in the clouds. The wind blew a gentle breeze as a sweet fragrance of flowers wafted forth. His Royal Highness fell into a deep sleep. Toward the later part of the night, as birds gave forth their clear song, celestial deva induced an inspiration, a vivid dream. The sun appeared with a bright radiance, without any clouds to block the rays. Bold *Rahu* suddenly gobbled it up with his mouth. Then, His Royal Highness reached out his hand and was able to break the tiered umbrella in the world of the *Phrom*. Also, the feet of His Royal Highness went all the way down to the world of *nagas*. When he woke up, he had a feeling of concern. Sitting up, he thought deeply about this dream, but could not shake loose a sense of apprehension. Thus, he washed and donned his royal attire and proceeding from the royal pavilion. Sitting upon his bejeweled seat with the powerful soldiers in attendance all gathered in front, he related the dream to *Phaya Phiphek*, describing the details of everything that had occurred: “I think it is most amazing. What sort of good or bad is there to be?”

Phiphek heard His Royal Highness relate his dream and examined it with his wisdom to discern all the good and bad matters. Raising his hands, the *asura* informed His Royal Highness: “Regarding this dream, Your Royal Highness who has incarnated to come to vanquish the *yaksa*, the sun with a halo shining in the sky, you would be. Moreover, in the dream, *Rahu*, who came to swallow up the sun, a nephew of the ten-faced lord, *Maiyarap*, this is; who will put you under a spell and to *Badan* will take Your Royal Highness away. However, no danger will there be. Follow a loyal soldier will and kill the *asura*; then Your Royal Highness, back he will bring thee. As for the part of the dream where the jeweled umbrella is broken in the land of *Phra Phrom*, most propitious, this part of the dream would be. It reveals over the *yaksa*, victory you will have. Secure *Longka* you will; pass away will the ten-headed *asura*. As for Your Royal Highness treading on the land of the *naga*, very auspicious, this matter is. Out to cover everywhere, in all the levels of heaven and down below, your power will spread.”

Phra Chakri remarked: “So *Maiyarap* will take me away to the realm of *Badan*. What way do you think would prevent this wicked *asura*?” *Phiphek* replied: “Very bad the ill-fate of your day of birth is. Saturn being separated from the moon danger in the middle of the night there will be. If one o’clock in the morning is past, celestial *deva* from the stars will arrive. Thus, pass will this evil stigma. Then only peace and happiness you will have.”

The bow-bearing lord of the three worlds heard the prediction of *Phiphek*. His Royal Highness thus ordered the son of *Phra Suriya*: “You must conscript the troops to protect and safeguard, sitting in watch throughout the night until daybreak.” *Hanuman*, hearing the command of *Phra Chakri*, raised his hands in reverence and said: “As for myself, one of your very most loyally loyal soldiers, please let me offer myself to help protect you from the dangerous danger of this wily wicked *kumphan*, so as not to let that one be able to enter here and reach Your Royal Highness.” Saying thus, he made obeisance with *Sukhrip* and they went out.

He raised his hands above his head, and closing his eyes, recited a powerful chant – the body of the *wanon* was transformed: tremendously tall as *Phra Phrom*; gigantic as Mount *Chakkrawan*, his lower part stretching beneath the earth many fathoms. His tail was wrapped around to be a rampart completely encircling the troops. As for the royal pavilion, the *krabi* leader placed it before his chest. Spreading his mouth wide to be an opening, his tongue closed and open as a screen. *Phiphek*, along with *Phra Lak*, sat guarding *Phra Chakri*. *Sukhrip* was placed as the gatekeeper watching over the *krabi* troops, examining each as they went in and out so that no enemy in disguise could mix in. As for the *Sip Paet Mongkut*, they patrolled on tours of inspection. Bonfires were lighted in every sector as the troops beat gongs making their rounds.

Then, tenacious *Phaya Maiyarap*, when it was close to twilight, holding his ruby pipe, along with the magical sleeping potion, stealthily slipped through the surface of *Badan*, rising up to the edge of the ocean and took the path into the forest. Upon reaching Mount *Morakot*, the *yaksa* turned left and right and saw the companies of *wanon* troops marching on patrol, sitting in guard, their captains sternly exhorting them, not realizing the impending danger. The *kumphan* secretly went forth.

Looking around, he saw a huge bulwark like Mount *Chakkrawan*, making him confused: ‘What has happened that I cannot see the royal pavilion? Good or bad, I must find out. Besides, I am one with

great bold might; I can go and put them to sleep by using my great power. I think I will wander about to see the tricky stratagem of these *krabi*.' Thinking thus, with a display of might, the *asura* flew up into the sky. Even reaching *Solot Phrommet*, he could not find the end of the mountainous wall. So he flew back down with his might, cutting through the earth. Upon reaching *Ka La Khani Rut*, he did not find the end of the barrier. Unable to see any trace of an opening, he was at a loss, thus he returned.

Carefully creeping along, following the path, concealed in the shadows of the thick leaves, he did not let the *wanon* troops see any part of his body. The companies of *krabi* troops marching in patrol suddenly heard the sound of twigs breaking. They gathered and went to investigate, searching in a great commotion, captains and conscripts in a boisterous uproar. *Maiyarap*, alarmed, his whole body took fright, so he immediately slipped away. He decided he should hide himself in the edge of a thicket at the base of the mountain. Leaning out, he saw a unit of troops surrounding a camp fire. 'If I want to sneak into that place, I must go in disguised as a *wanon* soldier, not let them suspect anything. I will deceive them with questions to learn.' Thinking thus, he held his hands up and composed his mind, reciting an incantation and his body became a small like that of a forest monkey. Going in disguise to the unit of troops, the *asura* joined them in their patrol.

He saw one *krabi* displaying his valour, spreading his mouth wide to be a huge opening with a gatekeeper stationed in front; those who went back and forth were examined so he would know each face and name, counting the bodies strictly. Going in or out, all were noticed. The *kumphan*, when he saw this, was alarmed. But he stood and observed closely, not knowing where to go or what to do. Accordingly, he wandered around and listening to the *wanon* conscripts chatter.

The brave and valiant *krabi* soldiers wandered about in patrol, beating gongs, exhort each other: "We can not think about sleeping yet; the luck of the four-armed lord will be very bad. We must help to safeguard His Royal Highness and not allow any danger." *Phaya Maiyarap* heard the *wanon* and asked with pretense: "When will this danger pass that the astrologer predicted regarding his day of birth so we can lie down and close our eyes to give us some peace and comfort." The company of *krabi* troops said: "See here, you contemptible one, where have you been? When the latter part of the night has come, and the sun is ready to shine, thus will pass the ill-fate of *Phra Chakri* according to the prediction of *Phiphek*."

Phaya Maiyarap heard the talk of the *wanon* and was delighted as if obtaining the celestial abode of *Phra In*. He thought: 'I will create an artifice to trick these *krabi* troops, have them all sleep, using my gemmed pipe.' Thinking thus, the *asura* slipped away. When he was out of sight of the *wanon*, he changed his body back to that of a *yaksa*. With a kick, he flew up into the clouds to Mount *Solat*. Standing on top of the mountain, he held his ruby gemmed pipe and whirled it back and forth. It was brilliant as a twinkling star, clear and bright just like the light of the star at the time of the dawn. The *wanon* troops who were safeguarding the incarnated lord saw the luminous light on the horizon. Thinking that it was the morning star, the conscripts and captains were delighted: "At this time the ill-fate of the four-armed lord has passed." The *wanon* pointed, all speaking at once in a clamor, not realizing it was a trick of the *asura*. Thinking that it was real, they stopped their marching on patrol. Some slept, some sat around in groups, teasing and joking together, playing and laughing; some gathered around to smoke *kancha*; some closed their eyes, warming themselves by the fire.

Phaya Maiyarap, when finished brandishing his bejeweled pipe, flew back. Upon arriving, he stood a bit apart and saw everything was quiet, gong and drum and instruments made no noise. Some danced, some slept. As the *kumphan* stealthy crept in, he saw that some of the companies of troops were chattering together, not asleep, walking back and forth. Alarmed, he backed away. He stopped and stood before the wind and, pouring the sleeping potion into the gemmed pipe, blew out. The potion struck the companies of troops, overcoming all of them who were unable to endure; all of the soldiers slept deeply; none were left conscious. Noticing that they were all sleep, none of them stirring, the *asura* walked inside. Upon arriving at the mouth of the son of the wind, he stopped and looked left and right. Then he invoking the sleeping incantation by pouring out the potion to fill his pipe and blew out. The potion struck *Phaya Sukhrip*, who sank down in slumber, along with *Hanuman*. The *asura* was delighted, so he went into the mouth of the *wanon*.

Reaching the royal pavilion, he saw a unit of soldiers sleeping all over each other, except *Phiphek*, along with the younger brother, *Phra Lak*, who sat at the feet of *Phra Rama*. The *asura* secretly entered and took the sleeping potion and put it into his pipe. Furtively watching, he leaned his body close and, invoking a powerful incantation, controlled his mind and blew again three times. The potion struck *Phaya Phiphek*, along with glorious *Phra Ram* and *Phra Lak*. They fell asleep, not conscious of anything because of the powerfully skilled incantation of the *asura*.

Ecstatic with joy, he clapping his hands, laughing merrily. Waving his pipe, he proceeded up into the royal pavilion. Examining closely, he saw *Phra Lak*, his face like that of a celestial being, brilliant yellow skin as if being painted with gold, his entire body gracefully becoming. Then he saw *Phra Ram*, magnificently handsome, a glorious soft dark green. ‘These two men so small, just this? How could my mother say they had more might than the *yaksa*? I could take their lives and have them dead in the blink of an eye.’ Thinking thus, he cradled *Phra Ram*, lifting him up above his shoulder and went out from the mouth of the *wanon*.

Slipping through the surface of the earth with his strength, he crossed the border, passing through the forest as he proceeded quickly to the city. Upon arriving there, he ordered the senior *yaksa* official: “You should take this tiny human and put him in an iron cage placed in the palm grove. Then conscript a company of *asura*, countless numbers having bold strength, to watch over him during the night. Be careful of any incident or calamity, do not be remiss. As for that damn *Phirakuan*, have her fetch water to put in a large pot to be placed in front of the royal plaza. When daybreak arrives, I will boil this human along with her son, have them all executed.” Finished with these orders, he went into his sleeping chambers. The brave senior courtier received the order of the ruler of *Badan* and, taking a large metal cage, they put radiant *Phra Ram* inside. Then they placed the cage in the palm grove according to the order of the *kumphan* lord.

73. Hanuman Rescues Phra Ram from Maiyarap (19: R 27; R 50; R 56; R 67; R 85; R 99; R 114; R 136; R 184; R 222; R 234; R 253; R 259; R 312; R 316; R 324; R 333; R 340; R 371)

The mighty son of the wind, since he had been overwhelmed by the magical potion, slept, completely unconscious. But when the wind blew across him, he awoke and called for *Sukhrip*: “Something extremely astonishing occurred. Just now, I fell fast asleep; or was that wily *Maiyarap* secretly able to enter here and put us all under a spell? Uncle, do not just sit there and sleep. You must go look for *Phra Chakri*.”

The son of *Phra Athit*, hearing the voice of *Hanuman* as if calling him from afar, was instantly startled awake. He froze and thought for a moment, feeling agitation like a searing flame. A sense of panic seized his mind as he quickly went to the royal pavilion. He saw the soldier guards fast asleep, not one with their eyes open, scattered all about, one on top of the other, as well as *Phaya Phiphek* and *Phra Lak* asleep; but the *Garuda*-mounted lord had disappeared. Shocked, he called out to *Hanuman*, along with the *wanon* soldiers. Then he walked dejectedly, going to awaken the royal younger brother.

Phra Lak, rising with a start from his sleep, looked around and did not see *Phra Chakri*. He was shocked as if *Phaya Matchurat* had come to sever his head. His mind was in turmoil as he sadly lamented, pouring out his heart: “Oh, alas, Your Royal Highness, we departed from the city enduring terrible suffering together in the wild woods. The ten-faced one stole elder sister and placed her in *Longka*. But we two brothers torturously followed so we could annihilate the *asura*. We were able to get an army of troops, *wanon* from two realms, marching across the ocean so we could exact our revenge. We have not yet had time to do battle and eliminate *Rap* and his kin, those deceitful demons. How could those wicked ones come and secretly abduct you? At this time, Your Supreme Royal Highness, how will you be able to endure such extreme agony? Will they torment you with suffering, or will they strike you down dead? If the incomparable *Phra Harirak Chakri* should pass away, how could I remain here with such anguish? I will die and follow you to heaven, allowing me to escape from the shame and disgrace before all the three worlds.” He wept while lamenting bitterly, nearly out of his mind.

Sukhrip and *Hanuman*, along with the *Sip Paet Mongkut*, wept in sorrow for *Phra Chakri*: “Oh, alas, Your Royal Highness, the mightiest in all ten directions, how could this wicked *asura* sneak in and overcome Your Royal Highness? Such a waste of our efforts as your soldiers being unable to safeguard Your Royal Highness; such a waste of our great mighty strength coming to serve at the feet of the four-armed lord. The three worlds will malign us; despise us for our careless neglect of the bow-bearing lord.” They all wept, while sadly lamenting, everyone in that huge army of *krabi*. The sound reverberated in a clamor as if all their lives would all pass away.

Phaya Phiphek, so miserably sad in grief, gradually regained his senses. He bowed his head in respect and informed His Royal Highness, the younger brother: “As for *Phra Chakri*, his life, he has not yet lost. Your terrible anguish, you should control; do not lament and weep in misery. To *Badan*, please have *Hanuman* His Royal Highness follow. As for *Maiyarap*, die and eliminated, he will. Throughout the world, the glory of the incarnated lord will spread.”

Phra Lak heard *Phiphek* and his sorrow gradually abated, so he ordered the son of the wind: “Sir, you of great earthshaking fighting might, quickly follow after His Royal Highness to *Badan*.” The

courageous offspring of *Phra Phai* received the order and bowed to his feet. Then he asked *Phaya Phiphek* the way to go, who carefully explained so there was no doubt. Departing from the golden royal pavilion, he made a display of his might and quickly went forth.

He examined closely the signs that *Phiphek* had related. Reaching the head of the forest path, he looked around and saw a lotus pond with one lotus blossom as big as a chariot wheel spread open with a fragrant aroma. The *krabi* leader broke the stem and slipped through. Looking about, he saw a laterite wall encircling a fort and an encampment with moat and dike, firm and secure, completely constructed of solid stone with a thousand *yaksa* on watch. So he pulled out his diamond trident and flourished it about, leaping in to attack this barrier of the *asura*.

The company of gigantic *asura* saw the white *wanon* advancing, attacking their camp, demolishing everything. Each of them was furiously incensed. As they grabbed their weapons with a displayed of boldness, they all jumped up in a throng, going forth to fight the *wanon*. Flashing and flinging their weapons in a furor, some even shooting off arrows. Stabbing with wooden javelins and throwing spears, they slashed and sliced in confusion. *Hanuman*, nimbly evading, turned to chase and annihilate the *asura*. Kicking and biting, bashing and slashing, with the mighty fighting strength of that great *krabi*, they all died in uncountable numbers – eliminated was that group of *kumphans* soldiers. When finished destroying the walled barrier and striking down the company of *asura*, the *krabi* leader quickly proceeded, following the pathway in the forest.

Looking around, he saw a gigantic elephant blocking the way, trumpeting in a dreadfully din, its two eyes like the rays of the sun. Flourishing his trident, he jumped and attacked the great elephant. The sedulous *asura* elephant charged wildly, advancing to fight the *wanon* – four feet kicking, tail lashing, trunk snatching, tusks stabbing with its strong, fighting might. *Hanuman*, evading and dodging with his agility, stood on the tusks of the tusker. Clambering up with his able strength, he brazenly broke the neck of the gigantic elephant. It fell there upon the ground, its life extinguished.

When finished eliminating the elephant, he quickly proceeded along the path. Swift like the blowing wind, he reached a great wide place that made him puzzled and confused. He looked around and saw mountains crashing together, creating sparking, intense flames, the sound reverberated in a turbulent uproar, with angry tongues of brilliant smokeless flames searing like a ferocious burning sun. He went directly into the mountains not afraid that the fire would harm him. With a quick display of his great skill, he leapt upon the peak of the hills. Stomping with his foot, his hand broke them apart; the mountains were completely shattered, causing a reverberation reaching *Solot* as the fierce flames were extinguished.

When finished breaking down the range of mountains, he quickly went straight along the pathway. Looking about, he saw mosquitoes huge as hens, a swirling swarm flying about. The *krabi* leader went to chase and kill them all. The swarm of gigantic, fearless mosquitoes, furious like the eternal fire, flew down, charging, crowding around to attack. The sound of their buzzing filled the air as they aimed to drink the blood of the great *krabi*. *Hanuman*, seeing the swarm of mosquitoes come to do battle, swatted and smashed them in a furor. Heads were hewed, bodies were bashed, wings were wrung, falling in a flood as the swarm of mosquitoes was eliminated from his great fighting might.

When finished breaking through the fierce mosquito barrier, the courageous son of *Phra Phai* turned his attention back to the path to *Badan*. Dashing on, he saw a square pond, very wide, covered with lotuses, the flowers elegantly blooming with a profusion of buds. The wind was gently blowing, wafting the aroma to refresh the soul. This made him confused as he could not figure out which way to proceed. Turning left and right, he examined all around the huge pond. He could not see any mark or trail; he was at wit's end. He just circled around and around.

Matchanu, that brave-hearted one, lived in that lotus pond which formed the inner barrier. Day and night he roamed about in patrolled along the large path. With a display of his great strength, he rose up from the middle of the water. Reaching the edge of the pond, he stopped, and looking about, saw a white *wanon* being so bold, having passed all the barriers along the path leading there. Furiously, he gnashed his teeth, stamped his foot, and, making a show of his authority, stood in the way and shouting out: “*Woei*, you wicked brutal being coming here, where do you think you are going? Have you no frightful fear of losing your life? Brazenly passing through the border of the *kumphans*, I will cut you down; crush you with my own hands.” *Hanuman* saw the small monkey rise up from the pool, haughtily showing off his bold might. He noticed something about this *wanon*: ‘Why does he have the tail of a fish? His appearance is so quite strangely strange, using such base and mean conceited language.’ Thus he bellowed back: “*Woei*, you teeny tiny tot, why are you not modest and humble as a baby boy? You should not block my way. Stand aside and let me pass, despicable being.” *Matchanu*

heard and was enraged like a fierce flame. Clapping his hands, he replied: “Even though I am small, I no fearful fear of your might. Do not be so bold and swollen with prideful pride. Who is the better one, we will see to that.” Saying thus, he made a display of his might and jumped in to fight.

Hanuman, furiously angry like a great inferno, fended him off with a swept of his arm. Each had agile nimbleness, each was brave, each was valiant. Mighty *Matchanu*, with an all out effort, attacked in a rush, evading and dodging. Kicking and biting in mayhem, they dashed about, not backing off. They chaotically changed positions, switched places in the fight. The courageous son of the wind, receiving the attack and, leaping and kicking with his feet, hit *Matchanu*, sending him reeling. Grabbed his feet, he thrashed him down on the stones with his great strength. *Matchanu*, with not a bruise on his body, was furious like the eternal fire. Rising up, he stamped his feet, making a powerful noise like a thunderclap. Daringly dashing, he advanced, fighting back, not thinking of his life. The brave son of the wind charged, fending him off, swaying back and forth, turning and changing positions in the fight.

Hanuman fought while pondering with some doubt: ‘What is it with this small *wanon*? I try to kill him, but he will not die dead. Tenaciously able to endure, he so bravely fights.’ Thinking thus, he called out: “*Woei*, little ape, teensy as a fly, how is it you come to guard this barrier of *Maiyarap*, that deceitfully deceiving leader? What is your lineage and family background? What is the name they call you, *wanon*?”

Young *Matchanu* heard the question asking for his name and the lineage. So he thought: ‘This *wanon* here, with great, brave bravery might, breaking through the barriers, reaching the great realm of *Badan*, his appearance and body is like mine. His two ears are shining radiantly radiant; are not those jeweled earrings similar to what mother told me? Right now, I will pause for a moment. I do not think there will be any harm in informing him.’ Thinking thus, he shouted out: “Me, here, I am named *Matchanu*. My beloved mother is *Nang Matcha* who gave birth to me at the edge of the great wide sea. Mighty *Maiyarap* came along and has taken care of me as his adopted son; he has had me stay here at the border of the *yaksa* land. My father is named *Hanuman*. You, sir, are a *wanon*. What is your name that makes you so boldly bold, to pass this way, reaching the hand of deadly death? Are you not afraid of being killed and losing your life?”

Hanuman heard what he said, erasing his doubts. He was overjoyed as if receiving some celestial treasure. Examining his face, a great loving feeling rose up. Clapping his hands, he laughed merrily: ‘Thank goodness I have reached here.’ Thus he said: “See here, *Matchanu*, you are a delightful delight to the eye of your father. You should not be incensed and furiously fight. I, here, am the one and only *Hanuman*. Such luck that we stuck at each other, but did not die dead, most belovedly beloved one of father. All the clever *deva* have compelled us to meet here.”

