

## THE RAMA JATAKA.

A Lao version of the story of Rama.

by

PRINCE DHANI.

On a tour of educational inspection in 1928 of the northeastern provinces, the decoration of the *bot* of wat Nūa in Roi-et attracted my attention in that it was covered with frescoes on the exterior instead of interior walls as is usual elsewhere in this country. The frescoes depicted the scene of a battle between Rama and Ravana. The question then arose in my mind as to whether one would be enabled by them to detect divergences between the Lao story and the one current among us in the Menam delta and lower valley. The people up in this part of the Kingdom were descended from those of Lanchang, owing their allegiance to a Lao Buddhist civilisation dating back to the XIVth century of the Christian era when their state reached its zenith of power, stretching from Pasak or Nakon Champasak astride both banks of the Mekong up past Wiengcān to the country round Luang Phra-bang, all three of the above-mentioned towns as well as Nakon Phnom on our side of the river seeming to have been their main centres of culture. On a closer scrutiny of the frescoes one got the impression that it was just the representation of a battle in which were to be found the usual traditions of Thai pictorial art—possibly comparatively modern. The attribution of specific complexions to the various leading characters, such as green for Rama and Ravana, red for Sugriva and white for Hanuman, the dresses and headgears and the stereotyped poses all testify to a common tradition with us. There was nothing

to indicate divergences in the story since a battle is just a battle especially when Ravana and not his allies or relatives takes the field in person. On further enquiries I was told that there was a certain "religious work" dealing with the story of Rama which was read out or recited at ceremonies connected with dedications to the dead or at cremations.

It was not till some two or three years later that the late Phya Sunthorn Thephakiccaraks, then governor of Roi-et and my host on the occasion of that visit, was kind enough to send me a typewritten copy of a voluminous Lao story of Rama called the *Rama Jataka*. That the story of a Hindu warrior, worshipped in his land as a god, should assume the form of a Buddhist *jataka* was rather astonishing. The story of Rama, it is true, is older than Buddhism, for in the oldest parts of the Buddhist Canon of the Tripitaka recitals of "ballads", in Pali *akkhāva*, are mentioned as being among a class of worthless occupations "shunned by Gotama the Recluse."<sup>1</sup> These ballads were explained by the Sinhalese commentaries as being based upon such stories as that of Rama and such explanations have been accepted by scholars such as Hermann Jacobi and Macdonnell. Within the Canon itself, though in a comparatively later section called the *Jataka*, among a collection of folklore and old stories is to be found a story called the *Dasaratha Jataka*, in which Rama with his brother Lakshmana and his sister (sic) Sita wander into the forest to keep his father's word of promise but do not meet Ravana or wage war with him. Such must of course have been the oldest version of the story of Rama current in Buddhist India. The extra-canonical *Rama Jataka* however had nothing to do with the *Dasaratha Jataka* and has never pretended to be so. Why it should have assumed the form of a *jataka* can only be explained by the parallel of Burma where no secular literature was ever looked upon with favour in olden days. Thus the Lao story of Rama metamorphosed into a *jataka* through religious bigotry. The Lord Buddha was made to say that he had been Rama in a former birth and his contemporaries had their due rôles in the story.

---

1. Digha Nikaya, Cullakkhandhavagga, I, 13.

It should also be mentioned in this connection that beside this work Lao literature possesses in its collection of fables (pakorn),<sup>2</sup> in the second book entitled the *Book of the Frogs* (Mandupakorn) a tale of Dasaratha and a tale of Rama. The tale of Dasaratha relates that King Dasaratha has four sons, Rama, Bharata, Lakkhana and Sataghana. The King in 'old age retires to live in the forest with Lakkhana and his mother. The tale of Rama describes an abduction of Sita by Ravana, with whom Rama wages war in his own interest as well as on behalf of Piphek, Ravana's brother, to avenge a wrong done him. After victory he installs Piphek as King of Lanka in Ravana's place. These tales, in a way reflecting the oldest version of the story as being distinct from the war of Lanka, are treated as secular literature and have nothing to do with our *Rama Jataka* either.

To return to that copy of the *Rama Jataka* sent me by the late governor, I presented it in his name to the Royal Institute. Being too busy at the time I paid no more attention to it. Some years later a friend consulted me about an idea he had of publishing this work.<sup>3</sup> I therefore had another look at it and found it highly interesting as a possible material for further research. With this object in view I beg to present this analytical summary in the hope that it may attract the attention of and stimulate a will to research by some scholar more competent than myself.