Matchanu, gnashing his teeth, pointed at his face and shouted back: “Hey, hey, see here, great *krabi*, such lying wicked words these are. Such base language, have you no respect? Who would believe you, *wanon*? If you can breathe out stars and the moon and the sun, let me see this sign for myself first. I then will believe that you are my famous father, the great soldier of the incarnated four-armed lord.” The son of the wind heard young *Matchanu* express his suspicions. He consoled him and then said: “Most beloved one of father, do not be in doubt.” Saying this while flying up, he breathed out – stars and the moon and the sun twinkled as they floated in the sky. He then descended to the earth.

Matchanu saw with his own eyes, just like the words of his mother. Overjoyed, he ran to him. Raising his hands above his head, he bowed down in respect: “I did not understand clearly, so I fought with you, father. As for punishment, it should be severely severe. Your beloved son begs for forgiveness. Do not let this be a fateful mark against me for all eternity.” *Hanuman* gathered his son in his arms. Caressing him, he consoled and kissed his face: “Most beloved one of father, that you fought against father here, this is because we did not know each other. Each was protecting ourselves from the fear of losing our lives. As for this wrong, it is just a mistake; there is no punishment or blame on you, darling son. Father can not stay here for long, I must quickly go follow the *chakra*-wielding lord and kill *Maiyarap* since he has abducted His Royal Highness. As for the way to *Badan*, you should tell your father.”

Matchanu felt helpless and dejected. He bowed in reverence and replied: “As for this, you need to understand; father should have mercy on me because *Phaya Maiyarap* has nurtured and raised me as his son until I have now grown up. His kindness is like that of a familial father, thus I feel a sense of loyal loyalty. If I tell you the way to go, that would be as if I have no sense of gratitude. Which way did father come down – that way would still remain. You should examine and look and you will know from your great superior wise intelligence.”

The wise son of the wind heard young *Matchanu* tell him in a round about manner the way to go. The *krabi* leader sat and thought deeply and realized. So he broke off the stem of a great lotus and passed through, inside the lotus stem. Upon reaching a water basin near the main gate, he saw a company of *asura* troops on patrol around the royal capital. So he stopped and thought for a moment: 'If I should go straight in and fight with the *yaksa*, how will I learn the news of *Phra Chakri* to know where he is being kept? I think I will make some artifice, hide myself and listen to find out.' Thinking thus, he composed his mind to make his body disappear. Then he went to hide in an *asoka* tree waiting to hear the *yaksa* talking with each other there at the edge of the lotus pond.

Nang Phirakuan endured such difficulty because of her beloved son who had been locked up; such extreme suffering and torture, her heart was nearly broken. *Maiyarap* had her come ladle some water to fill up a caldron to boil her child, have him die along with *Phra Ram*. She carried the water basket, going out from the city gate. Upon reaching the lotus pond, she sat down, thinking about her beloved son. She beat her chest, lamenting: "Oh, alas, my *Waiyawik*, darling, most beloved one of mine, such a waste to have nurtured and raised you – your birth year being most propitious. Why should *Maiyarap* have such wicked ideas, punishing you without any feeling, falsely incriminating you such that he will take your life? Alas, in the morning, you will be executed with *Phra Ram*. Who could help me here, there is no one. Mother is unable to do anything for you, my darling, so you will have to suffer the punishment. If your life should end now, mother could not remain; I will die also, determined to follow my beloved one. I will shed tears every moment. Tomorrow, you will be gone from me. When will mother see you again?" She wept while bitterly lamenting as if her life would end right there.

The son of radiant *Phra Phai* heard the weeping lady utter the name of *Phra Rama*, that in the morning his life would be taken, along with *Waiyawik*. So he reversed the invisible spell and walked out. Sitting down, he said: "Grandmother, do not be so sad and weep. I am the soldier of His Royal Highness against whom no one can challenge. My name is *Hanuman*. I have come in pursuit of His Royal Highness, the bow-bearing lord. As for *Maiyarap*, I do not know where he would be. I am at wit's end where to search. You should lead me into the city So I can strike that one down, have him dead. I will help *Waiyawik* escape from death. Grandmother will have peace and happiness. He will be the leader of the *asura* in *Badan*."

Phirakuan heard *Hanuman* and the lamenting sadness of the lovely lady gradually abated. She felt a joyous delight as if receiving some treasure from heaven. So she said: "*Maiyarap* took His Royal Highness and placed him in the palm grove at the back of the city in a large iron cage. *Asura* are on patrol inside and out, so it will be very difficult to lead you inside. Besides, the gatekeeper weighs everyone to see who is light or heavy. If you try to fly over the wall of the *yaksa*, you will meet a fierce *chakra* and die. Therefore, you should transform yourself to be a fly. You will not be noticed and can pass the *yaksa*. *Krabi*, you with such ability, think carefully, do not squander this chance."

The son of the wind said: "If it is just this, it is not so difficultly difficult. I think I can do it, no problem. I will transform to be a lotus fiber stuck to your breast cloth and enter without any suspicion. If you are too heavy and the scale breaks, you should say: 'The arm of the scale is very ancient, old and worn out, used for a long time. I am not taking anyone with me into the royal city. You should see for yourself, *asura* guard; do not create some quarrelsome issue.'"

Nang Phirakuan was delighted and replied: "As for this idea of yours, it is most brilliant. I will answer any questions as such. You must quickly transform your body." *Hanuman* raised his hands in reverence and recited a powerful chant. Composing his mind, he transformed his body to become a lotus fiber stuck to the breast cloth of *Nang Phirakuan*. *Nang Phirakuan* then took the water basket and ladled some water. Putting it on her hip, she walked forth. The gigantic *asura* who guarded the main gate saw *Nang Phirakuan* go ladle some water and come back. So they took the water basket and the woman placed on the scale to balance with some stones that they had used as a measure. But the weight was too much for the scale. There was a crack as it splintered and broke, falling to the ground. The water basket broke apart, shattering. The *asura* grabbed her, while the gatekeeper interrogated: "Lady, what are you trying to do? Who are you trying to carry into the city? You must speak only with the truth."

Nang Phirakuan, with a belligerent voice, replied to the *asura*: "Why do you talk like this? I have come alone, can not you see? The arm of your scale, *yaksa*, is so ancient, in use more than one hundred thousand years. It is no good and broke by itself, who can be blamed. Alas, can not you see I have fallen, water flowing all over; you can say whatever. Do just as you please. I do not care."

The diligent senior gatekeeper heard the lady argue obstinately. Not realizing it was a ruse, each of them thought it was true. Looking at each other, they had no answer to give. *Nang Phirakuan* grumbled

while quickly walking on past the main gate. Reaching the front of the royal plaza, she pointed out to *Hanuman*: “*Phaya Maiyarap* is asleep in his bed there. *Waiyawik* has been placed securely in jail in the front. Over there is the palm grove at the back of the city where that *yaksa* has placed *Phra Chakri*.”

The wise son of the wind raised his hands above his head and recited an incantation to disappear. Quickly he went to find *Phra Narai* at the back of the city. Reaching the palm grove, he saw a company of *asura* on guard, sitting and lying around in many layers, alternating their patrol. The *krabi* leader raised his hands above his head and invoking a powerful chant putting a sleeping spell on the *asura*. A reverberating echo pealed through the air as darkness fell everywhere. A chill settled throughout *Badan* as if it were the cold-winter season. The company of *asura* troops, overcome by the incantation of *Hanuman* that produced a feeling of dizzy drowsiness, fell asleep one on top of the other, conscript and captain. Some snored, some moaned, no one was left conscious.

The son of *Phra Phai*, when finished inducing sleep on the *asura*, went inside. He saw *Phra Hariwong* asleep in a big iron cage. He bowed down to the feet of His Royal Highness, his face awash with tears. “Oh, alas, Your Supreme Royal Highness, your glorious glory is spread in every direction. You are the refuge of the humans and *deva*. How could you come to lie in this cage? Alas, it is so pitiful, your body in contact with the dust and dirt, without even a warm blanket to wrap yourself, nor soft leaves to put over your body. We knew that *Maiyarap* would secretly come up in the night and place a spell just as he did. But we were unable to protect you. We were tricked by his powerful might; made to slumber from his magical incantation. He was thus able to steal you away. I have evaded the dangerous dangers to reach *Badan*. I will destroy him, cut him up with my shining diamond trident, take his head and skewer it placed in the front. That will serve him right, that contemptible thing, being so arrogant and wanton.” He lamented while tears filled his eyes, washing down his face as he wept sadly. When the sadness and sorrow abated, he made reverent obeisance and destroyed the cage. Lifting up *Phra Chakri* with his mighty strength, he carried him away.

Quickly he went out from the city, reaching Mount *Surakan*. Going straight to the base of the great mountain, the *wanon* looked back and forth and saw a golden pedestal there in a pure gold cave. So he placed *Phra Chakri* there with delight. Then he bowed his head, prostrating himself to the great ones, respectfully, including *Phra Thorani*. Raising his hands in reverent homage, he said: “Please, *deva* and celestial beings that are here on this mountain, along with those in the six levels of heaven, come to help safely safeguard His Royal Highness. I will go execute *Maiyarap*.” Entrusted thus, he quickly went, turning his face from the mountain toward the city.

The great celestial one who lived in that mountain cave, having divine hearing and sight, looked down and saw the son of *Phra Phai* bring *Phra Narai* and place him at the mouth of the bejeweled cave. ‘At this time, he will return to fight and kill the audacious *Maiyarap*.’ He led the retinue of *deva* down to *Phra Chakri*. Upon reaching there, they went in and surround him, singing lullabies as maidens plucked and strum; a lulling, celestial sound of music, sweet and melodious to sooth the soul. Some waved whisks, fanned fans over His Royal Highness; some circled around the base of the big mountain safeguarding that royal one, not allowing any trouble or affliction.

Meanwhile, the brilliantly wise, brave son of the wind focused his attention on eliminating the *asura*. He went directly to the front of the royal plaza. Upon reaching the ornate palace, the *wanon* made a display of his valiant strength; stamping his feet, he raced forward, and with a leap, kicking open the ornate audience window. The sound reverberated, echoing in an uproar. Then he shouted out: “*Woei, Maiyarap*, you contemptible *kumphon*, who do you think you are coming to abduct radiant *Phra Harirak*. I am his fierce capable soldier following here to fight. My name is *Hanuman*, brave and valiant like a noble lion; you are like a doe. Today, you will lose your precious life.”

Phaya Maiyarap rose with a start from his bejeweled bed. The *asura* leader looked around and saw the *wanon*, boldly using very harsh language. Furious, he grabbed his sword, and, rising up, bellowed: “Hey, hey, see here, damn ape, so arrogantly boasting of your might that you are brave and valiant, I am one with tremendous power; there is no one in the world who can withstand me. You are like a tiny shimmering firefly; how could you fight with the blazing sun.” Saying thus, he gnashed his fangs, ground his teeth, and brandished his sword to chase him.

Hanuman, warding him off, jumped and kicked with his might. They each reciprocated, pursuing to fight or backing away from the encounter, aiming to kill. Slashing, stabbing, seizing in battle, both were brave, both were bold. Tenaciously powerful *Maiyarap* received and defending himself in the fight. Grinding his teeth, he jumped, leaping forward. One foot tread on the knee of the *wanon*, his hand waved his sword, raised up. Craftily he grabbed him in a furor, turning to change positions. *Hanuman*, fighting closely, ardently beat him. In a position to attack, he grabbed at the *kumphon*. With

a breathtaking leap, he stood on his shoulder, his hand seized his sword. Nimbly fighting, he turned about, wrestling, hitting the body of the *asura* leader. The sword broke into two pieces as the *wanon* kicked with his brave strength. The *asura* fell and rose to his knees, crawling away. The *krabi* leader charged at him.

Maiyarap, having lost his mighty bejeweled sword, grabbed his mace. Wielding it back and forth, dazzling the eye, he stamping his feet with a deafening noise. He quickly displayed his fighting might and went back to fight. Both of them received, both beat, chasing and retreating until his mace broke, tumbling away. He snatched a large spear and went back to fight. The courageous son of the wind, evading and dodging, soared in to fight. His right hand wrested away the throwing spear. He stabbed the *kumphān* many times until the spear of the *asura* broke apart. Then he pulled out the diamond trident from his body and slashed at him. He thrashed left, scrambled right, nimbly with no regard for himself.

Mighty *Maiyarap*, without any weapons with which to fight, thought for a moment: ‘This *wanon* here, is quite capable; very powerful, bold and valiant, more than any *deva* in heaven or ascetic, learned one or *naga*. I think I must devise some artifice to strike him down. Even though this one will have a chance to beat me, I have no fear or dread because my heart is not in my body; there is no way that I can die.’ Thinking thus, he shouted out: “*Woei*, forest ape, both of us have battled here, our fight has been very serious. Each will not lose to the other’s might. Come let us make a deal that will be honest and fair so each will not be wronged. We will take three palm trees bound together, twisted around to be a palm club and alternate hitting each other three times. Whoever is stronger will not lose their life. What do you think of this?”

Hanuman heard and thought for a moment: ‘This *asura* thinks to change his tactics; I am guessing it must be some tricky trick, but I am not afraid of his might. I will outwit and strike him down, have him dead. If I should die, the wind will blow over my body causing my life to be restored. As for this one, I think he can be destroyed by my might.’ Thinking thus, he shouted out: “Do you speak the truth or not, *yaksa*? Suppose it is not as you say, according to your words.”

Phaya Maiyarap replied: “As for these words, I have uttered them with honesty. If not firm in the truth, please have *Phra In*, the brilliant thousand-eyed one, take my life, have me dead. However, I will beat you first, three times. Finished, then I will lay down. Then you can rise up and beat me, according to what I have pledged.” The son of the wind clapped his hands and replied: “Why do you choose to say like this? It is possible you are taking advantage of me. I am the guest, come from afar; is it not proper that I should beat first, *asura*? You should realize I am in no way as stupid as you, *yaksa*. But if you will beat first, okay be quick. The one who can endure will survive.”

Phaya Maiyarap heard the *krabi* and was delighted. The *asura* went to pull up the palm trees. Using his foot for support, he planted his shoulder and pulled; uprooted were three tall trees that the *asura* leader twisted into a club. Then he shouted out: “*Woei*, silly forest ape, you boast of your might that you are so skilled. Who can endure, we will see. You must lie down and let me beat you.”

Hanuman heard the words of the *asura* and uttered a chant. When finished seven times, he blew out; composing himself, he stroked his body three times making himself resolutely indomitable. Then he stretched out his body and beckoned to the *asura*. *Phaya Maiyarap* saw the *krabi* lay down, his body stretched out. Elated, he lifted up the palm tree club. Brandishing it with a display of his might, the noise reverberated in every direction. With his two feet supported him, he leapt up and the *asura* leader beat down. Three times there was an echoing thunder, the earth roared and quaked. As for the body of ever-victorious *Hanuman*, it was beaten into the ground.

The brave son of the wind, not hurt or bruised in the least, rose up and shouted out: “*Woei, woei*, demonic demon, do you know the God of Death? Quickly lay down, you wicked one. Give me that club so I can beat you. Do you love yourself; have a fear of dying? I will take your life, *yaksa*. Bow down to my feet here, then you can keep your life, *asura*.”

Phaya Maiyarap saw that the *wanon* had not lost his life, but was arrogantly jeering him, giving him a sense of alarm mixed with fearful respect for his might and an anxious feeling like a burning flame. Then his will-power returned and he restrained himself: ‘Why should I fear this contemptible one?’ Thinking thus, he replied: “*Woei*, wicked beast, I will not pay respect to you. You should not boast with such bold words.” Saying thus, he stretched out his body and gave the club to the *krabi*. “You should quickly come and beat me according to our agreement.”

The son of the wind seized the palm club. Raising it up with his great power, he aimed to annihilate him. Valiantly, like a noble lion, his two hands flourished the club, thrashing down three times. The sound echoed, reverberating in the air as the club shattered into many pieces. Then he tore off the arms

and legs of the *asura* and flung them away with his might. *Phaya Maiyarap*, his feet and arms returning to form his body, did not lose his life. Rising up, he stamped his feet and bellowed with a thundering, quaking roar. Charging forth with his agile strength, he came to fight. The son of the wind, turning with his skillful power, leapt to kick, hitting the *asura* who tumbled to the ground from the tremendous mighty power. With a breathtaking leap, he jumped instantly and trod on his chest. Then he asked *Phirakuan*: “What is it with *Maiyarap*? I strike him down, but he does not die. I think there must be some explanation.”

Nang Phirakuan replied at once: “This one can be struck down, but will not die because of the contrivance of the *yaksa*. He removed his heart, made it into a bee that was placed in an ornate jeweled box. Then he hid it at the top of Mount *Trikut*. You sir, if you can think of a way to kill the bee, *Maiyarap* can then be eliminated.”

The son of the wind heard the lady inform him of everything, making him delighted as if receiving a heavenly gift. With his foot treading securely on the *asura*, he raised his arms above his head and recited a powerful incantation – the body of the *wanon* was transformed. He became huge, towering tall like a mountain, complete with four faces and eight arms, a great display of his formidable might. His left foot stood on the chest of the *asura* not letting him crawl away; his right foot, stepped out reaching Mount *Trikut*. One hand held the tip of the mountain, while one hand searched about. He was able to snag the bee, which he took and held up: “*Woei, woei, Maiyarap*, is this not your heart?” Saying thus, he crushed it to dust, chopping off his head at the same time. Like the great God of Death had come to slash and thrash with his sharp sword, his body writhed as the *kumphān* passed away.

Finished striking down *Maiyarap*, the son of *Phra Phai* reversed the powerful incantation and quickly walked away. He sat upon the gemmed throne and had *Waiyawik* taken from the jail and handed him the royal possessions and realm so he could rule over *Badan*, along with all the concubines and palace ladies. As for *Matchanu*, he placed him in command to be the *phaya maha uparat* as second in command, along with councilors and mighty troops to govern half of *Badan* and thousands of concubines for his pleasure.

Finished conferring the realm, the *krabi* leader, carrying the head of *Maiyarap*, went to the four-armed lord. He lifted up *Phra Narai*, placed on the hand of the *wanon*, beautiful like the moon shining in the sky. With one hand carrying the head of the *asura*, he made a display of his might and slipped through the surface of the earth, rising up from *Badan*. When he reached the royal pavilion, the sun was rising, its rays shining forth. He placed His Royal Highness upon the bejeweled bed stand. Then he raised his hands in reverence to the resplendent younger brother, and informing him of the events of his fight – the *krabi* then presented the head of the *asura*. *Phra Lak*, with *Phiphek* and *Sukhrīp*, *Ongkhot*, as well as the *Sip Paet Mongkut* and the army of *krabi*, each was relieved of their sorrow; delightedly they went to see him all together.

Phra Kritsanu, when the evil potion of the *kumphān* had worn off, awoke from his sleep. Looking around, he saw the *wanon* lords and leaders, with all the troops gathered. Thus he said to his younger brother: “Beloved companion of mine, *Phaya Phiphek* made a prediction foretelling that *Maiyarap* would come up and put a spell on me, taking me to *Badan*. Now it is beyond the time. The sun is shining clear and bright. I think that the evil danger has passed. The prediction of the *asura* must have been wrong.”

Phra Lak bowed his head and replied: “In the middle of the night, *Maiyarap* secretly came and put a spell on the army, making everyone sleep, including the great *krabi*. He abducted Your Royal Highness, taking you down to *Badan*. I, along with the *wanon* lords and leaders were so very sad, nearly losing our lives. *Phiphek* explained the situation and had *Hanuman* follow. The *krabi* leader was able to bring Your Royal Highness back here according to the prediction of *Phiphek* following the dream of *Phra Chakri*.” His Royal Highness heard his great royal younger brother and was dumbfounded, making him confused. Turning his face, he pronounced: “See here, *Hanuman*, did you follow me down below to *Badan*? How did you so bravely fight with the *yaksa* not passing the time of sunrise and thus bring me back here?”

The son of *Phra Phai* bowed his head and replied: “Indeed, I followed you to *Badan*, breaking through the five fierce barriers of the *asura*. We fought bravely, but I was able to strike down *Maiyarap*, killing him, taking his life. As for fair *Nang Phirakuan*, the mother of *Waiyawik*, she led me into the city. Such a great meritorious service she performed, so I gave her son to rule over the realm. As for *Matchanu*, my own beloved son, I made him *uparat* to stay to help safeguard that realm, to be in the service of Your Royal Highness and be responsible for the city.” He informed him, from beginning

to end, relating all clearly and thoroughly. Finished thus, he placed the head of the *asura* in the middle of the *krabi* troops.

His Royal Highness heard these matters and noticed the head of the contemptible *asura*. His Royal Highness was delighted, thus he said in praise of *Hanuman*: “Your meritorious service is very great; following after me with a devoted heart, alone undertaking such a fight. When this war is over in the land of the *yaksa*, I think I will have you rule over *Ayuthaya*.” Saying thus, he took a ring of nine gems from his finger on his right hand and conferred in on the *krabi*, and then went into the ornate royal pavilion.