## II

The *Rama Jataka* is divided into two sections. The first consists of 20 chapters, called *phuk* or bundles, because they are written on palm leaves and tied with string into bundles. The second consists of 23. The first, after the usual formula of a Buddhist *jataka*, purports to give the history of the common ancestors of the hero and villain. Tapparames, a descendant of Brahma, has two sons, Thotaroth and Wirulhok, names corresponding to the Pali

2. cf Finot: *Récherches sur la littérature laotienne*, BEFEO, XVII, 1905. p. 101.

3. พระรามชาดก พระสารประเสริฐ และหลวงศรีอมรญาณเก็บเล่าความ  
พิมพ์ พ.ศ. ๒๔๗๖.

Dhataratha and Virulhaka respectively. Their capital is Inthapat, now Angkor. The elder son being deficient in arms, Tapparames appoints the younger son to be his successor. The elder, aggrieved at being passed over, leaves home and travelling "through forest, dales and hills" comes into the valley of the Thon river where he builds his capital named Mahanathi Sri Phanphao on the right bank. A serpent-king however comes along and advises him to cross the river and build a new capital, which is named Canthaburi Sri Sattanag. This of course is Wiengcan and the Thon river is obviously the Mekong. In due time Raphanasuan, i.e. Ravana the Great, son of Wirulhok of Inthapat, comes to Canthaburi and forcibly leads away King Thotaroth's daughter Cantha. King Thotaroth has two other children, Rama and Lakshana, who when grown up into strong youths are highly proficient in the use of the bow and arrow. They volunteer to avenge the wrong done to their house by cousin Ravana and set out on a long land journey to the south. After subduing Ravana, they return home by way of the great river. During their long journeys to Inthapat and back, they contract several matrimonial liaisons with daughters of local chiefs and kings as well as with celestial nymphs; and their offsprings become later — in the second part — leaders of their fathers's army in the subjugation of Ravana at his new capital of Lanka. The parties are finally reconciled and Cantha's hand is given to Ravana with her father's blessing. The main item of interest in this first part is the route by which the hero and his brother travel. Names are however difficult to identify on account of the fanciful explanations given of their origins. One obtains an impression that the land-route to Inthapat is by way of the left bank of the Mekong. Among recognisable names we find, between Nongkhai and the north-east bend where the river turns south, three streams draining into the Mekong, namely; the Ngum (ᨾ᩵ᩁᩬ᩵) or Ngoum, the Ngeap (ᨾ᩵ᩁᩬ᩵) and the San or Chan. The brothers then enter thick forests and eventually reach a stream called Sé, and after that another called Rohini, i.e. the Red river, which could not surely refer to its more famous namesake in point of

meaning,—the Eleusæ range of Tonkin. They then enter a state called Kabilaphat, described as the land of various Kha tribes, the chief of which lives in a town called Khasamsaen, i.e. the three-hundred-thousand-Kha. This part is "shut in by high ranges of mountain fringing upon Annam". A further march of fifteen days bring them to the "city of the Khom chief" where a month's stay is made. Passing then through a "mud-sea" they arrive after three or four days' march at a "sea of unfathomable depth and breadth", into which the Thom river flows. On the west bank of this river near the mouth they find the city of Inthaphat, the goal of their expedition. Such a description of the Khmer capital, whether the original Indraprastha otherwise Angkor Thom or any of the later capitals such as Lovek is meant, would not be geographically applicable and there must be a hyperbolic use of the word "sea" (สมุทร) in any case. It is of course considered a poetic licence to use the word *samud*, meaning sea, for any big stretch of water in Thai literature.

The journey back by river is said to have been through the Khone rapids and two towns are mentioned as Takkasila and Tawai. The first of these towns is difficult to identify but there is a village about 30 miles east of Nongkhai on the right bank which is marked in some maps as Ban Tooay. There is really nothing in this part of the story that corresponds to any story of Rama save the names of the principal characters, Ravana and his brother Phibphi, i.e. Vibhishana, and another brother Inthachi, doubtless identical with Ravana's son Indrajit, etc.

In the second section we are on more familiar ground—that is we begin the story of Rama more or less in accordance with local versions. Ravana reverts to his unprincipled nature and being unsatisfied with his surroundings moves south to found a new seat of government which he names Lanka. He abducts Sita the wife of Rama who wages war against him to recover her. The presentation of the story is in many ways remarkable for the majority of episodes in the Thai *Ramakien* which do not correspond to the

*Ramayana* of Valmiki is to be found in the Lao version told of course in a different way and some with many variations. As this study is primarily one of a comparative nature to help determining the relationship of our Lao version with other versions of what might be termed after Coedès as the Hinduised states of the Far East, it has been thought fit to include in the analytical narrative given below comparisons chiefly with two other versions. One is the standard Thai version of the *Ramakien* of 1798—commonly known in this country as the *Ramakien of the first Reign*—as being the version of a most closely allied culture; the other is the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, as being the standard version of world-wide fame. I might be allowed to add that by comparing this with the *Ramayana* I do not by any means commit myself to the opinion—still clung to in many quarters—that the *Ramayana* is the source of any of these versions of the story of Rama, although I hope to be able to come to some deduction later regarding the provenance of the Thai and Lao versions.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless there can be no denial that of all the descendants of the old story of Rama in India that survive either in the motherland or its neighbours, the *Ramayana* of Valmiki will have to be looked upon as the proper heir to the ancient heritage. For the *Ramakien* the abbreviated form of RK will be employed; for the *Rama Jataka* RJ whilst for the *Ramayana* it will be RY. To turn now to our analytical narrative:

The commencement of the story in each of our versions is indicative of their nature. The *Ramayana*, being a Vishnuite bible, emphasizes the fact that Vishnu was invited to assume on earth the reincarnation of Rama. The *Ramakien*, though based upon an identical theme, is yet nothing but a secular epic—a fact clearly indicated in the epilogue which says that *This work called the Ramakien is an essay at presenting a pagan tale of no great moral essence but meant as an offering (to the Three Gems). Whosoever*

4. A short presentation in Thai of my conclusions on this question may be found in ประวัติศาสตร์วรรณคดีและวิจารณ์เรื่องรามเกียรติ์แห่งนิทานอิเหนาของไทย พ.ศ. ๒๔๘๔ 1941 :

*listens to this must not be misled by it but should moralise upon the impermanence of all things.* It therefore gives the story of the invitation to Vishnu without the same devotional implications. The *Rama Jataka* of the Lao on the other hand, having had to metamorphose into a Buddhist Birth-story traces the origin of its hero to a *bodhisattva* who has been invited to come to earth by Indra. Contrary to the RY or RK, or in fact almost any version of the story of Rama so far known, the RJ credits its hero with only one brother Lakshna. It is however noteworthy that the old version appearing in the Tripitaka as *Dasaratha Jataka*—possibly the oldest story of Rama so far known—records the same number.

To procede with our story, Ravana assuming the form of Indra violates the Queen of Heaven. The latter learning the truth only after the act had been committed, asks her husband to let her assume a human existence on earth in order to avenge the wrong done her. She is therefore born as Sida, (Sita), the daughter of Ravana and his queen Sudtho (RK Montho, RY Mandodari). On the advice of the astrologer royal, Phibphi, the brother of Ravana, the child is abandoned because she is destined to bring about her father's downfall. She is guarded however by the *genii* of the forest till discovered by an unnamed seer (named however by RK Janok, RY Janaka) living on an island (RK, RY. Mithila). Having reached adolescence, she is given in marriage to Rama who alone of all suitors—including even Ravana—is able to lift up the ancient bow in the seer's keeping. We are next told that while the hero with his wife and brother live in the forest Sida is abducted by Ravana through the well-known ruse of the golden hart. Phya Krut (RY: Jatayu, RK: Sadayu) opposes the abductor on his way back and is wounded by a ring which the villain takes from the hand of the heroine. The ring is later restored to Rama while searching for his lost wife and becomes an important instrument for later identification. So far we are fairly well on the original theme of the classic as well as the Thai version, with one important default, the intrigue of Kaikeyi.

Now follows a series of five episodes which find no counterpart in the classic *Ramayana*, though three of them correspond more or less to the Thai *Ramakien*. One is in fact tempted to see in these episodes possible explanations to the otherwise new interpolations in that Thai work.

1. In his wanderings in search of Sida Rama eats a certain fruit which turns him into a monkey for three years during which several of the following episodes take place. This one is not even accepted by the Thai *Ramakien*.