74. Kumphakan Goes to Fight (4: R 133; R 184; R 206; R 259)

75. Kumphakan Strikes Phra Lak with the Mokkahasak Spear (3: R 27; R 56; R 162)

76. Kumphakan Blocks the Water

77. Death of Kumphakan (2: R 47; R 111)

78. Enter Intharachit (4: R 65; R 69; R 154; R 252)

79. Intharachit Makes Nagabat Ceremony

80. Mangkornkan Goes to Fight (14: R 60; R 85; R 94; R 96; R 198; R 219; R 221; R 231; R 260; R 271; R 289; R 324; R 347; R 358)

Mangkornkan went to the camp of the *asura*. After washing and dressing, his hand grasped bow and arrow and, like mighty *Wetsuwan*, strode out to mount his chariot. The troops gave a deafening reverberating cheer as they quickly drove forth. Upon arriving, he had the army halt, set up at the base of the great mountain, in the formation of marching troops, firmly stationed waiting for the enemy.

Meanwhile, the radiantly virtuous, incarnated lord went to bed in the night. His Royal Highness pondered deeply upon the war campaign in which he would eliminate the *yaksa*. He was unable to fall asleep until the time of the sunrise. The moon slid behind the mountains as the sun appeared shining its bright rays bringing forth the faint beautiful dawn; the music announced the time with a song of blessing. So he arose from his bed, washed and donned his ornate attire, and strolled out to the front of the royal pavilion. Just then they heard a tremendous noise. His Royal Highness said: “See here, *Phiphkek*, today, who has marched an army out to fight and do battle, making this reverberating noise, shaking the ground.”

Phaya Phiphkek examined and knew from his insight. Thus he bowed his head in reverence and informed His Royal Highness: “As for the army that has marched out, the *asura*, *Mangkornkan*, this would be. The son of *Phaya Khon* is this fellow, exceedingly superior skills at archery is this one, from *Romakhan*, the nephew of *Thotsakan*.” *Phra Kritsanu* replied: “This one, so skilled in archery, with great might to which none can compare, we should have which of the soldiers march out and fight this *asura*?” *Phaya Phiphkek* bowed his head and replied to the royal command: “As for the *wanon* troops, who can do battle and fight with this son of *Phaya Khon*, anyone I do not see. Please, go, oh four-armed lord, out and fight with this *asura* leader.” *Phra Chakri* hearing the soothsayer, *Phiphkek*, ordered the son of *Phra Suriya*: “You must prepare the *wanon* troops – mighty powerful and strong – I will march out to do battle and eliminate *Mangkonkan*.”

Phaya Sukhrip took the order from His Royal Highness. Mobilized were the courtiers and marching troops: *Nilarat* was the mouth of the winged formation; *Nilak* and *Nilakan* were the two eyes; the son of the wind was the head of the great bird; *Mahatwikan* was the tongue; *Nilanon* was the neck of the feathered creature; the two wings spread out protecting the troops were *Wahurom* and *Chomphuphan*; the left and right claws were *Pingkhla* and *Malun*; the royal guard was formed as a falcon; the grandson of *Phra In* was the tail at the end of the army. As for units of *Tiao Phet* and *Chang Kiang*, they arranged themselves as the talons and feathers. *Sukhrip* and *Phiphkek* served as the aides to the four-armed lord.

Phra Ram, along with his mighty royal younger brother, went to bathe in the stream. Donning their royal attire, their hands grabbed their mighty bows as they mounted the celestial chariot. *Matuli* drove the horses gracefully; the younger brother of *Narai* sat in front, hands held in reverence. There was the sound of gong, drum and bugle; the horses neighing with vigor; the thundering sound of the troops cheering. The clouds of dust darkened above as the army swiftly marched forth. Upon arriving at the battlefield, His Royal Highness had the troops halt directly in front of the army of the *asura*.

Phaya Mangkornkan, seated upon his bejeweled chariot in the middle of the *kumphan* army, saw the humans march their troops coming near – a powerful army making the earth tremble. He had his troops spread out as the wings of a crow. Then he ordered the *yaksa* charioteer to drive the radiant gemmed chariot, breaking through the ranks of troops and he bellowed out: “*Woei*, you human beings, what sort of fighting might can you have? Arrogantly boasting with false pride, coming to fight with

the *asura*. I am from *Romakhan*; my name is *Mangkornkan*, with tremendous fighting power – the three worlds fear my might. Today, I will annihilate you using this great bow of mine. You will not be able escape with your lives, along with this swarm of *wanon*.”

Phra Narai heard *Mangkornkan*, nephew of the twenty-armed lord and replied: “*Woei, Mangkornkan*, do not boast so haughtily of your strength. Your father came to fight, yet he could not withstand my hand. Your might, how much could it be, brazenly coming out to fight? Your head will be severed, flying who knows where. You should not speak so insultingly.” *Phaya Mangkornkan*, hearing this, was incensed. His two eyes were like the rays of the sun. Grinding his teeth, gnashing his fangs, stamping his feet, the earth trembled and shook. He drove the army of troops to go attack.

The leader of the *yaksa* in the vanguard took the order from the *asura* lord and drove the troops in to fight. The ranks of *asura* sallied forth, slashing and stabbing, shooting firearms and arrows. Charging, flinging wooden javelins and throwing spears – wrestling, wrecking, winging, whacking – the army of the diligent *wanon* defended, warding off the *kumphān*, and swarmed in to fight and attack. Some broke loins, broke necks, broke knees, tore off the arms and the feet of the *yaksa*. Clashing, bashing, thrashing, slashing in a furor, the *asura* died scattered everywhere.

For the ranks of gigantic *asura*, the more they died, the more reinforcements came in to attack the forest *krabi* troops. Charging while hurling their weapons in a torrential rain, each of them evaded, each pursued. There was the sound of guns, the sound of reverberating cheering – the powerful armies did not think of their lives. The ranks of great *krabi* troops, each of them stood firm and attacked, merging in for a close fight. Thrashing left, swinging right in a furor with their strong fighting might, it was company against company, unit against unit – the *kumphān* died or dispersed, out of their minds.

Phaya Mangkornkan saw the *wanon* attack the *asura*, some dying, some fleeing in terror. His hand brandished his bow as he bellowed, making the earth tremble, having the charioteer drive the royal chariot in to attack the middle of the *wanon*. Boldly fighting and beating, the *krabi* died grievously from his bow, strewn all about on the ground from the tremendous might of the *kumphān*.

The *Garuda*-mounted lord, when he saw *Phaya Mangkornkan* come forth to attack the ranks of troops and the *wanon* falling dead all about from the mighty strength of that *yaksa*, grabbed *Akkhaniwat* with its tremendous power. Fitting it to the string, he raised his bow and shot away. The sound was like a clap of thunder, the earth shook and quaked, hitting the army of powerful troops, who died, scattered everywhere.

Phaya Mangkornkan saw the human shoot his arrow and his troops die in great numbers. So he grabbed his mighty *chakra*, that of radiant *Phra Phrom*. Brandishing it like the light of the eternal flame, the *kumphān* flung it with his might. Blazing like the sun, the *chakra* struck the company of *wanon* and great *krabi*. Heads were severed, feet were sliced off, all were cut down, heaped together on the ground.

The lord of all three worlds saw the *yaksa* fling his *chakra*, striking the *wanon* troops who died in uncountable numbers. *Phra Chakri* took his great arrow that was named *Phlaiwat* and shot it off with his might. The arrow hit the *chakra*, turning it to dust from the strength of the arrow of *Phra Chakkrit*. Then the arrow hit the enemy troops, killing them in countless numbers. All the *wanon* that had fallen dead, when the wind blew over them, were revived, jumping up ready to attack, cheering loudly, jeering the *asura* leader. *Phaya Mangkornkan*, furiously enraged like a fierce fire, shot off an arrow. The arrow hit *Phra Ram*, cutting his gemmed armor, able to pierce inside all the way to the body of His Royal Highness, then it returned and floated in the clouds.

Phra Narai, seeing that the arrow of the *yaksa* had great might, sat and thought deeply for a moment: ‘As for this *Mangkornkan*, he is quite capable, shooting and breaking through my armor, piercing inside. I think he is one of superior skill, more than others in the lineage of the *yaksa*. At the time *Phaya Khon* fought, he shot an arrow which broke my bow. Father and son are quite superb at archery, there are none to compare.’ Thinking thus, while raising his bow, the heaven and earth shook and trembled. His hand pulled out the *Phalachān* arrow; fitting it to the string, he took aim and shot. The arrow hit the arrow of *Mangkornkan*, which disintegrated, unable to endure the power. The ranks of *kumphān* troops were annihilated, along with the chariot of the *asura* that was destroyed.

Phaya Mangkornkan was now without chariot, without troops, without even a charioteer, alone, having no one as a compatriot, his face ashen, his body shaking with fear; he was at wit’s end, at the end of his might in how he could fight. The *kumphān* pondered: ‘Gosh, this damn little human being, the powerful arrows of that one are quite valiant, along with the ranks of *wanon* troops. I struck them down, but they did not die. If I should battle on, how could I challenge them?’ Thinking thus, he flew up into the bank of clouds with his might. Raising his hands above his head, he prayed to the

benevolence of glorious *Phra Phrom*. Invoking a chant, he composed his body – the *asura* transformed himself. Arose were mighty *kumphan* just like that of the *yaksa*, flooding all over in the heavens. Then he created a torrential torrent of flaming charcoal, booming boldly brilliant, beaming bright, falling upon the earth, scorching like the timeless inferno. *Phra Kritsanu* saw *Mangkornkan* stop fighting and disappear from his sight, but with flaming charcoal falling, filling the earth, scorching hot, strong and bright, making him puzzled and confused. Thus he questioned: “See here, *Phiphek*, as for *Mangkornkan*, where did he go? This torrential rain of flaming charcoal, what is the cause of this, *asura*?”

Phaya Phiphek raised his hand in reverence and replied: “As for *Phaya Mangkonkan*, risen up into the sky, that one has, in the bank of clouds his body is hidden; a learned incantation he has recited creating this torrential torrent of flaming charcoal of bold, brilliant, blistering, burning brightness, hoping to strike down the *wanon*, have them all dead from the magical chant of the mighty *asura* leader.” The virtuous incarnated lord looked up and saw the shapes of the *asura* in the sky, all alike, uncountable, not knowing at which one to shoot his arrow, which one was the real *Mangkornkan*. Taking aim at many places, *Phra Chakri* did not know what place to strike. So he asked *Phiphek*: “How do I know which one is the *yaksa*?” *Phiphek* informed him: “Please, your lord, *Phrommat* you should use; sent straight away, the *yaksa*, it will execute. If *Mangkornkan* passes away, disappear as well will all the conjured shapes.”

Phra Narai took out his arrow and fit it to the string. Raising the arrow, he pulled back with his nimble strength and shot the arrow with his might. The noise reverberated echoing through the sky – golden celestial abodes shook everywhere. Straight the arrow went as sent by the four-armed lord, hitting *Mangkornkan*. His head was severed, flying from his body from the might of radiant *Phra Narai*, tumbling down. His life ended, the conjured bodies disappeared.

The flocks of *deva*, along with the groups of celestial angels, saw the triumphant four-armed lord eliminate *Phaya Mangkonkan*. Each of them felt delightful joy, leaning out of the gemmed windows in every celestial abode. Faces smiling, laughing merrily, all together they clapped their hands, scattering glorious celestial blossoms. A group of angels plucked and strummed; musicians played harmonizing tunes, conferring a victory blessing on *Phra Narai*, their hands raised in reverence. Incomparable *Phra Chakri*, when finished eliminating *Mangkornkan*, admired the celestial blossoms. Then he had the company of troops disband. Away from the battlefield they went, back to the golden royal pavilion.

81. Champhuwarat Disrupts Nagabat Ceremony

82. Nagabat (5: R 57; R 67; R 124; R 181; R 311)

83. **Intharachit Uses Phrommat Arrow** (10: R 7; R 32; R 102; R 103; R 131; R 162; R 181; R 311; R 347)

The fearless, ten-headed one learned that *Kampan* had been killed at the hands of the enemy. His torment and regret was beyond belief, feeling agitation as if being seared by a hot flame. He sat in deep thought, unable to speak. As for the order of *Intharachit*, he completely forgot, not thinking at all. So he had this command: “*Woei*, *Waiyakasun*, you must quickly go to the *Sattaphan* mountains and let my son know of this matter, that *Kampan* has lost his life; have my son quickly go to fight.” *Waiyakasun* took the order from His Majesty and flew away. Upon arriving at the shore of the ocean at the edge of Mount *Yukhonthon*, he descended from the sky and went into the ceremonial hall. He raised his hands in obeisance and reported to *Intharachit*: “*Kampan* marched an army out to fight; the enemy has struck him down dead. At this time, your royal father has issued a pronouncement to ask Your Royal Highness to urgently think of a way to take revenge on them.”

Intharachit, his mind in tranquil composure in his ceremonial rite, heard the news of death, making him furiously incensed like a poison flame. Vexed as if he would die, he rose up, stamping his foot: “*Woei*, *Waiyakasun*, see here, if this was not on the command of my royal father, why should I not cut your head off? Giving you as you deserve, damn wicked one; coming here to ruin my ceremonial rite.” Said thus, he had this command for the *asura* courtiers: “I will rectify these disgusting evil words and give my victorious arrow formidable force. You must bring the black goats and black bulls and sacrifice them according to the incantation so there will be blood to offer at this time in the middle of the ceremonial rite.”

The company of courtier troops bowed their heads and received the order of the *asura* lord. They went running out, tripping in disorder. The flocks of goats and bulls were led in, tugging and pulling at them noisily, tied up in front of the *asura* according to the royal command. *Intharachit* returned to sit upon the ornate seat and grabbed his powerful *Phrommat* arrow. Raising his hands in reverence in front

of his face, the *yaksa* leader recited a chant. When completed one thousand times, the earth trembled and quaked. He grabbed the animals that were tied up and sacrificed them. Finished thus, he took a gold tray to gather up their blood, giving it to *Phrommat* to soak up with its might – all completed as he intended. Then the *kumphan* laughed merrily: ‘Now, for this arrogant adversary, in no time they will be eliminated. There is no way these humans and *wanon* will be able to withstand my arrow.’ So he ordered *Rutakan*: “I will go to fight with the enemy with a clever strategic ruse. I will change my body to be that of *Phra In*, *Thao Kosi*. As for the companies of troops, they will be scholarly *gandharva*, celestial deities and learned ones. As for *Karunrat*, he should transform into *Erawan*. One company should change their bodies to be lady dancers, acting as if they were lovely heavenly angels, plucking and strumming, singing and dancing, all together in front of the elephant.”

Rutakan bowed his head and received the royal command. He had *Karunrat* transform to be the indomitable *Erawan*; thirty-three adorned heads; each head with seven beautiful upturned tusks; each tusk with seven flower ponds; each pond with lotus blossoms, each with seven clusters rising up on slender stems; each cluster opened into seven flowers; each flower had seven beautiful lotus pedals, each with an aroma permeating, infusing the nose; each pedal had celestial angels, each with seven lovely young ladies; each of the angels had graceful figures, each dancing and singing sweetly; each lady had a retinue; each had seven young beautiful maidens; a pure white exactly like the elephant of the ruler of *Tavatimsa* Heaven. There was a celestial abode on each head of the elephant, sparkling radiant with gems. As for the chariot driver, he became a *deva* at the end of the great elephant, an ensemble of musicians played, having changed their bodies to be that of angels. With respect to the maiden dancers, they frolicked in front of the courageous elephant. The ranks of *asura* troops transformed to be celestial *deva*. Some were *gandharva*, intermixed in a great throng. Those in front were changed; each of them became celestial beings. All carrying various weapons – poison guns and poison arrows, waiting for the son of the twenty-armed lord to go fight the enemy.

Intharachit, when the auspicious moment arrived, transformed his body. He became just like His Celestial Majesty, *Phra In*, the thousand-eyed one, come down from *Tavatimsa*. His hand grabbed the *Phrommat* arrow. So similar to *Amarin*, he went forth to mount the elephant, towering tall over the line of mountains; sterling white with a silvery hue – tail twitching, ears itching, proboscis pleasing, tusks tapered. Soaring, gliding in the heavens, legions of troops were arrayed left and right carrying copious umbrellas and victory standards; sparkling shining lines of fluttering yak hair whisks. The flock of deities, the transformed celestials, followed in order along a long line. Crossing the range of mountains near *Sithandon*, he drove the elephant through the clouds.

Upon arriving at the battlefield, he saw *Phra Lak* standing and waiting in the middle of his troops; the *asura* felt delighted as he had hoped. Thus, he had the powerful army of troops halt, spreading out far and wide, floating there in the sky with their might. Then he ordered the troops to transform their bodies to be *deva* and celestial angels. The ranks of troops changed to be celestial angels and *deva*, according to the command. Plucking and strumming, beating and blowing a musical melody with a lulling, light lilt. Some danced gliding along, swinging and swaying to the celestial song, strolling gracefully, waving their arms, twisting around in a circle, back and forth. Putting on coy manners that made them bewitching and bemusing according to the artful stratagem of the *asura*.

Phra Lak, seated upon his gemmed chariot, looked around and saw this transformation. He saw His Celestial Majesty, *Makkhawan*, atop his great enormous noble elephant, along with the flock of *deva* and celestial beings, floating there in the middle of the clouds, with a group of heavenly angels gliding gracefully, dancing in various poses. So he had this command: “See here, *Hanuman*, what is the reason His Celestial Majesty, *Amarin*, riding on his great celestial elephant has come to float in the middle of the sky, along with a retinue of *deva*?”

The diligently powerful son of *Phra Phai* heard the younger brother of His Royal Highness. Bowing in obeisance, he replied: “As for *Kosi*, along with this group of celestially celestial beings, all carrying weapons, with no exception, also having maidenly maiden dancers from the inner court, I have never seen such a thing before. Perhaps it is some tricky, treacherous artifice of the devious, deceitful *yaksa*. It is very puzzling, I am quite suspicious. Your Royal Highness should take extreme careful caution.”

Phra Lak heard the son of *Phra Phai*. His Royal Highness gazed, staring intently back and forth, observing the group of *deva* along with the celestial angels performing their dance in the sky. Astonished and bewildered, captivated and transfixed by the spectacle, the royal younger brother was entranced, as well as all the *wanon* lords and leaders, along with the ranks of *krabi* troops. The more they looked, the more imprudent they became, taking no precaution against the *asura*.

Intharachit saw *Phra Lak*, along with the ranks of troops, lose their senses. So he grabbed *Phrommat*, raising it up to the string. Taking aim at *Phra Lak*, he drew back while sitting on the neck of *Erawan*. The *kumphān* shot the arrow away, which transformed to be a thick flood of arrows, striking the younger brother of the lord of the three worlds, along with the ranks of powerful troops. The *Sip Paet Mongkut*, mighty *Sukhrip* and *Ongkhot* fell there on the ground. The ranks of powerful *yaksa* troops, some shot, some hurled their weapons, swarming down from the sky. The monkey army was hit by spears and cutlasses, poison guns and poison arrows. Dying, piled about all over the earth, only *Hanuman* remained.

Intharachit saw the human and *wanon* annihilated. He clapped his hands with delight, along with the ranks of powerful troops, happily cheering and shouting. The wise son of the wind looked and saw *Phra In* shoot an arrow striking the mighty royal younger brother, along with the group of celestial *deva* hurling their weapons like torrential rain hitting the ranks of *krabi* troops, exterminating them. Furiously incensed, he stamped his foot, making a display of power so the earth shook, shouting out: “*Woei*, see here thousand-eyed one, why do you come with the cunning *kumphān*, together with this group of celestial ones striking down the younger brother of *Phra Narai*, killing him? This is not within sincere virtue. I will take your life, have you dead.” Saying thus, he pulled out his trident and flourished it about, making a display of might. Rising up into the clouds, his foot scrambled, treading on the tusk of the elephant. His left hand broke the neck of *Erawan*; his right hand grabbed at the bow, jerking at it with his mighty strength. *Intharachit* received and defended himself from the attack. The *asura* thrashed with his bow, striking the body of *Hanuman*. Battered and bruised, unable to withstand the strength, he tumbled from the neck of the powerful elephant, unconscious there on the ground. The *asura* leader was delightedly overjoyed; clapping his hands, he laughed merrily. His appearance returned to that of an *asura* as he descended from the sky. At that moment, the sun was setting, falling behind the edge of the mountain, so he ordered the powerful soldier: “See here *Saran*, should you see *Phra Ram*, the elder brother, come weeping and wailing miserably, hugging his younger one, falling in a stupor, you must quickly go report on this matter.” Said thus, he disbanded the troops, the great brave courtiers and powerful soldiers. Their cheering resounded in the heavens and earth as the *asura* leader returned to *Longka*.

Upon arriving at the royal palace of his supreme *yaksa* father, he strode into the bejeweled audience hall and bowed his head to the feet of his great royal father amidst the *asura* courtiers and group of poets, astrologers. The ten-headed one, when he saw his beloved, devoted son, asked him: “So you went out to fight in battle with the human, what happened? The fight was a defeat or victory? Why have you come back in the evening?” *Intharachit*, bowed his head and replied: “This time, I devised a clever stratagem. I transformed my body to be that of the thousand-eyed lord riding *Erawan* in the sky. As for the ranks of troops and soldiers, they changed to be celestial *deva*. Some groups were maiden dancers singing a sweet lovely melody there in the clouds. *Phra Lak* was entranced, transfixed with confusion, along with all the *wanon* troops. I saw the enemy negligently relax their guard. I shot my *Phrommat* arrow, striking mighty *Phra Lak*, along with the *krabi* troops – all have perished.”

The ten-headed one heard His Highness inform him on this matter and was delighted getting as he hoped. Clapping his hands, he laughed heartily, the noise reverberated in the heavens reaching *Dusit*. Then he embraced *Intharachit* tightly: “Most beloved one of father, it is not a waste you are in the lineage of *Phra Phrom* with such brilliant might. You will be the ruler of the *asura* to carry on our lineage and family in the city of the *asura*. You must be tired and weary from the battle. My beloved should go bathe and relax; enjoy some food and be satisfied, go enjoy your lovely beautiful maidens.”

84. Nang Sida Rides Busabok Kaeo (2: R 311; R 347)

His Royal Highness, *Phra Harirak*, waited for his mighty royal younger brother until the sun was setting, falling behind the edge of the mountains, giving him a sense of anxiety in his heart like a burning fire. His Royal Highness thought it was very peculiar: ‘Today, I heard a cataclysmic noise; the heavens and earth shook and quaked; a sound of uproarious cheering and shouting. Has he somehow been defeated by the *kumphān*? I think I will go out and see, to know what it is, bad or good.’ Thinking thus, he grabbed his bow and went with a company of troops.

Chomphuphan led His Exalted Royal Highness, winding along, following the forest path. It was so dark that it was difficult to see the way, given that it was the middle of the night. So he took out his *Chanthawathit* Arrow and, fitting it to the string, aimed into the sky – His Royal Highness shot the arrow with his might. It became a moon floating on the horizon, brilliantly beaming bright, shedding an illuminating light on the earth. His Royal Highness quickly went forth.

He saw the ranks of soldiers struck by the weapons and firearms, dead, piled up all around. Then turning, he saw that *Hanuman*, his supreme soldier, had lost his life, lying upon the head of *Erawan*. His Royal Highness sat and wept: "Alas, oh son of the wind, with skilled fighting might, so brave and valiant, the three worlds lived in fear of your power. How could you lose to this wicked adversary? Where could I find another like you, so loyal, honest and sincere? Your life should not come to an end, as if you had no power or strength. Lying here in the middle of the battlefield, it is so shameful toward all the worlds." Bemoaning while tears welled up, *Phra Narai* was nearly out of his senses.

Then he thought of *Phra Lak*, his beloved, devoted younger brother and wandered away from the great *krabi* leader. Turning, he saw the son of *Phra Thinnakon*, along with courageously brave *Ongkhot*, as well as the *Sip Paet Mongkut*, dead, lying scattered all around. His love and regret was beyond belief agitating his heart like a burning flame. His Royal Highness bemoaned: "Oh, alas, son of *Phra Thinnakon*, such great supreme might, greater than the heavens. You should not come to lose your life; this is most distressing. Even with the ten-headed *asura*, who has power to suppress all throughout the three worlds, you had victory when you broke his ornate umbrella. Alas, such regret for *Ongkhot*, tenacious courage and valiant skill, in the lineage of the mighty *Amarin*, struck down by an arrow, lying here on the ground. Alas, the *Sip Paet Mongkut*, all celestial beings, brave and skilled, incarnating to come help eliminate the demons, how could you lose to this gang of wicked, evil ones? Such disgrace and shame before these despicable *yaksa*. The three worlds will all have blame." His Royal Highness bemoaned while weeping.

Then he looking around and saw his younger one, *Phra Lak*, struck by the powerful arrow of the *yaksa*, implanted in his chest, lying there on the ground. *Phra Chakri* rapidly ran to him. His two arms grabbed the arrow, pulling and tugging, but it would not budge or loosen, implanted so securely as if fastened tightly, making his agitation double over. Dropping down, he pressed close to his younger brother, gently lifting him up, holding his head in his lap. Tears flowed down, washing his face as the *chakra*-wielding lord wept bitterly: "Oh, alas, my beloved companion, such struggles and hardship that you endured with me. So determined to help eliminate the *asura*, how could you lose your life and pass away? Why are you so overconfident, letting yourself be struck by the *yaksa* weapon now three times. The time of the powerful *Mokkhasak*, you were on the verge of having your life come to an end. I had superbly powerful *Hanuman* go to inform *Phra Phrot* of this matter. He was able to get the herbal remedy to mix together, applied so that you can be revived. The time when you were struck by the *Nagabat*, that arrow of *Intharachit*, if not for the powerful *garuda* swooping down upon the *naga* that fled away, thus your life was restored. This time, what am I to do? With the powerful arrow of that mighty one, who will help you, beloved younger one? All three younger brothers have greatness; along with me, we were to be the ones to eliminate the *yaksa*, all four of us. I had those two younger ones stay to rule the realm, oversee the many troops and soldiers. We two were to endure hardship and misery, along with *Sida*, wandering in the wild, until the promise of our supreme royal father was fulfilled. We have started this war, but have not yet finished the fight; and you now have laid down your life and fled. Oh alas, separated from my wife, then, moreover, come as well to lose my young brother, how can this be?" Weeping while bemoaning bitterly, His Royal Highness fell unconscious.

Chomphuphan, along with the great *krabi* troops, saw *Phra Harirak Chakri* sadly weeping in his affection for his royal younger brother. No more sound, no more movement, no more breath coming out of his nose. Thinking that his life had ended, the soldiers were shocked and panic-stricken, as if *Phra Kan*, the king of evil, had come to slice off their heads. Each of them ran around, shouting and crying in their adoration for *Phra Chakri*: "Oh, alas Your Supreme Royal Highness, with booming might that can suppress every being, you are the foundation of all the worlds. *Phra Suli* had you incarnate to destroy the perfidious *yaksa*; exterminate the evil, invidious ones. The war with *Longka* is not yet finished and the two royal ones have lost their lives and passed away. The son of the wind, *Sukhrup* and *Ongkhot*, the eighteen valiant brave leaders, have been killed and lost their lives. Now all will break apart and disperse." Each of them sobbed bitterly, a great noise like the sound of a terrific storm. All of the forest *krabi* soldiers fell unconscious on the ground.

Saranthut, when he saw *Phra Ram* wailing in his love for his younger brother and collapse, the two *asura* were delighted and quickly went to *Longka*. Upon arriving, they bowed their heads and informed *Thao Rapphanasun*: "*Phra Ram* came weeping in his love until his life ended from grief; along with the troops, all have passed away." The ten-headed royal *yaksa* heard as if celestial water had come to bathe his body. His ten mouths laughed merrily; twenty arms clapped a resounding echo: "Now as for youthful *Sida*, I will end this matter by my own cunning. However, were I to go and inform the captivating lady, she will surely doubt because of the love for her husband. I think I will

invite the beautiful woman to go witness with her own eyes. Then will she will agree to stay under my majestic white umbrella; to welcome me in love and pleasure.’ Thinking thus he ordered *Mahothon*: “You must take *Busabok Kaeo* and have charming, *Nang Sida* ride in it to go visit her husband who is lying dead on the battlefield – the corpse of the younger with the corpse of the older. As for that damn *Trichada*, have her accompany the young lady out there.”

Mahon bowed in obeisance and quickly went out and had the guardian attendants take radiant *Busabok Kaeo* and head towards the flower garden. Upon arriving, he went to *Nang Trichada*. Coming close, he sat down in front of the wife of *Phiphek* and informed her about the matter following the royal command of the ruler of *Longka*. The *yaksa* maiden heard the senior courtier. Frightened, she quickly went to bow her head to the feet of *Phra Laksami*, informing her: “*Thotsakan* had his courtier come here to report that mighty *Phra Lak* had been struck by the arrow of *Intharachit*. He has passed away, dead along with the courtiers, leaders and troops. Your royal husband went to him, hugging his younger brother, weeping, until he also passed away. Together they are on the battlefield. They have brought the golden celestial *Busabok*, the one that can fly in the air through the heavens, to offer to you so you can go and see the body of His Royal Highness, your husband.”

That supreme beloved one, hearing this news, her heart burned with agitation. The lovely lady was stunned, in shock. Such suffering pain as if she would not be able to endure. Tears filled the eyes of the beautiful woman as she sobbed. *Nang Trichada* bowed to the feet of the lovely lady and said with her wisdom: “Your Royal Highness should control your bitter tears, restrain your sadness and grief. This matter you have not yet seen with your own eyes. Please, young lady, go. As for both those two royal ones, he said Their Royal Highnesses were dead – is it true or not? Listen to me, please, it does no good to beat yourself with unwarranted anxiety.”

Beautiful *Nang Sida* heard *Trichada* and gradually regained her senses. She went from her bed, along with *Nang Trichada*, to mount *Busabok Kaeo* – glittering and gleaming, grabbing a glint. Five peaks seeming to emulate a celestial abode; red coral bract interspersed with diamonds. Passing over the clouds, they floated through the air, brilliantly beaming, the radiance competing with the sun, like the shining moon traveling along, gloriously floating, lustrously luminous.

Upon arriving at the battlefield, the carriage descended from the sky landing on the ground as if it had a heart and mind of its own. They saw the *wanon* troops scattered all about, battered and brutalized, all dead, making her heart cold and quiet, as if landing in a desolate cemetery. She dismounted from *Busabok* with anxious agitation like a burning flame, along with *Trichada*, going to wander about looking for *Phra Chakri*. She looked and saw the son of *Phra Phai* lying dead upon the head of the elephant. Shocked, nearly out of her senses, the lovely lady fell in sorrow.

“Oh, alas, dauntless *Hanuman*, the leading soldier with mighty strength and valor; who courageously offered your services to *Phra Chakri* to bring the ring and *sabai* to me to let me know that he had not passed away. Such kindness as yours cannot be found. Honest and upright toward His Royal Highness; to you no one can be compared. Alone, attacking and fighting *Sahatsakuman*, striking them dead along with their troops; then, moreover, burning down the city of the *kumphan*. At this time, with the companies of *wanon* defeated by the insidious *Intharachit*, now you have lost your life; this is most extremely unbelievable. Such a waste of your strength; your name renowned throughout the three worlds.” Bemoaning, while tears washed down her face, the young lady nearly fell unconscious.

Then she thought of the conch-carrying lord, along with *Phra Lak*, so she went to wander some more away from the powerful *krabi* leader. Looking, she saw His Royal Highness, *Phra Hariwong*, hugging his younger brother slumped there on the ground. The lovely lady ran to them. Sinking down at the side of his feet, tears flowed down in streams. Hugging his ankles, the beautiful woman grieved and wept.

“Oh, alas, *Phra Hariwong*, the *rishi* and celestial ones throughout heaven gathered to invite you to come eliminate the wickedness, those ones who were oppressing the world. How can it be you could not overcome the *yaksa*, losing your lives, both younger and older brother? Prostrate here on the ground, your bodies touching the miserable dirt, as if you were not the incarnation of *Narai*. The waning of the lineage of the *chakra*-wielding lord; the waning of the power as if something unseemly; the waning of the formidable force in the family of *Ayuthaya*. All of this is because of retribution from some terrible fate, making me become infatuated with the golden deer, beseeching Your Royal Highness to follow it. Moreover, driving away *Phra Lak* so that I fell victim to the artifice of the *yaksa*. Your Royal Highness then had to follow after me and fight, suffering such extreme difficult troubles. Oh, alas *Chao Lak*, you, the devoted loyal companion of your elder brother, how could you be defeated by these wicked ones? Now that Your Royal Highnesses have passed away, who will there be to save

me? Or have both of you intentionally fled to the heavens? Oh, alas, Your Royal Highness, *Phra Chakri*, I have come to you now. You should open your eyes and look into the face of your wife before dying. Now that you have come to lay down your life, how will I be able to survive?” Bemoaning, while bitterly weeping, she fainted at the feet of *Phra Chakri*.

Nang Trichada saw the supreme lovely lady grieving in her love for the two royal ones, her face bent down, motionless at the feet of her great royal husband. She went to embrace the young lady, lamenting in sadness: “Oh, alas, most lovely young one, any place under the heavens, none could be found with such supreme grace, more than any consort, paired with His Great Royal Highness. I am without any family or husband, but I have comfort relying upon Your Royal Highness, refreshing like an ornate parasol. *Phaya Phiphek* was driven away; he went to rely upon the bow-bearing lord, eventually finding peace and contentment, alleviating his agitation under his protection. Then the two royal ones fought; they should not pass away, escaping from us to go to heaven. Now whom will we turn our face to and rely upon.” Bemoaning while weeping bitterly, the lovely lady nearly lost her senses.

Gradually, her grief slackened. She stroked the lovely lady gently all over her body. She knew that the young lady had not passed away, so she gradually massaged the feet of Her Royal Highness, comforting her with gentle words, softly and sweetly humming to her. *Phra Laksami* dimly heard the sound of *Nang Trichada* as if being anointed with cool celestial water. Gradually regaining her senses, the young lady awoke and rose up. Examining the face of the lord of all three worlds, her lament doubled over.

Nang Trichada saw the lady gradually regain her senses and informed her: “You ought to restrain your miserable sorrow. As for His Royal Highness, your supreme royal husband has not passed away.” *Nang Sida* heard the words of *Trichada* and questioned her: “His Royal Highness has not lost his life? How can you know this? Or do you just say this to give me false comfort? I do not believe your words.”

Nang Trichada bowed her head to the feet of the beautiful lady and replied: “You should not be suspicious with doubt. I do not speak a lie, oh lovely woman. As for *Busabok*, it has been for time immemorial like the mighty gemmed *chakra* of *Phra Narai*, His Radiant Imperial Majesty. It is something that can foretell, give a sign – a woman that is a widow without a husband, if she rides in it, it will not move or float up into the sky. Once when *Thotsakan* changed to be a *deva* going up to heaven in disguise to enjoy the heavenly angels, for many days he could not be found. *Montho* grieved, thinking her husband had passed away. The lady consulted *Busabok* and sat in it and it floating up in the sky, circling around *Longka*; I witnessed this event with my own eyes. Another matter is that your husband is His Royal Highness, the four-armed lord, incarnated to come eliminate the *asura*. As for losing his life, that would be wrong. Your Royal Highness should consider this first; you ought not to feel such anxious suffering.”

Nang Sida heard *Trichada* inform her of this matter and gradually regained her senses; rejoicing as if *Thao Kosi* had brought celestial water to pour over her. She suppressed her sad sorrow; the beautiful woman raised her hands above her head, praying to the flocks of *deva* of every kind: “At this time, please celestial *deva*, that is supreme *Phra Phrom*, along with His Celestial Majesty, *Thao Makkhawan*, *Wirunhok* and *Wirupak*, those ones with great power, *Wetsuwan* and the great *Thotsarot*, all these celestial beings, those with booming might like acidic flames, along with forest guardian *deva* in every direction, you must have compassion. I entrust to you His Royal Highness, *Phra Harirak*, along with his younger brother, *Phra Lak*. Help to guard over these two royal ones; do not let them have any danger or harm.” When finished entrusting the two royals ones, *Phra Laksami*, bowed to the feet of His Royal Highness, *Phra Chakri*, then had these sweet pleasant words: “Remain here, Your Royal Highness, your wife is going to take leave of the bow-bearing lord. It is our fate that we will still remain separated.” Saying thus, the lovely lady wept.

When gradually she was able to suppress her grief, the supreme lovely one examined the face of her supreme husband and gave a great sigh. Then she turned and looked at *Phra Lak*, from her affectionate love, she did not want to be separated. Taking pains to steel her heart, she walked away from *Phra Chakri*. Upon arriving at *Busabok Kaeo*, she sank to the ground. The lovely lady raised her hand in homage and made a solemn promise: “With honesty and faithfulness toward *Phra Chakri*, I will never be content with anyone else. Please supreme celestial ones in every region, river, pier and great forest, *Phra Thorani*, the one with truthful honesty, you must help, let me see with my own eyes whether His Royal Highness, *Phra Hariwong*, has lost his life and passed away. If so, then the shining *Busabok Kaeo* will not take me up into the sky. However, if the lord of all three worlds, his life has not

yet ended and passed away, this ornate palace of *Phra Phrom* should quickly take me away with its might.” The supreme lovely one cast her lot as thus, and led *Trichada* walking gracefully forth to mount the ornate bejeweled *Busabok*.

Celestial *Busabok* of the fearless ten-faced lord floated up into the sky as if it had a mind of its own, magnificent glowing, glittering and gleaming, radiant like the luminous moon. The brilliance caught the face of the lovely lady beaming in the middle of a constellation of stars. Turning and circling like a swan flying three times around in the sky, then quickly it went back to the flower garden.

85. Hanuman Carries the Mountain to Cure Phra Lak (2: R 67; R 311)

Phaya Phiphek led the company of *wanon* troops to the mango grove. Wandered about, they gathered fruits until the light of the sun faded. When all the baskets on their shoulder poles were full, the *kumphān* led them to return. Marching along the forest path, he felt a twitch in his right eye and was seized with a feeling of panic all through his body. The *asura* quickly marched forth. Upon arriving at the encampment at Mount *Morakot*, he went to the royal pavilion of the four-armed lord and saw there were only a few *wanon* attendants sitting around listless and dejected, seemingly despondent. He asked about His Royal Highness, the *Garuda*-mounted one: “Today, he has gone where?” The *wanon* leader who was the senior raised his hands in respect and replied: “He has gone to investigate something that has occurred.” *Phaya Phiphek*, learning this news, felt anxiety in his heart as if his life would come to an end. All the many groups of monkeys were alarmed and agitated, their bodies shook. They all threw down their baskets and, with the *kumphān* leading, quickly followed along. Walking through the dead of the night, it was chillingly silent and desolate until they got close to the army of *Phra Chakri*.

Upon arriving at the battlefield, he came upon the companies of dead *krabi* piled up on each other, all senseless, scattered thickly all over the ground. Then he saw mighty *Hanuman* stretched out upon the head of the elephant, lying there on the earth, increasing his feeling of panic. ‘Oh, how this can be, the son of the wind with fighting might to suppress all the three worlds, fallen here, so unseemly it is, by the adversarial foe, struck down.’ Then he thought about *Hanuman*: ‘that his life would come to an end, wrong this seems because the superbly mighty son of *Phra Phai* he is. Perhaps by poison he was struck making him unconscious. If wind blows across his body that will renew his live, revived he will be.’

Thinking thus, he quickly moved in close to the *wanon* and examined the face of *Hanuman*, his bearing so brave, valiant and courageous, eyes red like the rays of the sun, his hand grasping his powerful diamond trident. He was in a position as if he would leap up, jumping in to fight the *yaksa*. ‘Being the leading soldier, defeated he ought not to have been; gallant, but his dignity still shown.’ Thinking thus, while raising his hands above his head, paying homage to the groups of *deva* every wherein every level of *Phra Phrom* in *Solot*, he recited a mighty incantation. When finished seven times, he blew out, breathing directly into the mouth of the great *krabi*. The wind blew throughout his body as the *asura* called the *wanon*. *Hanuman*, when the wind was blown into his chest, the poison from the bow dissipated, melting away. Faintly hearing the sound of words, the *krabi* leader was revived. Looking about, he saw *Phiphek* and was delighted. Rising up, he knelt and paid respect to the *asura*. Then *Phaya Phiphek* asked him: “See here *krabi*, what occurred to make things like this be, making the *krabi* completely fall over dead, scattered thickly all about the ground by the hand of the contemptible enemy?”

The brilliantly wise, courageous son of the wind informed him of the events, from beginning to end: “I was overcome like this not because of losing to the might of those *asura*. It is because celestial *Indra*, riding the great elephant, *Erawan*, came floating in the clouds, together with a flock of *deva* and angelic angels, singing and humming, dancing, their plucking and strumming echoing throughout the sky. The royal younger brother was bedazzled and befixed, became carelessly careless; that celestial one shot his arrow striking the young brother of His Royal Highness, along with the eighteen *wanon* leaders, all passing away. His retinue of celestial beings flung their weapons in combat. The *krabi* troops all perished. That *Makkhawan* would do like this made me vexedly vexed beyond belief. Aiming to take the life of *Kosi*, I leapt, jumping up to fight, breaking the neck of the elephant, *Erawan*. He beat me with his bow, and I fell, on the verge of losing my life, if not for you sir, coming to revive me in time. Your kindness it beyond words.”

Phaya Phiphek replied: “*Indra*, that one of brilliant might, it was not. *Intharachit* an artifice made, his body that of *Thao Kosi* changed to be. Not letting you realize it was the enemy, your lives he could then take, dead have you all. When engaging in war, not guard yourself, how could you; overcome by such deception letting yourself be. Conscript and captain piled up dead, the whole army, beyond belief,

distressed I am.” Saying thus, he led *Hanuman*, along with the companies of great *krabi*, threading through the corpses of the *wanon* troops. Looking about there in the battlefield, he saw bow-bearing *Phra Hariwong* embracing his mighty younger brother, pitifully lying upon the bare ground. Shocked as if mighty *Phra Kan* had come take his life, he went close to the incarnated lord, along with *Hanuman*, that powerful one. The two sat down at the feet of His Royal Highness, the lord of all three worlds. *Phaya Phiphek* held the right foot of *Phra Chakri*; the son of the wind held the left foot of glorious *Phra Narai*. Such extreme suffering, such extreme grief, such sad sorrowful weeping.