2. An unnamed seer (RK: Kodem of Saket) living in the forest had a daughter Phaengsi (RK: Swaha) and later on twin sons named Sangkib and Phalichan. The names of these two are of course identical with Sugriva (RK: Sukrib) and Valin (RK: Phali). The rôles of the brothers are however mixed up all through the story and what is told of the one in all other versions is attributed in this story to the other. As they grow up the seer begins to suspect they are not his progeny. By invoking divine help in his verification he puts them to a test in which he throws all three into a stream. His own child, Phaengsi, swims back to him and the others (in RK they are turned into monkeys and) disappear over the waters to found later on a settlement of their own called Kasi (RY: Kishkindha). Swaha is later turned into a monkey too by eating of that same fruit which Rama ate and the two mate giving birth to the monkey Hundaman (Hanuman).

3. A bull born of Thoraphi (RY Dundabhi) after going to death his own father and thereby winning leadership in his own herd becomes arrogant and challenges Sangkib the monarch of Kasi (RK: Phali of course) to a mortal combat. The younger brother Phalichan (RK: Sukrib) waiting outside the cave where the combat is taking place, and believing his brother to have been killed by the bull, seals up the entrance in accordance with his brother's instructions given before going in. The elder brother comes out at last, and, enraged by what he takes to be his brother's treachery, quarrels with him. In the series of



fight which follow the elder brother is killed by an arrow shot by Rama who had allied himself with the other party. The help given by Rama to Sugriva against his brother Valin is of course classical.

4. We come now to another episode which occupies a different position in the development of the story of the Thai *Ramakien*, of which it is a well-known part though it is told rather differently to the Lao Jataka. A demon, Nantha (RK: Nontuk, a corruption of the same word, both derived from the Sansk. Nanda), a porter of Heaven, is gifted with a magic finger which will kill any one pointed at. He becomes a dangerous nuisance to the heavenly communities thereby. To rid him a beautiful celestial damsel's help is enlisted. RK says the damsel is Vishnu in disguise. She promises her love to the infatuated Nantha on condition that he learns to dance. While teaching him the damsel points to a fatal spot on her body and the demon imitating her kills himself.

5. By the time of his alliance with the monarch of Kasi, Rama is released from his curse of an existence as a monkey. Now, the widow of Sangkib, named Kodtaraj, in assisting her husband to fight his brother got wounded in the eye and blinded. She comes at this juncture by Rama and is cured of the blindness by the hero. She is enabled to have a son by him into the bargain, who under the name of Kwan Thaofa is later to become one of Rama's leading generals in his war with Ravana. The RK has no such episode. The rôle played by this character seems identical with the Ongkot of the Thai *Ramakien* though Ongkot is a son of Phali and therefore the heir of the Kingdom of Khidkhin. Nor, by the way, is Hanuman a son of Rama in the Thai version, his father being instead the wind-god, Vayu. One cannot help remarking that it is to the credit of the Thai *Ramakien* that its hero Rama is distinguished by his unwavering constancy to his wife through the long trial of separation.

All preparations being ready, Rama now begins his advance upon the enemy, and we revert again from episodes to the main

story more or less in conformity with the *Ramayana* and the *Ramakien*. Throughout the prosecution of his campaign against Lanka, the hero of the Lao story is accompanied by many principle characters of the epic, and it will now be worth our while to review their rôles. The brother Lakshna has ever been a constant companion, and his presence on Rama's council of war and in his battles is a matter of course. Another constant companion since the early days of the Inthapat campaign, though only mentioned in this narrative for the first time, is the divine steed Manikab, in every sense a gift from heaven having been presented to Rama by Indra. Not only is he a resourceful mount of the hero, but is besides a trusted friend and councillor sharing in all deliberations. To him is the credit of having saved Lakshna's life from Rama in a frenzy of anger on learning of the loss of Sida. To him too belong magical powers, for he once underwent a trance by which he succeeded in forcing Ravana to come out of his lair and be vanquished in battle. Manikab is indeed a character peculiar to the RJ, as he is not found in any other version of the story of Rama. Two other personages are also peculiar to this version with respect of their rôles: namely Phaengsi, as a wife of Rama while in the simian stage; and Kodtaraj, widow of Sangkib and later wife of Rama. Both may be classed as amazons taking part in Rama's battles and both have valiant sons in their father's service. These sons, Hunlaman and Kwan Thaofa, already mentioned, have their seats on the council of war and usually take prominent parts in the conduct of war in all respects. Two others are mentioned as councillors and allies, namely: Phalichan, King of Kasi and Munyiraj, King of Inthapat, the latter being the main supplier of man-power for fighting. While the Lao *jataka* relates that Rama's man-power is human, with the one exception of Hunlaman, the RK recruits his army from the monkey-hosts from Khidkhin and Chomphu and the RY adds bears to the monkeys. Among the lesser leaders in RJ are four sons of Rama and four of Lakshna born in earlier adventures of the first section. The names of some of them are noteworthy,