Phiphek said: “Oh *Phra Chakkrit*, throughout the heavens protecting all with your strong celestial power like a bejeweled umbrella erected over the world, your mighty beneficence is spread. Fallen upon the bare earth, ought not to be, miserably lying here embracing your younger brother, as if so unseemly mean and low.”

Hanuman said: “Oh *Phra Hariwong*, with power to conquer all three worlds; the most supremely supreme and greatest of royal ones, the foundation of the world; how could you fall, piled upon each other, both of you, so tragically tragic.”

Phiphek said: “Oh royal younger brother, by the *asura* arrow struck, so dismaying. Because properly safeguarded yourself, you did not, thus to the evil *yaksa* already three times you have lost. Where to find one similar in the royal lineage, to the conch-carrying lord honest and faithful? Steadfast, your own life, not thinking about, determined to offer yourself until you have now passed away.” The two lamented while weeping, as if they would lose their senses.

Chomphuphan, along with the company of *wanon* soldiers, dimly heard the weeping of the two. A misty dew settled on each of them, washing away the woeful substance, making it dissipated. Each of them regained their senses, along with the conscripts and captains, all were revived, rising up. Looking, they saw *Hanuman* and noble *Phiphek*. All were delightedly happy as if receiving some celestial water. *Phaya Phiphek*, along with the son of the wind, their sadness and weeping abated. They all helped to massage and knead the feet of His Radiant Royal Highness, *Phra Narai*, in order to awaken His Royal Highness. The bow-bearing lord of the three worlds dimly heard the sound of the *asura* and *wanon*. The four-armed lord gradually regained his senses. Breathing with difficulty as the air flowed through his nose, he opened his eyes and saw the *asura*, along with the brilliantly wise son of the wind. His sadness gradually abated. Steeling himself, he was able to rise up and asked: “What has happened, *Phiphek*? As for my royal younger brother, *Phra Lak*, along with the ranks of great *krabi* troops, struck by arrows, putting an end to their lives, at this time, I see a very peculiar sight, that being the elephant, *Erawan* of the *chakra*-wielding *Amarin*. Why has it come with the *yaksa*, then had its neck broken, losing its life?”

Phaya Phiphek replied: “This elephant a transformed elephant of fearless *Intharachit* it is; changed to be *Makkhawan* that one did, a deceitful artifice in order to fight did he devise. As for his arrow, *Phrommat* it is named. His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu* on him bestowed, great powerful might able to subjugate all three worlds it has.” His Royal Highness said: “As for *Phra Lak*, along with the ranks of *wanon* who have been struck by his arrow and passed away, how do you think this can be rectified?”

Phiphek replied: “As for the remedy for the arrow of the *asura*, some understanding I have, but everything do I not really know the same as *Chomphuphan*. Medicinal cures, *Phra Suli* had him study.” *Chomphuphan* then bowed his head to the feet of *Phra Chakri* and said: “As for what *Phaya Phiphek* has said is not false. When I was still an attendant serving at the feet of *Phra Suli*, His Celestial Majesty had me go study the medicinal herbs in all four lands. As for the medicine to remedy the *Phrommat* of the *asura*, it is located at Mount *Awut* in the great land of *Buppha Phawi The*. The way there is far, it is located at the very end. Also there is fierce, powerful *chakra* spinning continually every moment. If someone goes onto that mountain, they will be annihilated by the sharp *chakra*. According to the celestial command of *Phra Isuan*, if *Narai* incarnates, coming as *Phra Ram* in the family of *Ayuthaya*, and his royal younger brother is struck by the arrow of the *asura* leader, have a soldier with great fighting might named *Hanuman*, the son of celestial *Phra Phai*, go to Mount *Awut*. The *chakra* will stop because of his might. Then take the medicinal herbs of *Phra Isuan* and bring them as the remedy of the *Phrommat* of the *yaksa*. *Phra Lak* will regain his life, along with the ranks of powerful *krabi*.”

Phra Kritsanu heard *Chomphuphan* and had this royal command: “See here, dauntless son of the wind, you, sir, are one of tremendously brave and courageous fighting might. You must quickly go with your formidable power to Mount *Awut* and get the medicine to revive *Phra Lak* who has been struck by the powerful arrow of the *yaksa*, along with the ranks of *wanon* troops. Do this within this

night.” The brilliantly wise, courageous son of the wind bowed his head and received the order of the incarnated lord. He made obeisance then crawled out. Raising his hands in homage to His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*, he closed his eyes and uttered an incantation. The body of the *wanon* was transformed, making himself as big as supreme *Phra Phrom*, booming brawny and bright; he kicked, rising up past the sky, flying rapidly with his might. As swift as the strength of a typhoon, quickly he dashed through the air, passing out of the fog and bank of clouds all within the blink of an eye. The *wanon* saw the tip of the great mountain and noticed the fierce *chakra* of *Phra Suli*, stopped, not spinning anymore. The *krabi* leader understood for sure.

The group of celestials were all gathered, those that lived there to safeguard the medicinal herbs of His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Isuan*. They could hear a noise rolling forth, shaking and quaking the great mountain. Alarmed and feeling panicked throughout their bodies, they looked up at the tip of the mount, and saw the *wanon*, a pure radiant white all over his body, with diamond teeth and graceful earrings. They knew with their intelligence, understanding that *Narai* had incarnated to come and eliminate the wicked *yaksa*. ‘Perhaps he has had someone come to gather the medicine as a remedy to the arrow of the contemptible *asura*.’ Thinking thus, they yelled out asking: “*Woei*, intrepid *krabi*, why do you come here, do you not fear for your life? You must explain what is your purpose.”

Hanuman replied: “His Royal Highness, the four-armed lord, has come to make war with the ten-faced one. His royal younger brother, *Phra Lak*, has been struck by an arrow, the *Phrommat* of mighty *Intharachit*. His Royal Highness has ordered me come to take the medicine to remedy the poison in His Royal Highness, the younger brother of *Phra Chakkrit*, according to the celestial royal command of the ruler of the world that has been conferred.”

The celestial beings heard and knew, they were no longer suspicious. The great celestial ones thus replied: “*Phra Narai* has had you come for the medicinal herbs at the top of the great mountain to remedy the poison of the *asura* arrow. This is in accord with the command of *Phra Isuan*, the ruler of the world. But he only bestowed them here; you will have to lift the entire mountain. They can not be picked and plucked as you might intend. *Wanon*, you must carry the entire mountain. We, this group of celestial *deva* who safeguarding the medicinal herbs, will follow to go see His Exalted Royal Highness. Then we will bring the mountain back.”

The brilliantly wise, brave son of the wind made a quick display of his might and went to raise Mount *Awut*. Lifting and putting it on his shoulder, he rose up into the sky as high as he could. Soaring up with his strong fighting might, the *deva* helped support as well. Upon reaching the battlefield, he was delighted. The *krabi* leader tried to place the great mountain down, but it would not remain on the earth; he was at a loss. So he asked the great powerful celestial ones: “See here, sirs, honorable *deva*, what is it with great Mount *Awut*? I try to place it here on the ground, but it will not stay down.”

The guardian *deva* of the mountain replied: “See here, mighty *krabi*, as for this mountain, His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*, gave a command conferring the medicine that can revive the life of those in the family of *Phra Chakkrit*, the *Garuda*-mounted lord. As for the land of *Longka*, it is just a small island floating in the sea. It ought not to be a place for Mount *Awut* because of its eternal purity. You, sir, one of great fighting might, must take this celestial mountain and move it to be in a northerly direction, have the wind blow gently over it bringing the fragrance to reach the younger brother of His Royal Highness, *Phra Harirak*, along with the ranks of *wanon* troops. Then their lives will be restored; it is not so difficult.” Intrepid *Hanuman* heard the words of the great celestial ones, so he took the floating mountain with his might. The fragrance of the medicine flowed over His Resplendent Royal Highness, *Phra Lak*, along with the ranks of *wanon* and courtiers – their lives were restored all at once.

Phra Lak, *Ongkhot*, along with the son of *Phra Suriya*, as well as the ranks of powerful *wanon* troops, when they were revived and had regained their senses, saw bow-bearing *Phra Chakri*. Each of them rose from the ground, raising their hands in reverence. *Phra Lak* hugged the ankles of his glorious elder brother, and said: “As for this war, it is not just the gang of wicked *asura*, there is the mighty *Thao Kosi*, who has colluded with the *yaksa*, riding *Erawan* floating here, together with his celestial retinue, as well as *deva* and angels dancing, the sound so lulling and sweet, floating in the sky. I did not think it was some wicked enemy. I then was confused and transfixed, becoming negligent; the celestial one used his powerful arrow, striking me down, taking my life. If not for Your Royal Highness coming to revive me in time, I would have had to take leave and continue this fight in heaven, striking down and killing that group of *deva*. *Garuda*-mounted lord please have mercy.” *Phra Kritsanu* said: “It was not mighty *Indra*. *Intharachit* created a scheming artifice, changing himself to be *Thao Kosi*. You, thus were defeated by the enemy. Do not think in anger of the thousand-eyed one.”

The guardian *deva* of the great mountain seeing that *Phra Lak* had recovered, were delighted. Thus they gave praise and a blessing for victory to the two royal ones: “May you have formidable might with glorious power from your great bows to eliminate the gang of perfidious foes that are battling against the world and bring peace and comfort like a gemmed umbrella erected over the head of the learned ones and *deva* of all sorts. May you two royal ones stay in well-being. We will take leave at this time and go to guard the medicinal herbs according to the command of His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Isuan*.” Said thus, they took the mountain and flew away, floating along in the sky. *Phra Narai*, when the *deva* had conferred their blessing and taken the mountain back, felt happy; his face was like the radiant moon. He invited his faithful royal younger brother to mount the bejeweled chariot. Along with the ranks of courtiers and *wanon*, and powerful army of troops, they returned to the royal pavilion with a cheering that reverberated across the lands.

86. *Intharachit* Beheads the False *Sida* (2: R 67; R 240)

87. *Phra Lak* Fights *Intharachit* (1: R 67)

88. Death of *Intharachit* (29: R 25; R 32; R 56; R 66; R 67; R 94; R 102; R 111; R 132; R 135; R 161; R 167; R 178; R 206; R 213; R 218; R 240; R 257; R 259; R 274; R 275; R 278; R 283; R 311; R 323; R 345; R 369; R 371)

Phra Lak saw *Intharachit* march his army of troops out. They flooded forth in uncountable numbers, cheering in an uproar, displaying their fierceness, striking a bold manner as if they wanted to jump in to fight. He smiled, and then ordered the companies of troops: “You must urge each other on, be firm and resolute, listen and watch the might of the *asura*.”

The son of the ten-faced *yaksa* lord, standing in his chariot in the middle of the troops, had this command: “*Woei, woei*, see here soldiers, you must march out, go to fight bravely, attack the army of the *krabi* troops, kill them, have them all eliminated. If anyone yields to the enemy, I will take your life; have you dead, along with seven generations of your family, giving you what you deserve, wicked ones.” The army of *yaksa* troops heard these royal words, but none dared to go in battle. They were full of extreme dread as if a tiger seeing a noble lion. Out of fear and awe of mighty *Intharachit*, and not knowing what sort of excuse they could make, they had no alternative but to go fight. With a breathtaking leap, they suddenly attacked, going to pursue in the battle.

Shooting, stabbing, sticking, slashing, confusedly, in a chaotic tumble with the ranks of great *krabi*, it was company versus company, unit versus unit on the assault, each evading, each chasing in the fight. The ranks of valiant skilled *krabi* fought, forging ahead, leaping in to beat the *asura* troops. The monkey army attacked, snatching the weapons of the *yaksa* using their brave strength. The dead were scattered everywhere on the ground, dividing them, stampeding up to the chariot of the *asura*. *Intharachit* saw his army dispersed, out of their minds, enraging him like fiery lightning. So he pulled out the great *Surakan* Arrow and fit it to the string, raising it up. Taking aim at the royal younger brother, *Phra Lak*, the *asura* shot the arrow off. The noise was like the sound of an acidic flame; Mount *Chakkrawan* trembled and quaked. The arrow hit the ranks of forest *krabi* troops, annihilating them, piled all over the ground.

Phra Lak saw *Intharachit* shoot his arrow, striking the ranks of *wanon* troops. Heads were severed, bodies were sheared, feet were slashed, rolling about at the base of the mountain. Thus, he grabbed mighty *Phrommat* and shot it away. Thundering and rumbling like the waves in the sea, *Kalakhanirot* quaked and quailed, striking the chariot of mighty *Intharachit*, pulverizing it to dust. The ranks of *wanon* troops that had died from the arrow of the *yaksa* rose up, their lives revived. With raised eyebrows, narrowed eyes, bared teeth, their cheering caused a stir in a display of their valour. With a breathtaking bound, they leapt with their power, and went to attack the *asura*.

As for the army of *Intharachit*, some ran, escaping in a fluster; some went in to resist the onslaught. Hacking, hewing, hammering, hustling confusedly, some of them shot off arrows. Both bravely battled in a bold bout, flailing and fighting close together. The strong *wanon* troops attacked, grabbing at the ranks of the *asura*. Mouths bit, feet kicked, hands slapped, intent on the kill. The ranks of *asura* could not withstand their might; they dispersed or died, out of their senses.

Intharachit, without chariot, standing upon the ground, saw the *krabi* attack, killing his *asura* troops. Furiously enraged, he stamped his feet, ground his teeth, gnashed his fangs, and went to attack the forest *krabi*. Thrashing left, swinging right with his bow, the companies of *krabi* could not withstand his strength. Dispersing hastily, reduced grievously, no one was bold enough to resist. The younger brother of the incarnated lord saw mighty *Intharachit* advance, attacking and beating the *wanon*. His hand flourished his bow, valiantly intent on fighting. With a breathtaking leap, he grabbed the *asura* with his powerful strength. His left foot trod on the knee of the *kumphan*; his hand lifting up

his bow. He beat, thrashing mighty *Intharachit* who toppled, instantly falling. *Intharachit*, with tenacious and extreme endurance, grabbed an arrow and shot. The noise resounded, a rumbling, rolling echoing like thunder, striking the shin of the royal younger brother from the mighty strength of the *asura* leader.

Phra Lak, struck by the *Surakan* Arrow, felt a searing pain like a poison flame. Taking pains to steel himself, he thought of the grace of the learned ones. Lifting his hands above his head, he recited a powerful chant in praise of *Phra Narai*. When complete seven times, he blew out on to his right shin. Stroking down all over his body, the poison arrow of the *asura* disappeared. Then he pulled out *Akkhaniwat*, that one with earthshaking power. Fitting it to the string, he pulled back with his agility, shooting the arrow with his might. Brilliantly bright with a blistering blaze, the sound reverberated, echoing to *Dusit*, going straight to strike *Intharachit*; the arrow stuck in the chest of the *asura* leader.

The son of the fearless ten-headed lord fell to the ground, nearly as if he would lose his life. Steeling himself, he lifted his hands above his head and prayed to the grace of glorious *Phra Phrom*. Taking pains to compose his mind, the *asura* recited a powerful incantation. When complete, he blew out, stroking all over his body and the arrow dislodged from his body. Furiously enraged like a bright flame, he gnashed his teeth, ground his fangs, stamped his feet, making a force as if to overturn the earth. With a breathtaking jump, he leapt with his power, intent on attacking *Phra Lak*. His left foot confidently trod upon his knee, like *Rahu* seizing the moon when flinging his *chakra*. The royal younger brother grabbed at the bow of the *yaksa*; the son of the ten-faced lord thrashed back. The younger brother of valorous *Phra Chakkrit* struggling in the fight with the *asura*, beat back using his might. Leaping up, he stood on his shoulder grabbing his head, cunningly turning and twisting, Bashing and beating *Intharachit*, blood dripped, trickling down all over his body.

Intharachit struck by the bow many times, twisted away. Taking pains to tolerate the agony, he gradually steeled his body and rose up. Grabbing his fierce *chakra*, he flung it with all his strength. The noise was like the sound of thunder, the air reverberated and shook. Brilliantly bright like the sun, the *chakra* spun circling around the younger brother of the four-armed lord. The royal younger brother saw the *chakra* displaying its might, so he grabbed his *Phrommat* Arrow and shot it. The sound reverberated, echoing across the sky; Mount *Chakkrawan* shook and quaked. Pursuing the mighty fierce *chakra*, the arrow pulverized it in the blink of an eye. Then it hit the horses, chariot and elephants, all the powerful *yaksa* troops. Dead, they piled up all over the ground from the tremendous force of the younger brother of *Phra Chakri*.

The son of the ten-faced *yaksa* lord, without chariot, without troops, without any weapons, had a feeling of panic-stricken dread; fearing now only death: 'If I should stay and fight on further with this human here upon the ground, I think I can not match his might. It is sure that I will die and pass away from the arrow of that one who has such force. Even if I should die, my reputation will remain, spreading my fame and glory into the future so that the three worlds will not offend and defame me until the end of this age.' Thinking thus, he made a display of his might; all ten directions roared and quaked. The sky darkened, gloomy with smoke as the *kumphan* flew away. Reaching the sky, he hid himself in a bank of clouds and paid homage, venerating *Phra Isuan*. Controlling his mind, he recited a learned chant. When finished one thousand times, sound reverberated in every direction and a torrential rain of weapons fell upon the ranks of *wanon* troops.

The younger brother of bow-bearing *Phra Hariwong* saw the weapons falling from the sky, striking the ranks of forest *krabi*. He looked around at the battlefield and could not see *Intharachit*, making him confused. His Royal Highness thus asked the astrologer: "See here, *Phiphek*, at this time *Intharachit* was fighting, then he disappeared from my eye. These weapons falling are very peculiar. As for our army of *wanon* troops, feet and arms are severed; they are being wounded as if hit by a *chakra*. What is up with this *yaksa* leader? The son of the ten-faced lord, where has he gone?"

Phiphek, bowing in reverence, replied: "As for the son of the ten-faced lord, despair he is in; at the end of his might he is. Escaped, hiding in the clouds he has gone. An incantation thus making weapons of many kinds fall thickly like torrential rain, the *asura* has recited. Please, shoot and rectify the cunning of the *asura* leader." *Phra Lak* heard and thought carefully on each point and then shot off *Phlaiwat*. The noise was like the sky thundering; the heavens rumbled and quaked. Brilliant like the sun, the arrow went directly to strike the *asura*. All of the *wanon* troops that had died were revived, regaining their lives, rising up from the might of the younger brother of *Phra Chakri*.

Intharachit, struck by the arrow which firmly implanted in his body, recited a chant. When completed seven times, he blew out, but the arrow would not dislodge from his body, making him feel more despondent; weep in despair, did the *kumphan*. "Oh, alas, in the lineage of radiant *Phra Phrom*,

such a waste to be was born with an illustrious name and renowned might like the apocalyptic fire; I could conquer all up to the level of *Solot*. Along with my great force and might, I have learned the Three Vedas, supernatural chants and incantations. Manifested like the sun, *deva* and celestials bow down in respect to my fame. Defeated while having such bold strength; such a waste studying the art of the bow. I have lost my life because of *Phiphek*, the younger of father, bringing harm, laying bare our plots, revealing our secrets. The city of the *asura* will have only trouble and hardship from this day. The family of *Phra Phrom* will decay and decline from this gang of enemy who have come to oppress.” Bemoaning, while the poison from the arrow seared, burning and agitating the heart of the *yaksa*. Such extreme suffering, such extreme grief and sorrow as if his life was coming to an end.

Phra Lak intent on striking him down, waited for the chance to eliminate the life of *Intharachit*. Thus he pulled out *Phrommat* and fit it to the string. His eye searched, taking aim, observing. His Royal Highness was about to shoot, but *Phiphek* saw *Phra Lak* pulling back on his bow. He bowed in reverence and informed him: “A moment Your Royal Highness, please stop; eliminate the *yaksa*, not yet. A boon from *Phra Phrom* that one received; should his life end and to the earth his head falls, a great fire it will create, over the universe burning all, hotter than the fierce eternal flame. But supreme *Phra Phrom* a shining celestial crystal tray did bestow to catch the head of the *kumphan* when that one would pass away. *Ongkhot*, the son of the august *Phali*, with the same mother as the *asura*, please have go ask for the bejeweled tray from *Thao Thada Phrom* and bring here the head of the *yaksa* to receive. Then, to eliminate the life of the *kumphan*, your powerful arrow you should shoot.”

Phra Lak, hearing this from the younger brother of *Thao Thotsakan*, said: “See here, son of *Phaya Phali*, you must go to the level of *Phra Phrom* and ask for the tray from *Thao Thada*, the one sparkling with diamonds, to catch the head of *Intharachit*. I will then eliminate this *asura*. You must be quick, come back at once.” *Ongkhot* bowed his head, receiving the order with delight. Making obeisance, he flew away. Upon reaching *Phra Phrom*, the *wanon* bowed his head in reverence and informed him: “Great mighty *Intharachit* has fought with the younger brother of *Phra Chakri* who has escaped into the sky. His Royal Highness will shoot *Phrommat* to strike him down. His Royal Highness thus had me come here to ask for the ornate gemmed tray to catch the head of *Intharachit* when the mighty lord will shoot his arrow so that it will not fall upon the ground. Your Celestial Majesty, please have such mercy.”