because they are curiously mixed up. One is Ongkot (RY Angada, RK Ongkot) who in the other two versions as well as any other version is the son of the monkey King Valin of Kishkindha. In RY Lakshmana also names his son Angada but that comes long after the war in Lanka. Another of these sons of Rama is named Thosakanth, i.e. "the Ten-necked", the regular name in the Thai *Ramakien* for Ravana, King of Lanka! As for the other side, besides Phibphi and Inthachi, brothers of Ravana, are mentioned as leaders the eldest son Chetthakumar and the nine sons of Queen Sudtho. An ally of Ravana in this campaign is the Naga-King of Pattalum, the netherland, to which state I shall have occasion to refer later.

On the way of his advance, Rama decides to send Hunlaman and Kwan Thaofa on a mission to ascertain the whereabouts of Sida and what may be happening to her. Save for minor details and one rather important side-issue the narrative follows the line of the classic version. That side-issue, important because it is a favourite episode of farce on the stage and therefore widely known, concerns the test of magical powers put to the seer called Tafai, the "Flame-eyed" (RK: Narod, i.e. Narada) of whom the brothers (RK: Hanuman goes alone, Ongkot waiting on the north side of the oceans) sought and obtained asylum for one night on their way to Lanka. The brothers are worsted in their attempts against him in the same way as is told in the RK. They then arrive in Lanka and their adventures are the same as in the Thai work, save that it does not include the attempt of Sida to commit suicide. Intruding into the bedchamber of Ravana they tied his hair with that of Queen Chantha in a magical knot which could be undone only by the Queen boxing the King's forehead. This episode finds its parallel in the *Khamphak*, a series of ballads recited at performances of the *Khon* depicting the campaign of Lanka, and believed to date from the days of Ayuthya, being thus anterior to the Thai *Ramakien* of 1798. The RK itself relegates this incident to a much later part of the story. The brothers then assuming the forms of monkeys work

havoc with the city of Lanka and its guardians but are finally caught. Finding it impossible to punish them, for they resist and defeat their tormentors in all their attempts, it is learnt from the culprits themselves that the only way to kill them is by applying fire to their bodies. This done, they writhe and move about all over the palace and set fire to all buildings that way, after which they escape out of the city, which is by now all ablaze. Neither of them can extinguish a small flame on their respective bodies and have to hurry back to Rama at Inthapat for advice. The hero tells them to return to where the fire had been first alighted. They therefore return to Lanka which they find already completely built. Unlike the RK, nothing is said about Rama's anger at their having overstepped his injunctions in setting fire to the enemy's capital. Their intentional arrogance in Ravana's presence finds a counterpart later on in the RK, in which Ongkot, sent on a mission making a final appeal to peace, doubles up his long tail to form "a seat as high as the throne of the King of Lanka".

Manikab now advises Rama to find an ancient chart wherein is marked a shallow by which one crosses over to Lanka. The task is allotted to the brothers Hunlaman and Kwan Thiaofa. After many enquiries the brothers succeed in finding it under the oceans inside a gigantic fish sustaining the earth. Rama then shoots an arrow with the message informing the enemy of his impending attack offering to retire if Sida is restored to him. These two items exist neither in the RY nor RK. Ravana now summons a council of war; and, being advised against retaining the lady, literally throws out his advisers, the brother Phibphi and Inthachi as well as his own son Chetthakumar, who with their families join Rama as the latter is after all their own cousin.

We now come to the war in Lanka. On this subject the RY devoted one out of seven books. The RJ too devotes a big proportion to it, but the *Ramakien* has a much bigger proportion of tales of fighting. Between the RJ and the RY the treatment is not the same. While RY is lengthy because of its speeches on the field of

battle the RJ makes it up with extra episodes. The RK, adopting almost all the RJ's extra episodes, has many others besides. The campaigns of Kumphakan and Intrajit (RK), not separately dealt with in RJ, are recounted at great length and though following a similar line as the RY are much more detailed. Various relatives and allies of Ravana are introduced in RK without parallels in the other two, such for instance as the mighty Sahassadeja whose gigantic size frightens the monkey-soldiers, the two tusked sons of Thosakanth born of elephants, Satthasura and Virunchambang and many others.