Thao Thada heard the son of *Phaya Phali* say that the younger brother of *Phra Chakri* had him come. Thus he took the gemmed tray and gave it with a heart of joy: “You, sir, should quickly go, do not tarry – catch the head of this unjust *asura*.” *Ongkhot* received the shining tray. Making obeisance, he flew away. Arriving at the base of Mount *Chakkrawan*, he held up the tray, floating in the sky waiting to catch the head of the *asura* so as to not let it fall to the ground.

Phra Lak, when he saw *Ongkhot* holding up the ornate tray floating in the middle of the sky, lifted up his great powerful arrow. Setting it to the string, he took aim and shot it. The noise was like the sound of typhoon, reaching up to the level of *Solot*. Striking the arms of great mighty *Intharachit*, left and right, were sliced off from the might. Then the *Phrommat Arrow* went to execute him, severing the head of the *asura* leader. His body fell to the earth, his life coming to an end.

Ongkhot saw the head of *Intharachit* severed from his body, flying off. So he took the shining celestial tray of *Phra Phrom* and caught the head, bringing it down to the ground to present to *Phra Lak* amidst the *wanon* courtiers, with all the troops gathered around. The younger brother of *Phra Harirak* saw *Ongkhot* holding up the head of the *kumphan* and was overjoyed. He looked and examined the head of the *yaksa* leader and then smiled, his face exuberant with joy.

The *deva* and angels of every sort, along with the celestial forest guardian who lived at the base of the great mountain saw *Phra Lak* eliminate *Intharachit*, taking his life. Each of them were ecstatic, leaning their faces out of every window of their celestial abode. They scattered golden celestial flowers and garlands of sweet aroma, flooding everywhere there on Mount *Chakkrawan*. Clapping their hands with delight, some struck, some strummed, some beat, some blew, some cooed, some crooned, a lulling, gentle tune. In praise, they conferred their blessings – a raucous uproar throughout the heavens.

Phra Lak, when finished eliminating the *asura* with the *deva* scattering the celestial blossoms, felt delightful joy. He said to *Phiphek*: “As for *Intharachit*, that one’s head has great mighty power. I think I will take it to present to *Phra Narai*.” Saying thus, he strode forth to mount his chariot. He had the army of troops move out, leaving from Mount *Chakkrawan*. Their cheering shook the earth as they returned to the royal pavilion. Upon arriving, he dismounted from the chariot and went to see the four-armed lord. Bowing his head to the feet of His Royal Highness, he informed him of the events of the fight as he presented the head of the *asura*. The radiantly incarnated lord heard his younger brother and

was overjoyed. His Royal Highness turned and saw the head of *Intharachit*, teeth separating, eyes rolling, eyebrows flexing, as if it still had a life and soul. His Royal Highness said: “Do you see this, most excellent young brother. The head of the *yaksa* that was executed still will not give up its life of wickedness, making a show of bravado, continuing to display its evilness. Even though anyone else would go fight, none in the three worlds could have engaged in such a contest with that one. Only my beloved young brother could have struck down the *yaksa* leader.”

Sukhrip and *Hanuman*, along with the powerful *Sip Paet Mongkut* and *Phiphek*, all bowed their heads in obeisance and related from the beginning all the events of the fierce fight with the *asura*: “Whichever arrow *Intharachit* shoot off, supremely powerful with celestial might, along with wily schemes of many kinds, *Phra Lak* was the better warrior. Shooting repeatedly, he overcame his many wicked tricks until the *asura* lost his life. The younger one of *Narai* is most supremely unrivaled in the world.” *Phra Chakri* proclaimed:

“The damnable *Intharachit* had a sinful and base heart bringing harm to the *deva* and learned ones, creating torment in every direction with a deceitful villainous heart.” Saying thus, he turned his face and asked the wise soothsayer, *Phiphek*: “As for the head of *Intharachit*, sir, what should be done with it?”

Phiphek replied: “Please have *Ongkhot* take the head of *Intharachit* and in the middle of the clouds hold it up. Your Royal Highness then should shoot it make it disintegrate to dust with the mighty power of your great arrow. Everlasting peace and comfort the world will have. Your Royal Highness, such mercy, please have.” The glorious lord of all three worlds said: “See here, grandson of *Thao Makkhawan*, you must take the head of *Intharachit* and hold it up there in the middle of the clouds.” *Ongkhot* took the head of the *asura* and flew away. Floating there in the sky, like a brave noble *garuda*, one arm held up the head of the *asura* leader, presenting it for the incarnated lord.

Phra Harirak Chakkrit saw *Ongkhot* holding up the head of *Intharachit*. The mighty lord strode forth and pulled out *Phrommat*, fitting it to the string. His eye took aim at the head of the *yaksa*. Pulling back with his mighty strength, His Royal Highness shot away. The sound reverberated, shaking up to *Solot*, Mount *Chakkrawan* quaked and quelled, striking the head of great mighty *Intharachit*, pulverizing it to dust. When finished, he strode forth, beautifully charming like a celestial in heaven. Just then the shimmering shining sun set as His Royal Highness returned to the royal pavilion.

- 89. Cremation of *Intharachit*
- 90. *Phra Ram* – *Thotsakan* – The First Battle
- 91. *Sahatsadecha* and *Mulaphlam* Go to Help *Thotsakan*
- 92. *Mulaphlam* Fights and Dies
- 93. **Sahatsadecha Fights and Dies** (2: R 65; R 142)
- 94. **Saeng Athit Fights and Dies** (4: R 22; R 27; R 65; R 142)
- 95. *Phra Ram* – *Thotsakan* – The Second Battle
- 96. *Sattalung* and *Trimek* Fight and Die
- 97. *Thotsakan* Performs Umong Ceremony
- 98. *Satthasun* and *Wirunchambang* Go to Help *Thotsakan*
- 99. **Satthasun Fights and Dies** (3: R 65; R 258; R 345)
- 100. **Wirunchambang Fights and Dies** (25: R 21; R 26; R 32; R 45; R 67; R 127; R 132; R 142; R 147; R 154; R 158; R 159; R 163; R 168; R 199; R 206; R 247; R 253; R 268; R 282; R 288; R 289; R 290; R 304; R 306; R 338)

The troops of *Satthasun*, those left from the dead, snuck their way back. Scrambling wildly through the forest, they thought that the monkeys were chasing them until they reached the army of *Wirunchambang*. They staggered forth telling those in the vanguard: “The army of *Atsadong* which had marched out and fought with a troop of great *krabi*, His Majesty, his life has come to an end.” *Chitakasun*, the senior leader in the vanguard, heard and was alarmed, so he led them forth. Upon arriving, they bowed in obeisance and informed the *yaksa* lord: “*Thao Satthasun* advanced his army to the middle of the forest and met a tiny *wanon* swinging from the branches of a tree who called out, questioning him very boldly. The *asura* lord was fooled by his words. In an instant, he had eight arms and four faces and beat the *yaksa*. His gang then came to strike down the *asura*.”

Wirunchambang heard as if being struck by lightning. The *asura* gnashed his fangs, ground his teeth, his indignation and distress beyond belief. Leaping upon his ferocious steed, he drove the companies of troops quickly on. Seeing the army of *Atsadong* grievously dead, lying entangled in uncountable numbers, he urged the horses to charge out from the great roadway. The sound was of a wall of steeds, stirrups clashing, the soldiers urging them forward. A reverberation shook the earth like

a wave in the great seas. Clouds of dust spread out, darkening the sky, blocking the rays of the sun. The horse troop drove their steeds, leaping and soaring; their cheering echoing as they raced along.

Looking around, he saw the army of the humans set up in the array of a huge *garuda*, with companies of forest *krabi*, enraging him like a roaring flame. He snarled out a command, ordering the *asura* troops in the vanguard to drive their horses to charge. *Chitakasun* drove the horses, swarming as one to attack the *wanon*. Spreading out as wings, they pretended to evade so the monkeys would give chase, then they mobilizing their firearms and bows as they turned back to overwhelm them, flinging throwing spears, charging all as one in a furor. Stabbing with lances, pikes, and wooden javelins, the *krabi* faltered, running, scattered. The troop of horses was able to gain the advantage in the battle, chaotically pressing forth in the fight. The *Sip Paet Mongkut* saw the *wanon* disperse, being beaten, out of their senses, making them furious like fiery lightning. *Nilak* snatched and grabbing a horse, thrashing it down; *Nilakan* killed a *yaksa*; *Surasen* attacked a company of steeds; *Pingkhla* pulled out his diamond trident and stabbed. The company of *asura* dispersed, unable to withstand the strength of the *wanon*. Dying, piled up all around the field, the companies of monkeys chased, slaying in the mayhem.

Wirunchambang saw his troops dispersing, out of their minds, enraging him like the eternal flame. So he raised his hands above his head, praying to the kindness of *Phra Phrom*. According to the doctrine of the *kumphān*, he composed his mind and recited his vanishing incantation. By the power of the skilled chant, the body of the *yaksa* disappeared completely, including his shadow and steed. He drove his horse to attack, charging, stabbing left and right, not stopping. With his agile strength like a noble lion, he twisted and chased, turned and charged as the *wanon* died in grievous numbers.

The *krabi* troops moved about taking aim to eliminate the *kumphān*, standing confident, staring, waiting in position. They could only hear the sound of horse hooves, but could not see the body of the *yaksa*. They could not counterattack, so they were cut down. The company of monkeys fled; the whole army unable to take on the bold force. Dispersing, they retreated until the chariot of the incarnated lord; in a panic, they circulated around in disorder. His Royal Highness, seated upon his chariot, saw the companies of *wanon* troops dying, piled up all over the battlefield, some fleeing in confusion. Looking about, he could not see the *asura* who was attacking them in to the middle of the army; he could only hear the sound of clip-clop. Not knowing how to fight back, His Royal Highness asked *Phiphkek*: “*Wirunchambang* has taken some action to hide his body, pressing in to kill. The *wanon* are dying, scattered all about. How are we to fight this *yaksa*?”

Phiphkek replied: “Please, Your Royal Highness, to destroy and kill the horse of the *asura*, your great *Phrommat* Arrow you must shoot. Strike him as well, shortly then you will.” *Phra Chakri* grabbed his arrow and shot it away. The sound reverberated, shaking the heavens as the arrow became an uncountable flood of arrows hitting the companies of troops and horses, killing all of the army of the *asura* leader, including the horse, *Nilaphahu*, that fell dead, its life ended. From the power of the incarnated lord, the *wanon* troops were revived.

For *Wirunchambang*, losing his horse was as if he had lost his life, also lost were all of his troops and horses. Alone, looking around, not seeing anyone, the *yaksa* was panic-stricken with dread. The *asura* was at the end of his wits, end of his might, at a loss of how to fight back. Face ashen, body shaking, his composure gone, he had an extreme feeling of regret for his life: ‘Damn these two human beings with fighting might supreme in the world. I think I must figure out some plan of escape in order to preserve my life; that would be better.’ Thinking thus, he cast off his turban cloth and wrapped it up to be a *phap phayon** as an image of himself riding a horse carrying a spear, standing confidently, looking as if it would jump into the air. Finished thus, he recited a sacred chant according to the wiles of the *asura*. When complete seven times, he blew out on the *phap phayon* image which became an *asura* riding a horse as if having a life and soul of its own. Then with a display of his might, darkness descended in all directions. Soaring away into the clouds, the *asura* escaped, flying away.

Upon arriving at Mount *Angkat*, he went straight down to the great mountain. Looking about, he saw a tribe of forest *wanon* carrying fruit, following one another into the mouth of a cave. The *asura* stared intently to make sure: ‘Perhaps there could be some learned one making chaste penance inside. I will go in to stay here, rest and serve the revered *rishi*.’ Thinking thus, he raised his hands in reverence

* *Phap phayon* [ภาพพจน์], literally, picture created by magic, but which could be translated as ‘image’.

and recited a powerful incantation – in an instant, he became invisible. Walking forth, he followed the *wanon* into the sparkling radiant cave.

Looking about he saw the figure of a beautiful woman, her face pure white like an angel, slender and delicate, with a bewitching complexion. The *kumphan* was delighted, so he reversed the magnificent incantation, revealing himself. Then he said with polite words: “I have just escaped from the bow of *Phra Rama*. With compassion, you must help save my life; I will please ask to stay in this cave just until the sun shines at daybreak, then I will take leave from you, beautiful woman.”

Most lamentable *Wanarin* turned and saw the *asura* leader pleading with beseeching words. Fearful, not wishing to look, ashamed, she turned her face to flee. When she heard the name spoken of *Phra Chakri*, the lovely lady thought deeply: ‘This *yaksa* has fled from the bow of incomparable *Phra Chakri*. Perhaps, I can be released from my suffering. Were I to let the *asura* stay in this cave, it would not be proper. A woman staying near a man certainly would unleash suspicion. I must tell him to go away from here so as not to be associated with some fault.’ Thinking thus, she replied: “If you were to stay here, I think we could not escape from the bow of *Phra Chakri*; this will just lead both of us to our deaths.”

Wirunchambang heard what she said and felt helpless, thus he replied: “Since you have no pity for me, and will not let me stay in this cave, it is my fate, and I think I must take leave. But which place would be good for me to escape from the powerful bow of glorious *Phra Ram*? You should speak out of goodwill; I will not forget your kindness, beautiful woman.”

Wanarin heard the beseeching words of the *asura* and replied: “As for escaping from the bow of *Phra Chakri*, I will give you a contrivance. You should go to the edge of the great ocean to the south, at the base of the *Sattaphan* Mountains, outside of where the water falls into the sea from *Sithandon* flowing between Mount *Atsakan*. That is a place of fierce *naga*, but besides that, there is no one else. You should transform your body to be very small with your great *yaksa* might. Go and hide in the foamy bubbles of the waves; I think this can save your life.” *Wirunchambang*, hearing the words of the angelic maiden, had a feeling of comfort gradually came over him: “Your benevolence, your kindness and mercy is beyond reckoning. Please stay, I will take leave and follow your words, beautiful one.” Saying thus, he quickly departed from the golden cave. Flying up past the clouds, he went straight to the edge of *Sithandon*. Upon arriving at the edge of Mount *Atsakan*, he examined the sea and saw unusual piles of bubbles in the water. He raised his hands above his head, praying to the kindness of *Phra Phrom* three times. Composing his mind, he recited a sacred chant – the body of the *asura* was transformed becoming inconspicuously tiny. He went in, sliding among the bubbles in the water, floating there in the sea.

Meanwhile, the *phap phayon* that was changed to be the form of the *asura* leader riding a horse leapt into fight just like *Wirunchambang*; the groups of *krabi* did not realize anything. Twisting and turning, slashing and stablign in a furor, the *krabi* died, scattered all about. The *wanon* troops crowded forth to surround, counter-attacking the *asura*. Some units pulled at it, attacking, cast it away; some monkeys leapt up grabbing at the *yaksa*. Some groups stabbed and slashed, but had no impact on the *phap phayon*. All of the eighteen leaders went in to fight but that image tenaciously endured in its attack.

Phra Narai saw the *yaksa* riding a horse and the *wanon* dying, piled all about. Thus he pulled out *Phlaiwat*, brought it to the string and took aim to eliminate the life of the *yaksa*. Pulling back with his great strength, His Royal Highness shot the arrow away. The arrow went to strike the *phap phayon*, pulverizing it, unable to withstand the might. Regenerating, it rose up again with agility – His Royal Highness shot again, three times. That image remained as it was, driving its horse, stabbing the company of great *krabi*. He was extremely perplexed, so he asked *Phiphek*: “As for *Wirunchambang*, I execute him, but he does not die. What sort of *asura* is this?”

Phiphek examined and knew for sure. Bowing in reverence, he replied: “Not the real body of the *asura* this shape would be; artificially creating an image of the *yaksa* has he. When Your Royal Highness shot your arrow striking his horse down, your great might the *asura* feared and enough bravery to fight your valiant power he has not. The turban cloth of the *asura* leader he took; a chant to cast this *phap phayon* image he recited. Escaping to Mount *Angkat*, fled that one has. Please, Your Royal Highness, an arrow to create a net to surround this artificial figure you must shoot. Then have the dauntless son of the wind follow the *asura* to execute. If death that one meets, will disappear the *phap phayon* of the *asura* leader. When eliminated, both horse and body, return to be a turban cloth and spear it will.” The radiant lord of all three worlds grabbed *Phalachan* and shot it. The noise was like the sound of a thunder clap, as the earth and sky quaked. The arrow became a diamond net of seven

layers encircling the *phap phayon*. Then he ordered *Hanuman*: “You must follow and eliminate this *asura*; strike him down, have him dead.” The powerful mighty son of the wind took the order of His Royal Highness, bowed in obeisance and flew off.

Swiftly going forth like a noble *garuda*, he headed toward Mount *Angkat*. Passing through the fog, he descended close to the mouth of the mountain cave. Reaching the ground, he saw the footprints of the *yaksa*. He also noticed a tribe of forest *wanon* chatting together noisily, following along a path at the base of the mountain, carrying fruits and vegetables on their shoulders. The *krabi* leader thus asked: “*Woei*, see here, forest monkeys, you are helping each other gather fruit, carrying it here, where will you go, or is it that you will bring it to someone who lives in this mountain cave?” The band of forest *wanon* replied: “We are gathering this fruit to deliver to beautiful *Nang Wanarin* in the cave of Mount *Angkat*, morning and night, without fail, it has been so for a long, long time.”

The son of the wind heard the forest monkeys utter the name a beautiful lady, making him delighted, as if being in a celestial abode. Quickly he followed, and reaching the mouth of the sparkling cave, the son of *Phra Phai* thought deeply with his sagacity: ‘If I were to go in as a *wanon* to converse with this lady, she may take some offending offence at associating with me. This will waste time and may frustrate the command of the four-armed lord to following and fight this *asura*. I think I should transform to be a human, make myself an innocent handsome young man, and then go to inquire of the lady; it is likely the beautiful woman will acquiesce since it is natural for a lady and a man in the end to have some feeling of love. I will then be able to complete as I intend.’ Thinking thus, he raised his hands above his head, praying to *Phra Isuan*, as well as the kindness of *Phra Chakri* and recited an incantation to change his body. He became a small, handsome man, his face elegant and enchanting. Dignified, he strode into the mountain cave. When he reached there, he turned and saw the most supremely charming woman sitting upon a bejeweled seat. The *krabi* leader examined her, unable to blink his eyes.

He examined her face, pure white as the moon; he examined her eyebrows, arched as if of celestial design. He examined her eyes, eyes of a doe; he examined her nose, delicately pretty. He examined her mouth, glossy lips as if they would spread open; he examined her cheeks, places of adoration. He examined her ears, flower petals; he examined her teeth, sparkling rays of sapphire. He examined her breasts, golden lotus buds; he examined her figure, charmingly beautiful. He examined her arms, elephant proboscises; he examined her shape, celestial *kinnari*. The more he examined her, the more entranced and enthralled he became, putting him in a fog of infatuation. An extreme feeling of thrill convulsed his soul. Thus he spoke out: “Dearest, oh dearest one, beautiful woman, most lovely thing, such an appearance to stir the heart, what is your name, angelic one? What is your lineage? Where do you come from? Where is your family, pretty thing? Why do you come to stay here alone at this mountain, so wretched, or have you lost your kingdom, along with the retinue of subjects of your realm?”

Nang Wanarin turned and saw a human with a handsome visage, pleasingly slender and slim, as if a celestial had descended from heaven. The more she examined him, the more she was amazed; the young lady was perplexed with confusion: ‘Who could be so bold and full of pride? Could it really be a *deva*; or could it be the celestial *Indra*, the great god in the level of *Dusit*; or could it be His Great Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*; or glorious *Phra Narai*; or could it be one of the forest guardians pretending to change his body and come here, sneaking in with a greeting, perhaps testing me to see if my heart is strong.’ This made her feel shy and embarrassed as if she would slip through the earth. So ashamed, so afraid, the beautiful lady turned her face down to try to escape.

“Lovely, oh lovely lady, pretty and charming one, so pleasant as a celestial angelic angel. The *deva* inspired me to walk here to meet you in this golden gold cave, as if discovering a precious gem, the only one in the whole universe. I want to offer you my life to stay together until the end of our days. Why do you stay so still, have you no compassionate compassion? Alas, what makes you displeased with me? Indeed, turning your face away, I can not see it clearly. Where are you trying to escape to, my darling? You should know how difficult it has been for me, trying my best, crossing the wild woods, nearly exhausted. Have some pity, charming lady; you should lift your face and speak. Just enough to give me some pleasure and comfort; this would be like saving my life. If you cannot give me some kind kindness, it is likely I will die and pass away.”