To present matters as clearly and as concisely as possible it is proposed to arrange the incidents of battle in the following tabular form:

*The Rama Jataka,*

- I. Rama orders the construction of the causeway over the seas, daughters of the Naga-King break through it by carrying away the stones for fun, are caught and seduced by Hanuman and brothers, thus putting an end to their mischief.
- II. Rama sends an arrow again to inform Ravana of his conditions of peace.

*The Ramakien and references.*

- I. Incident of the 'Floating Lady,' in which Benyakaya, niece of Thosakanth (Ravana) impersonates Sida. Her fraud at first believed in, but Hanuman exposes it by cremating the corpse. Benyakaya unable to endure the heat takes to flight but is caught, punished and then released. RY has no such episode. RJ III.
- II. The construction of the causeway almost similarly told as in RJ I, but has the extra incident of the quarrel of Nilaphat with Hanuman.

III. A banana trunk disguised as the corpse of Sida floats past Rama's camp. Rama taken in but Chetthakumar exposes the fraud.

IV. a. Four Lanka generals give battle and are killed;

b. One of them sends reals and magical snakes to annihilate Rama's army during the above but they are thwarted by magical *garudas*, the traditional enemies of serpents.

V. Maiyarab the Magician charms Rama and the whole camp to sleep and steals Rama to the nether world where he lives. Hanuman, and the three brothers rescue him, and kill Maiyarab.

VI. Ravana's nine sons give battle and are defeated.

VII. Ravana mounts a hill to take a look at the enemy's

RY gives the story of construction without the quarrel or the Naga-ladies.

RJ I.

III. The mission of Ongkot to offer final term of peace, ending in a fight.

RY in agreement.

RJ II and in the incident of the burning of Lanka.

IV. Thosakanth sets up a big canopy on top of a hill to view the enemy's camp. Sukrib flies at him. He takes a headlong flight. RY has a rather similar story but puts it before the mission of Angada.

RJ VII.

V. RK has the same story of Maiyarab though the rescuers is Hanuman alone.

RY has none such story.

RJ V.

VI. A much longer series of battles, in which are to be found reminiscences of RJ IV (b) corresponding to the battle of the bow of Naga-

camp. Rama shoots and Ravana takes to headlong flight.

VIII. Ravana and all his army leaders give battle. The nine sons are finally killed. Ravana wounds Rama with the lance Mokkhasakdi. Hunlaman brings a mountain of herbs to Chetthakumar who cures Rama.

IX. The fourth and last battle. Ravana is vanquished and killed.

bas shot by Inthrachit, of RJ VI corresponding to the battle of the ten Princes (สิบขุนสิบรถ), and of RJ VII to several battles fought by Thosakanth and Kumphan.

RY conforms more to RK than RJ for it records battles given by Kumbhakarna and Indrajit as well as Ravana and others.

VII. The last battle happening to be the fourth given by Ravana, and in this he is killed.

The dowagers now take the initiative in doing what they and everybody else in Lanka except Ravana have been long convinced as the only just and correct thing, the restoration of Sida to her rightful partner. They also invite Rama to accept the throne of Lanka. Accepting the first condition, without the RY's and RK's ordeal by fire on the heroine's part, Rama declines the throne and anoints the brother of the dead monarch, Phibphi, as his successor. After a stay of three months to give rest to his army, Rama returns to Inthapat, disbanding the allied armies. From Inthapat on his way home Rama founds settlements along the way, and the names of these are mentioned as being Phisnulok, Nakon Sawan, Sri Ayuthya, Nakon Raj, Phutthaisong and Phimai. Thus we are again off the track of the story of Rama.

But we have not left the story of Rama altogether yet. We are told that by procuring that wonderful fruit which is able to change monkeys into men Rama turns his son Hunlaman into a human state. The *Ramakien* relates that after the war, Rama raises the monkey general to the rank of co-ruler of Ayuthya with himself, bestowing upon him regal honours and privileges. Hanu-

man however is of too modest a disposition, and after acquiescing in accepting his master's honour for a time goes to surrender the regal privileges on the plea that he wishes to assume the vows of asceticism. This granted Hanuman retires to the forest and seeks a preceptor who however would not accept a simian candidate for the ascetic life. Hanuman therefore assumes the form of a man and takes the vows.