Angelic *Nang Wanarin* heard the *wanon* pour out his heart. The beautiful woman sat still and thought: ‘Since I was cursed by *Phra Isuan* to come and stay in this cave for such a long time, maybe thirty thousand years, I have had difficulties, hardship, never any happiness; suffering with anxiety like a searing flame. I have been alone, not having anyone come, just seeing that *yaksa* who fled from the

bow of His Royal Highness, the four-armed lord. This seems to comport with the command of *Phra Isuan* who said I would pass this punishment. But why is he not a *wanon* coming to fight the deceitful *asura*? I think this, it is quite astonishing. If I do not speak, I will not know the situation.’ Thus she said: “You, where do you come from? Acting so brazen, it is not dignified; asking my name and lineage, taking liberties with a woman. Please, go out from this cave; I would not speak with you. I would be ridiculed and slandered; I know that it is not good.”

Hanuman replied: “Alas, angelic lady, have you no compassion. I am curious, thus I asked; I would not take liberties with a woman, showing her no respectful respect. I was just hoping to learn of your circumstances – why should we not talk to each other? It would be a waste having travelled through the wild woods, my life nearly coming to an end because of my love for you, beautiful, pretty one. With a strong intention, I aimed to find you hoping that I could offer my care to spend our lives with each other, the two of us. I would do all I can to be with you, staying in this golden cave together, lovely lady. Do not drive me away from; have merciful mercy to help uplift me, my beloved one.” Saying thus, while creeping forward: “Why do you flee from me, beautiful young thing?”

Wanarin saw the man come close so he could catch her. The beautiful woman gave a furtive, sideward glance, then replied: “Talking like this makes me doubt; saying you crossed the wild forest with the intention of coming here. How did you know that I was staying in this cave? Do not use soothing words; bewitching and pretending with lies. Do not come so particularly close. Figuring that I am merely a woman, you pretend to menace me with no respect, hoping that I will talk to you, giving me such suffering, sneaking in to pretend with me like this. I am an important person, do not come so near.”

“Most, oh, most beloved, loveliest one of mine, my dearest dear, you should have some mercy. I am an honest person, do not doubt me. I love you; I intend to offer my life. Do not say that I do not respect you. I am not taking advantage of you; I only inquire with the greatest of goodwill. Why do you not inform me of your situation? You just reply by blaming me. You should tell me, young one; if it is in our destiny, I can help. I will assist you, little darling, I will not make you indignant or go against your feelings. This affair of yours, young lady, it falls in my duty, so I will volunteer to help. As for the goodwill that I come with, angelic one, you should have pity.”

“Talk, like celestial water in the stars, spoken intentionally to create some pretense. If I did not realize, I might be swayed. As for saying that you will help my suffering, such kindness can not be found. But as for the matter of offering your goodwill, these words should not be spoken. Thus you wonder and would inquire, I will tell you as you wish. I am a celestial named *Wanarin*. I lived at golden *Krailat* as the attendant of *Phra Isuan*. I have told you, now you must quickly go; do not come pestering me, I will take offense. One thing is that it will become known to *Phra Isuan*; your punishment would be very severe. Even you could not pass the danger which may lead you to your death.”

The brilliantly wise son of the wind smiled and replied: “Your words are very biting. Do not be upset; please, I am just inquiring. You should make clear on this point, saying you are the attendant of His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Isuan*. I am very curious, beautiful lady. Why do you not stay at *Krailat*, thus come to live at Mount *Angkat*, or are you using the mighty mightiness of *Phra Suli* to intimidate me, make me fear some punishment? This point sorrowfully increases my lament; what is the reason you do not say, but hesitate to speak and tell me? It is no wonder I have doubtful suspicion. If you convey the matter according to the truth, I could help you with everything. Do not hide with an anxious heart; I can accomplish anything?”

Wanarin heard these polite words and replied: “I will tell you the truth. Originally, I attended to His Celestial Majesty, supreme *Phra Isuan* at Mount *Krailat*. It was assigned to take care of a golden brass lantern in the ornate hall of the celestial abode. One day *Phra Suli* went to a group of celestial ascetics to sit and talk for a long time with these brahman masters of profound insight. I went to chat with some angels and the fire in the brass lantern went out. *Phra Suli* called out, but could not find me. Furious, he cursed me to come down here to stay at Mount *Angkat*. When *Phra Narai* would incarnate, coming to annihilate the ten-faced *yaksa* in *Longka*, he will have the *krabi*, *Hanuman*, come to follow *Wirunchambang*. He told me to inform him of the situation; then I will be released from this curse of the ruler of the world.”

“Lovely, oh lovely lady, pretty and charming, beautiful young, most adorable one, it is our fate, then, my sweetheart – perchance I was commanded by *Phra Chakri* to come and follow the *yaksa*, thus I have met you, charming, beautiful one, fulfilling the words of the curse of *Phra Suli*. Now you will be able to pass the punishment. If you had related this matter at the beginning, it would not have taken so

long. I will help you with your troubles, young one. My name is *Hanuman*; I am the principal soldier of radiant Phra Narai, accompanying him to annihilate the *kumphan*. As for *Wirunchambang*, has he come in here or not? You must tell of this matter, just the truth, so I can help you in your suffering, beautiful lady.”

“Words, oh verbose words; eloquently spoken to invent things. So persuasive and sweet sounding from the start, would you have me believe your silly chattering. So you are called *Hanuman*, the principal soldier of glorious *Phra Ram*. Your shape and figure so slim and delicate like this; do you say this to fool me? Do not sneak in and play, trying to convince me. Even though I am a woman, I can see through your tricks. I am not one to be so gullible. Who would believe the words you speak, thus boasting that you are the soldier of His Royal Highness, the incarnated lord. As for earrings, diamond fur and garland, beautiful diamond teeth, where are they? You are only a human, not a *wanon*; your power does not seem to be so glorious. You do not breathe out the bright stars and the moon, so could call yourself what sort of *Hanuman*. Who will go eliminate *Wirunchambang*, I hear this and I cannot suppress a laugh. You, the courageous principal soldier with such frighteningly powerful might, do not speak such nonsense.”

“Sweetest, oh sweetest darling, your enchanting beauty fills my love. Your clever talk is beyond your wisdom, mocking and satirizing with your words. When I tell you the honest truth, my dear, you do not believe me. Darling, alas do not ridicule me so quickly; I am afraid you will beg to go to heaven, just like *Butsamali* at the city of *Mayan*.” Saying thus, he raised his hands in reverence to His Glorious Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*, and composing his mind, recited a mighty chant – in an instant, he became a *wanon* with elegant diamond teeth, earrings, diamond fur and garland, breathing out the stars, moon and sun. *Nang Wanarin* saw *Hanuman* and her body shook as she shrieked. Two hands covered her eyes as she daring not look at the face of the great *krabi*. Full of fear, nearly losing her senses, the lovely woman would not lift her face.

“Sweetest, oh sweetest one of my eye, my most supreme beloved thing, do you see the truth or not, darling, according to what I said before. As for you, beautiful young woman, the all knowing *Phra Sayomphu* bestowed you on me to be a reward for follow the *asura*. Charming one, what would you say? Do you suspect in your heart, thus hiding your face; you should look to make it clear what you doubted. You should not be alarmed or startled.” Saying thus, while stroking the back of the beautiful lady, he teased her with adoring intimacy, kissing, touching and caressing, sliding in to slip her into his arms. *Nang Wanarin*, swatting away the hands of the *wanon* and with a cold stare, said: “You, sir, are a soldier of the glorious incarnated lord. You should quickly go follow the *asura*. Do not pester me; I will take offence.”

“Beautiful woman, cute little one, soft and gentle, young loveliest thing, you are a celestial flower blossom, could you drive me away, beautiful woman. I worship you so extremely; there is no way to break our love. Have some compassion, my beloved one; our fate is to be together.” He said this while his arm clasped her in an embrace. Snuggling inextricably close, he caressed the delicate flower blossom. The bee whirled in the air, gliding, buzzing, stroking, soaking up the powdery pollen. The blossom opened to receive the sun, unfurling the sweet refreshing fragrant aroma. The wind blew making rippling waves splashing on the shore, bubbles spreading across the stream. Those two shared a bewitching love – happiness and contentment infused them completely.

Graceful *Wanarin* was able to enjoy tender loving intimacy with the son of the wind, her first experience with the pleasurable delight of lovemaking. She snuggled close, unwilling to be separated. Losing her shame, irrevocably offering her love, the beautiful woman forgot about her suffering; forgot about His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*; forgot all about the royal place of *Krailat*; forgot even about her angel friends – the lovely, young lady was spellbound in rapture.

Hanuman, finished making love to the angel, said sweetly: “You stay here first, charming one. I must take leave from you, my beloved and go according to the command of the four-armed lord, quickly following to eliminate the *asura*. Then I will return to find you, dearest to stay together, one of my heart and soul, my beautiful one. I will send you to the garden in *Krailat*. You should not worry your heart. As for *Wirunchambang*, he has fled and hidden in what place? You must point out the way for me to go so I can execute, take that one’s life.”

Nang Wanarin heard the son of celestial *Phra Phai* and felt stunned throughout her body; such suffering, such grief, such sorrow thinking of being separated from the great *krabi*. This made the beautiful lady feel so lonesome she could only give a great sigh. Tears welled up her eyes; she did not want to speak out. Hugging the feet of *Hanuman*, she sobbed, nearly out of her senses. Suppressing her feelings, she thought of the relief from her suffering, returning to the happiness of Mount *Krailat*. Thus

the beautiful woman raised her right hand, pointing out the direction: “*Wirunchambang*, fleeing the bow of the four-armed lord, went to hide in the foam at the great ocean of *Sithandon* near the area of *Sattaphan*, south of Mount *Meru*. Sir, you of capable strength, must quickly go follow and find the *asura*.” *Hanuman* heard the words of the angelic maiden pointing out where the *kumphan* was, giving him a feeling of delight as if receiving a treasure from heaven. He hugged his beloved sweetheart, consoling and kissing the noble woman. Then with a display of his might, the ten directions quaked and quailed; he left the cave with his agility, flying up into the clouds.

Upon reaching Mount *Atsakan*, the *krabi* leader descended to the edge of the mountain at the shore of the great waters. Then he saw many bubbles in the water in rows, following small splashing waves. But one bubble was larger than usual, remaining still in the water. ‘I think this is most peculiarly peculiar; perhaps that is the *yaksa* leader who has escaped coming to hide here in the foam.’ The *krabi* recognized it for sure. Taking aim to catch the *asura*, he raised his hands to pray to the kindness of the ruler of the three worlds and uttered an incantation. His body became gigantic, as big as supreme *Phra Phrom* towering tall, reaching the mountain cliffs, eight arms, four faces, grabbing and catching the large bubble with his might. *Wirunchambang* falling into the hand of the enemy, felt a dreadful fright in his heart. His body returned to be that of a *yaksa*. Brandishing his truncheon like a flame, he leapt up to fight the *wanon*.

Hanuman, standing confidently upon the water, fought the *asura*. The sea became surging, splashing waves reverberating to Mount *Chakkrawan*. Each was bold, each was brave, evading, attacking, reciprocating back and forth. *Wirunchambang* came in close, not thinking of his life – the *asura* jumped and grabbed at *Hanuman*. His left foot trod on the knee of the son of the wind, raising his mace so he could annihilate. Twisting and turning, changing position in the fight, the *asura* leader beat down, striking the *wanon*. *Hanuman*, with the *asura* hitting him with his mace, sank down in the middle of the ocean so that he nearly reached the floor of the sea; but the *krabi* leader returned, rising up. Pulling out his trident, flourishing it like a bright flame, he went to attack, leaping to grab the *asura*. His left foot trod on his knee, while his hand snatched away the mace of the *yaksa*. Beating and hitting the *asura* many times, he repeatedly stabbed with his trident.

For *Wirunchambang*, losing his truncheon was like losing his life. The *asura* became remorseful. At the end of his might, the end of wits to fight, the end of his ability to cross swords with the *krabi*, in pain, nearly at the end of his life, he composed his mind and recited a mighty chant. By the power of the sacred Brahmanic incantation, the sea opened up for the *yaksa*. He fled down, following the hole in the water reaching nearly the bottom of the ocean. Sitting there in the middle of the sea that was so deep and wide and vast in composed mindful concentration, the *asura* leader intoned a learned chant.

Hanuman saw that *Wirunchambang* did not return to fight, but had disappeared into the middle of the ocean. The *krabi* leader, with the intention to catch the *kumphan*, raised his hands in reverence to His Radiant Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*, along with *Phra Phai*. Composing his mind, he uttered a learned incantation. His tail grew as long as the depths of the sea, reaching to the ocean floor. Then he encircled it around the *asura*, gradually moving his tail to every place.

Wirunchambang, hiding in the middle of the water with the *krabi* leader using his tail to encircle him, was panic stricken, face ashen, body shaking. He would escape, but could not. Rising up, he scrambled in a scurry, struggling in a flurry. The son of the wind wrapped his tail around, tying up the *asura* leader. Kicking, he soared up from the water. Standing at the base of Mount *Atsakan*, his hand grabbed the foot of the *yaksa*. Thrashing him against the edge of the mountain, he ended his life with his might.

Nang Wanarin, since *Hanuman* had left, remained behind enduring only grief. The supreme lovely one sadly sobbed. Alone, lonely and desolate, her heart anxious like a fire; such miserable grief beyond belief being separated from the *krabi* leader. As well as enduring the curse of His Celestial Majesty, as if an arrow had come to pierce her heart. It was two adversities side by side in her life; thinking over and over made her so sad. ‘Oh, alas, woe is me, enduring the suffering in this cave. When I met the soldier of *Phra Chakri*, I had such happiness that I would be able to pass my punishment. The *krabi* has gone and not returned until the sun has now turned behind the mountain. This is amiss from the promise he gave, or did he not go to meet the *asura*? Or maybe he has killed the *yaksa* and returned for audience with glorious *Narai*. Oh, my, if it like this, I think that he will not return here. Alas, I will go out to wait and watch, remain outside the mouth of the cave to put an end to this wondering in my heart.’ Thinking thus, the maiden quickly went forth. Upon reaching the stone slab that was shining bright, she sat down upon the ornate seat – the lovely lady waited for the great *Hanuman*.

The courageous son of the wind, when he had struck down the *asura*, picked up the head and flew off. Coming close to Mount *Angkat*, the *wanon* descended to the ground and went to the bejeweled cave. *Nang Wanarin* turned her eyes following the pathway and saw the *krabi* come from afar, giving her joyous delight. Her face beamed like the moon. Rising up from the shining stone, she went out to receive *Hanuman*. The son of the wind saw fair *Wanarin* coming to receive him and was delighted. He placed the head of *Wirunchambang* down at the base of the mountain and took the arm of his supreme lovely one to go into the radiant cave. *Nang Wanarin* bowed in reverence and said: "Sir, why does it take you so long to come, making me heavy-hearted waiting here. Such suffering, such grief and sorrow, nearly as if my life would end. I would blink my eyes, not even once. When I saw you return, I was so happy as if receiving a sparkling gem."

Mighty *Hanuman*, hearing the words of the angelic maiden, consoled the beautiful lady. Stroking her back, he said sweetly: "See here, most beloved one of mine, as for the matter of me loving you, sweetheart, this is like my very own heart. Even when fighting the *yaksa* leader, I could not forget my beautiful one. Since I went past the time, slow in returning, please forgive me, my lovely thing." Saying thus, while teasing and playing, having fun with his joyful one, he kissed and scrutinized her all over her body. Sweet *Wanarin* slapped away his hand, giving him a disdainful stare. Then she said beseechingly: "At this time, you have finished with the royal task of the bow-bearing incarnated lord. Will you have compassion and help me put an end to this suffering; put an end to my anxiety today?"

Hanuman smiled while replying: "I will help you, my lovely lady, have you return to serve His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Sayomphu*. Since I will be separate from my sweetheart, my grief and so sorrowful sorrow will be beyond reckoning because I will have no one to love being far from you, beautiful one. Can I please admire my supreme lady in the remaining time here, to make me satisfied?" He said thus while snuggling close with such intimate, adoring love. Caressing the cheek and mouth of the lovely lady, he stroked and fondled the flower blossom. Touching and teasing, seducing and soothing, so pleasingly pure happiness in the taste of love. Both of them were blissfully content.

Nang Wanarin once more experienced intimacy with the *wanon*. The beautiful woman loved as if she would take her last breath. Agonizing because the *krabi* would be separated from her, she gave a great sigh. Tears filled her eyes as she sobbed in the lap of *Hanuman*. "I must now go away from you and return to *Krailat*. Sir, you stay to serve the incarnated lord. You must undertake this royal duty, make it steadfast. As for the enemy, this gang of foe, even if they would have might with their bows, may those ones not be able to fight you; may your power spread throughout the worlds."

Hanuman embraced and caressed the lovely lady: "Beloved one of mine, like my heart, if I did not fear the bow-bearing lord, I would not go from you, lovely one. I would stay and admire my beautiful maiden, but it cannot be, it would be a hopeless mistake. As for the blessed blessing of my young one, so adorable, a thing of love infusing every strand of my fur like heavenly celestial water. You go and be happy in *Krailat*; my beloved, do not forget me, loving one." Saying thus, while cradling the lovely lady in his arms, he went from the ornate seat. Upon reaching the mouth of the cave, he set down the young lady. Then he examined her face, increasing his sorrow as he sighed: "I think I would not send you, beautiful one, such very adored thing, if not for the fear of His Celestial Majesty, *Phra Isuan*, who would be angry if I went beyond his command. From today, I will not see your face, beloved one, my most darling thing." Saying thus, he hugged the young, pretty lady, beautiful as a golden gem. Tossing her up into the heavens with the mighty strength of the great *krabi*, she reached great Mount *Krailat* to return to the ornate celestial abode.

His Royal Highness, *Phra Harirak*, saw the conjured *phap phayon*, both the *yaksa* and horse, disappear. Just the turban cloth and spear remained. He knew that *Hanuman* had struck down *Wirunchambang*. His Royal Highness was delightfully happy. Along with his beloved royal younger brother, they set their faces to await *Hanuman*.

Finished sending off the beautiful angel, the son of the wind carried the head of the *asura* leader as he flew off. Upon arriving at the battlefield, he went for audience with *Phra Chakri* amidst the courtiers and troops. He bowed his head and informed His Royal Highness: "I followed and was able to engage him," he said as the *wanon* presented the head of the *asura*. *Phra Chakri* saw the head of the *kumphan* and was delighted: "It is not a waste of your strength being the son of *Phra Phai*; a supreme warrior with powerful, courageous valor. Whatever assigned, you can complete the task as if you were a bejeweled *chakra* that has great might." Said thus, he returned to *Wechaiyan*. Disbanding the troops, their cheering reverberated in an uproar as they returned to the royal pavilion.