The final act of the drama concerns the disgrace of Sida, which though forming an incident of the *Uttara Kanda* of the *Ramayana*, is related in the RJ more in conformity with the RK and other Indonesian versions than with that classic. While Rama is out on an inspection tour of his kingdom, Sida is persuaded by her maids-in-waiting who have never seen Ravana to draw for them a picture of him. Rama's sudden arrival back puts them all to confusion for fear of Rama's jealousy. This arouses Rama's suspicion and on a search being made the picture is discovered. Learning that Sida drew it he orders Lakshna to kill her. Lakshna, however, leads out the sister-in-law and after a time returns to show Rama his sword tainted by a dog's blood as a proof of his having carried out the order. Meanwhile the lady mounted on Manikab is taken to the seer who brought her up from childhood and in time gives birth to a son by Rama named But (meaning "son"). Later on the seer creates by magical power another son named Hup ("image"), who is just the image of his brother. As they grow up they come into conflict with Hunlaman's minor officials which develops into such a big affair that not only Hunlaman but Rama and his brother Lakshna (RK: the other brothers Bharata and Satrugna) come out to help the officials against the rowdy unknown boys. The weapons of either party not being able to harm the other, Rama, suspecting the cause of it, questions the boys of their parentage. Their reply is to the effect that they are sons of the Lord Rama whom they have never seen because their mother Sida is living by herself at a hermitage. This leads to a reconciliation on all sides and all live happily ever after.



While the *Ramakien* hardly differs from the above except on minor points<sup>1</sup> such as the name of the "Image" being Lob, i.e. Lava, it however includes an incident of the *Release of the sacrificial Horse*, no doubt parallel to the *Ramayana's* story of the celebration by Rama of the great sacrifice called the *asvamedha*. The *Ramayana* moreover has it that Sita is banished from Ayodhya, and not ordered, as in the RK or RJ, to receive capital punishment. Sita besides gives birth to twin sons Kusa and Lava, nor is anything told in RY of the fight between uncles and nephews in consequence of the sacrificial horse.

The reader, if at all familiar with the *Ramakien*, will have noted by the time he gets thus far in reading this article that there are still many important episodes of the RK which do not find place in this work, such as the war with King Ākrawat of Maliwan after the Lanka campaign. And yet no other pair of Rama-stories bear such a close resemblance to one another.

The end, as the beginning, of the three works compared show characteristic divergences. The devotional *Ramayana* has it that at the end of the span of their lives the hero with his brothers and the heroine are remerged into Godhead in heaven; the secular *Ramakien* is not concerned with the death of its hero, heroine and their family; and the monastic *Rama Jataka* winds up the story in the traditional manner of a birth-story by the usual formula, thus:

"At the end of the discourse the Buddha summed up by reiterating that King Ravana born to give injury to the *bodhisattva* Rama in those days is now born as Devadatta . . . . King Thotaroth the father of Rama as King Suddhodhana, Queen Wisutthi Sida as Queen Maya, Prince Lakshna as the Venerable Ananda . . . . Sida as Uppalavanna (the bhikkuni) . . . . . As for King Rama of those days he has become today none other than my very self."

### III

The two parts of this story are thus sharply divided. Each one describes as its leading motive a campaign to avenge the

abduction of a girl. While the first possibly bears a tinge of local history, the second follows more or less accurately the story of Rama, the hero of the Indian national epic. The seat of war of the first part is placed at Inthapat, obviously the Khmer capital of Yasodharapura, now Angkor Thom; whilst that of the second is at Lanka, a deserted place resuscitated by Ravana. Cantha, the heroine of the first section, reminds us in some respects of the Monthothewi of the *Ramakien*; whilst the heroine of the second section is part and parcel of Sida, heroine of the Thai *Ramakien* in almost every respect. Both sections are curiously interwoven with suggestions of the migration of peoples in the valley of the Mekong and thence to the south and of the founding of cities and states in those areas. These suggestions are nevertheless far from historical, for Phutthaisong, Pasak, Phisnulok, Phimai and even Ayuthya are treated as being almost of the same age. Although Rama and his brother Lakshna as well as Ravana are brought into the first section, their story has no parallel in the usual stories of Rama. In the second section however these three assume their proper rôles, only place-names being out of their setting. The royal House of Inthapat is traced back, as in the *Ramakien*, to Brahma and his progeny. Tapparames, the ancestor, has two sons, Thotaroth and Wirulhok. The elder being weak in arms, the succession passes over him to the younger, who is Ravana's father. Now according to the *Ramakien*, Lastian (RY Pulastya), also a descendant of Brahma, has many sons among whom was Kuperan (Kubera) the elder, also weak in arms and therefore passed over with regard to the succession. A younger brother, Thosakanth, i.e. Ravana, succeeds to the Throne of Lanka. It is worthy of notice that the name of Thotaroth, in Pali Dhataratha, is that of one of the *loka-pala* or guardians of the Earth, and so also is Kubera. The confusion between the name of Rama's father Dasaratha and Dhataratha the Earth-guardian has its parallel in the *Serat Kanda* of Java, where Dasaratha is also called Destarata, an equivalent to the name of the eldest Pandava Prince, Dhrtarastra, of the *Mahabharata*.