101. Judgment of Maliwarat (2: R 48; R 57)

102. Phali Disrupts the Kabinphat Ceremony of Thotsakan

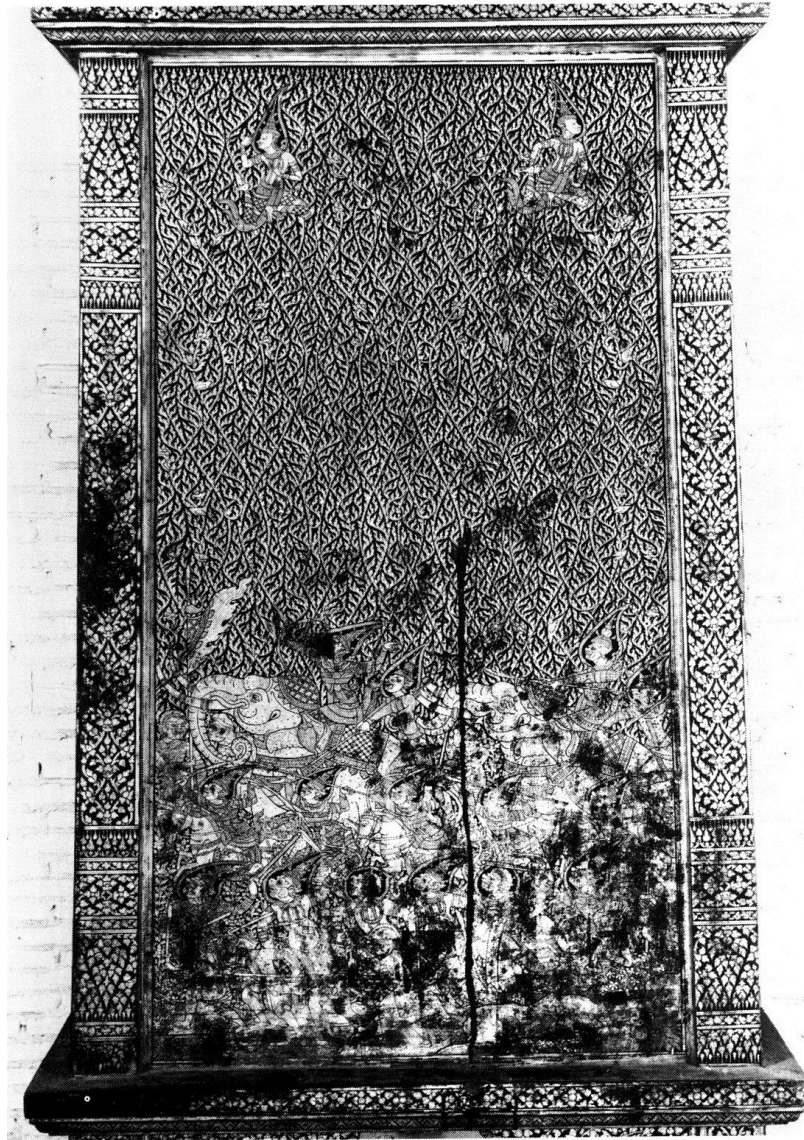
103. Phra Ram – Thotsakan – the Third Battle; Phra Lak Struck by Kabinphat Spear
104. Hanuman Gathers Remedy for Kabinphat Spear
105. Thapanasun Fights and Dies
106. Montho's Celestial Elixir (1: R 32)
107. Phra Ram – Thotsakan – the Fourth Battle
108. Hanuman Gets Thotsakan's Heart (2: R 163; R 212)
109. Hanuman Pretends to Fight Phra Lak (4: R 96; R 175; R 224; R 369)
110. Hanuman Tricks Thotsakan to Go Fight (5: R 184; R 212; R 261; R 264; R 299)
111. Phra Ram – Thotsakan – the Final Battle; Thotsakan Bids Farewell and Dies (6: R 206; R 212; R 261; R 264; R 288; R 299)
112. Nang Sida Endures Trial of Fire
113. Funeral of Thotsakan and Coronation of Phiphek
114. Atsakan Fights and Dies
115. Banlaikan Fights and Dies
116. On the Way to Ayuthaya
117. Reunion in Ayuthaya
118. Coronation and Rewards
119. Hanuman Rules
120. Mahaban Fights and Dies
121. Birth of Phainasuriwong and Asuraphat
122. Hanuman Ordains as an Ascetic
123. Phainasuriwong Discovers the Truth
124. Chakkrawat Catches Phiphek
125. Phainasuriwong Rules Longka
126. Asuraphat Goes to Find Hanuman
127. Ayuthaya Goes to Fight Longka
128. Thotsaphin Goes to Fight and Dies
129. March to Maliwan; Nilanon as Envoy
130. Suriyaphop Fights; Phra Satarut Struck by Makaphat Spear
131. Suriyaphop Dies
132. Banlaichak Goes Out to Fight
133. Mankrabin Goes out to Fight; Banlaichak Empowers Hera Arrow
134. Banlaichak Shoots the Hera Arrow
135. Banlaichak Dies
136. Chakkrawat Fights for the First Time
137. Nonyuphak Fights and Dies
138. Chakkrawat Fights for the Second Time
139. Waitan Goes out to Fight
140. Phetra Fights and Dies; Waitan Dies
141. Chakkrawat Fights for the Third Time
142. Chakkrawat Dies
143. Chakkrawat's Cremation
144. Return to Ayuthaya
145. Phra Ram Cuts the Tail of Matchanu
146. Phra Ram Expels Nang Sida
147. Nang Sida Gives Birth
148. Phra Ram Releases the Uppakan Horse
- 149. Hanuman Tied Up** (5: R 100; R 131; R 144; R 224; R 266)
150. Phra Mongkut Captured
151. Phra Mongkut Rescued
152. Phra Ram Fights with His Sons
153. Phra Ram Meets Nang Sida Again
154. Investiture of the Royal Sons
155. Nang Sida Flees to Badan
156. Phra Ram Goes to the Forest
157. Tripakkan and Kuwen Fight and Die
158. Kumphannurat Passes His Curse

159. Wayuphak Fights and Dies (1: R 164)
160. Unarat Fights and Dies
161. Phra Ram Returns to Ayuthaya
162. Phra Ram and Nang Sida Reconcile
163. Khonthan Takes Kaiyaket
164. Four Royal Ones March on Kaiyaket
165. Khonthan and Wirunaphat Die
166. Thao Kaiyaket Returns
167. Return to Ayuthaya – The End



Appendix 2: Selected Lacquerware Cabinets from National Library Collection

Figure 1
Cabinet R 73, Right Side



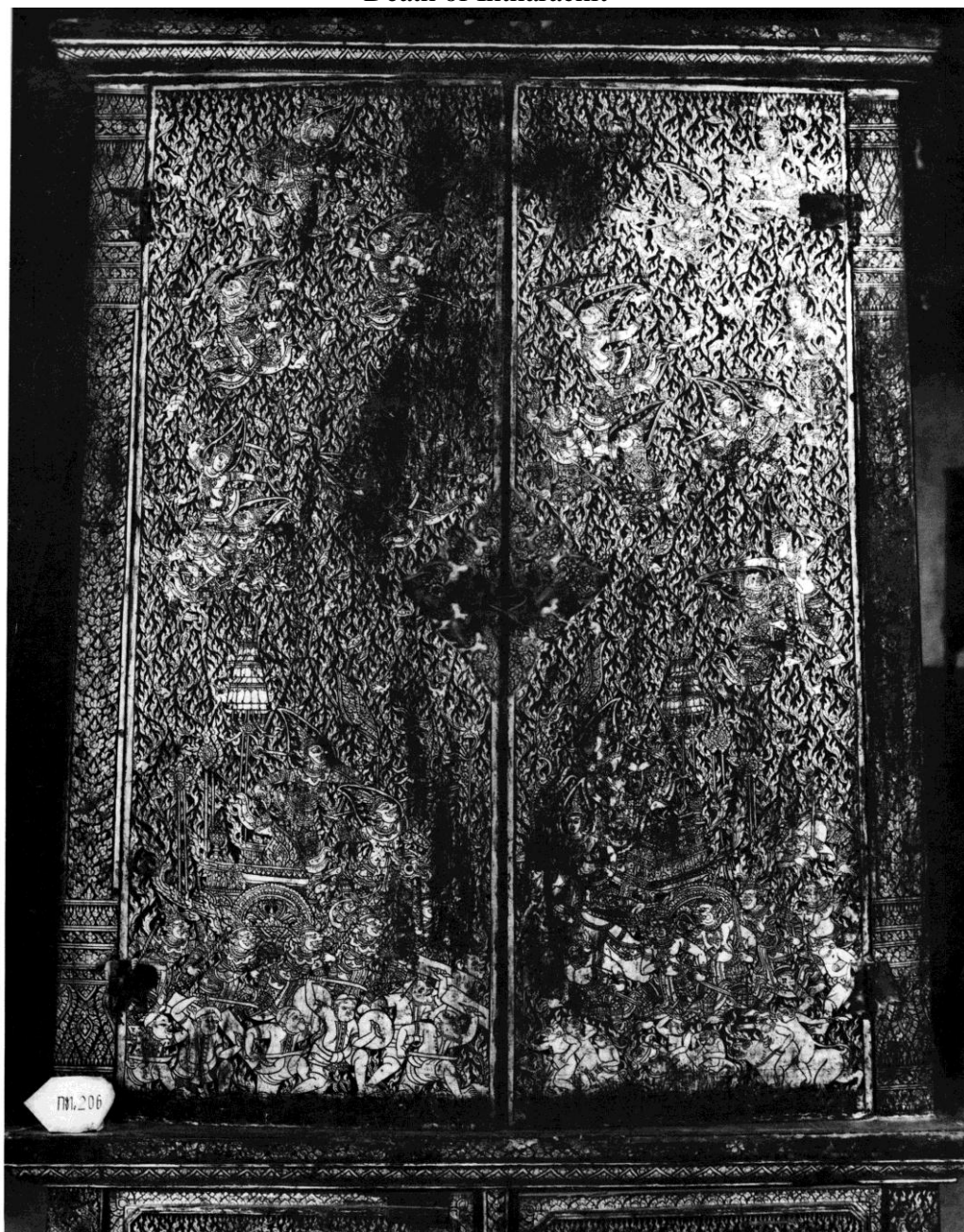
Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 255.

Figure 2
Cabinet R 42, Right Side



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 136.

Figure 3
Cabinet R 206, Front Side
Death of Intharachit



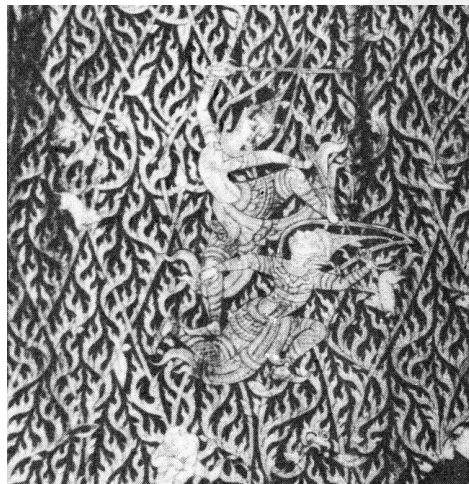
Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol. III, 64.

Figure 4
Cabinet R 67, Front Side Detail
Intharachit Nursing at the Breast of Montho



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 228.

Figure 5
Cabinet R 323, Front Detail
Phap Chap Phra Lak/Intharachit



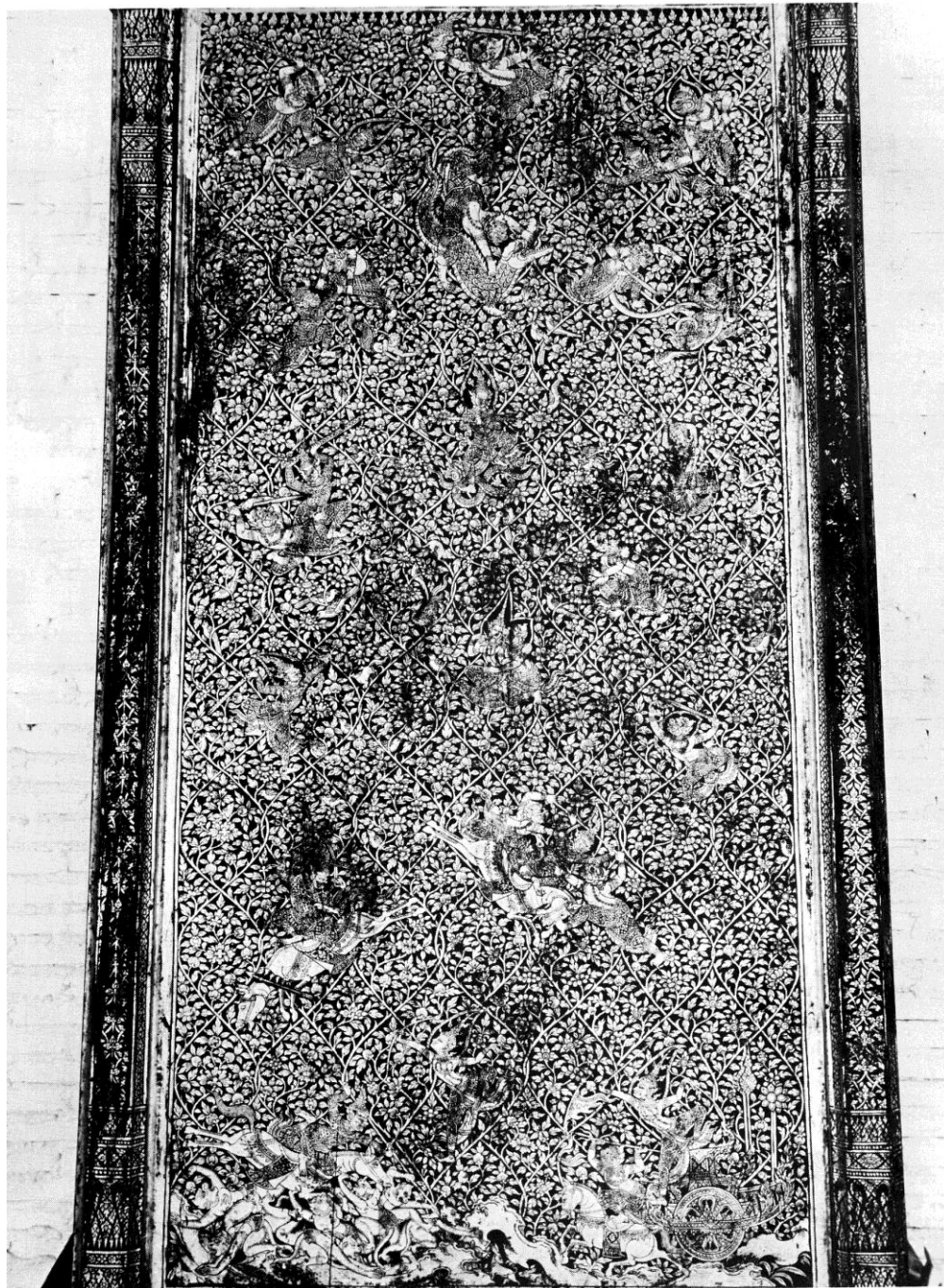
Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 228.

Figure 6
Cabinet R 206, Front Detail
Phra Lak Shoots Intharachit



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol. III, 64.

Figure 7
Cabinet R 67, Right Side
Wirunchambang Fights and Dies



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 231.

Figure 8
Cabinet R 67, Right Side
Maiyarap Abducts Phra Ram
Hanuman Goes to Rescue Phra Ram



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 230.

Figure 9
Cabinet R 323, Left Side
Suphanamatcha



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol IV, 140.

Figure 10
Cabinet R 198, Front Side
Mangkornkan Goes to Fight



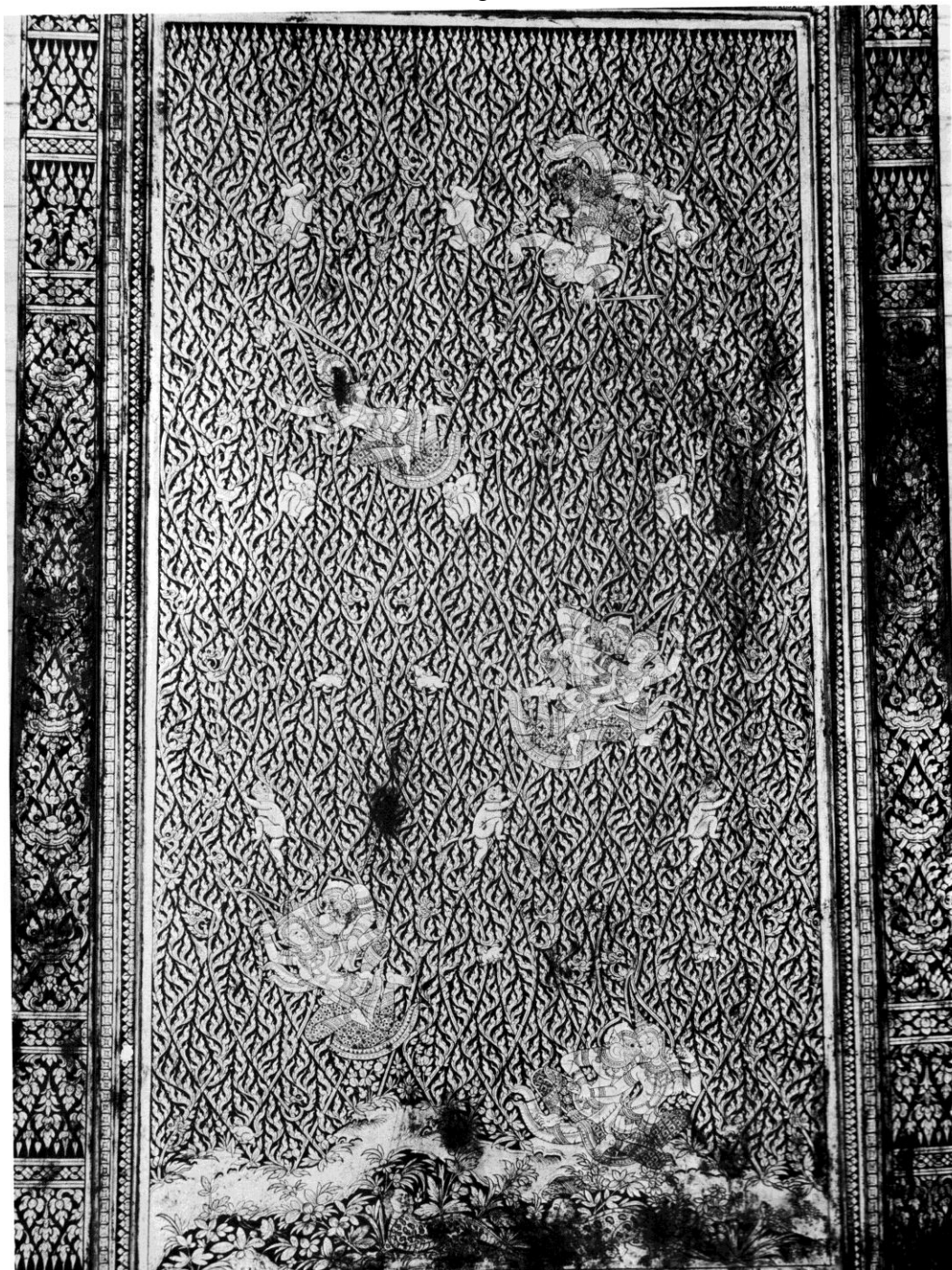
Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol III, 36.

Figure 11
Cabinet R 311, Front Side
Intharachit Uses the Phrommat Arrow
Nang Sida Riding in Busabok Kaeo
Hanuman Carries the Mountain to Cure Phra Lak



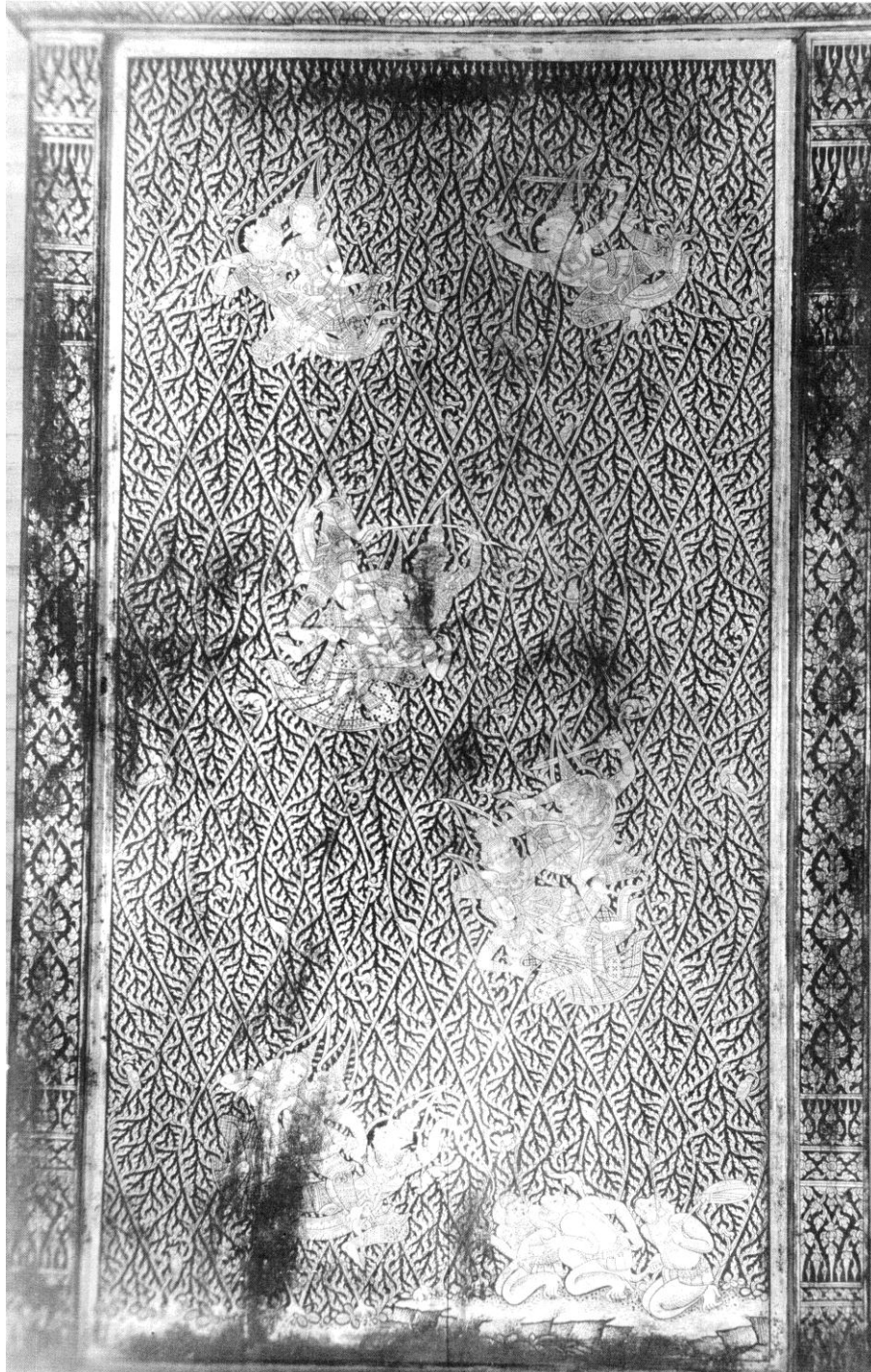
Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, Vol IV, 94.

Figure 12
Cabinet R 85, Right Side
Nang Loi



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2, 301.

Figure 13
Cabinet R 130, Left Side
Thotsakan Lifting Mount Krailat



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2 Volume II, 127.

Figure 14
Cabinet R 210, Left Side
Thotsakan Lifting Mount Krailat



Source: Kongkaew, Thai lacquer and gilt bookcases, Part 2 Volume III, 85.

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