The main problem concerning the first section is the identification of the historical parallel of the story. We know that at the beginning of the XIVth century of the Christian era Phya Suwanna Khamphong reigned over Lanchang. He banished a son who had seduced a member of his harem, and the son took refuge at the court of the Khmer monarch at Angkor. The latter gave his daughter in marriage to the Prince's son, named Fa-ngum, who was later equipped with an army to reclaim his fatherland, a measure probably intended by his father-in-law to strengthen Khmer influence in the upper valley of the Mekong. Fa-ngum in a triumphal march carried all before him and became a hero. He established Wiengcān as his capital under the identical name of Cānthaburi Sri Sattanag (-anahut). Fa-ngum was just that sort of a figure about whom minstrels would sing even when his days are long past. He however was a Lao, that is to say a native of that section of the great Thai race which was migrating down the Indo-chinese mainland to supplant the Mon-Khmer races before them. Nevertheless Fa-ngum, though descended from the royal House of Lanchang, was brought up in the Khmer country; whilst the Rama of our *jataka* is both descended and brought up in Lanchang. Fa-ngum went from Angkor to conquer the north; whilst the Rama of our *jataka* went from the north to conquer Angkor. The parallel seems therefore inapplicable. As there is no other historical figure, one begins to doubt whether it was meant to be a parallel to history at all. If however it was not, why then introduce the place-names of local history? I am ruling out Funan's conquest (through Fan Che-Man) of parts of the Malay Peninsula because we know of it from external (Chinese) records and may be certain that the fact has never been known to those local mediaeval chroniclers, who might have had any influence upon the shaping of our story.

The second section contains two features of interest. One is the problem of its scene of action — Lanka. The other is the form in which the story of Rama is told all through it. With

regard to the first problem, one feels that since the story has been developed from scenes along the Mekong down to the Khmer Empire then across the seas to a "deserted island in the south" which is named Lanka, that island must be nearer to the mainland of Indochina in just the same way as the real story as told elsewhere develops its scene of action from the slopes of the Himalaya downwards past the Vindhya and modern Mysore and then across the seas to Ceylon. Now it is well-known that the name of Lanka, amplified into Lankasuka used to be adopted to designate a kingdom of the lower middle part of the peninsula of Malaya, the Ling-ya-ssan-kia of the Chinese. That state would easily answer to the description of the "island across the seas to the south", in spite of the fact that it is merely "across the seas" and not an island. The supposition that the Lanka of our *jataka* is identical with this state rather than with the classical namesake of the real story seems therefore more than probable. It is further strengthened by the mention of an ally of the King of Lanka in the person of the Naga-King of Pattalum, the netherland. One cannot help seeing in this low-lying Kingdom of the Naga any other locality than the modern province of Phattalung, reputed to have been the seat of an ancient but vague civilisation, a low-lying stretch of land between Nakon Sri Thamaraj the ancient Tamralinga and the Lankasuka just mentioned. The main thing lacking is the historical figure to be identified with the Ravana of our *jataka*, for we do not know that any particular hero of Inthapat had ever had anything to do with going across the seas to found there a new state.

The problem therefore of the identities of the hero of Cantha-buri in the first as well as the second sections and of the monarch of Inthapat who went across the seas to found a new state called Lauka and became the villain of the story in the second section is quite similar in respect of the impossibility of finding historical parallels although the scenes of action are laid in real localities of this neighbourhood. Failing more definite evidences we are

bound to arrive at the only conclusion possible, namely that the *raconteur* of the *jataka*—and his audience of course—accepted as a natural supposition that Rama and his contemporaries, like the Buddha, lived their lives in our part of the World.<sup>5</sup> In short the *terra cognita* of the Lao of those days consisted only of the valley of the Mekong and its adjacent lands and like the ancient Romans all land beyond that pale was merely unknown. In this way classical heroes of India became nationalised into Lao or Thai or their neighbours. In a way this testifies to the popularity of the epics, as borne out by the statement of an eminent *savant* of the present day,<sup>6</sup> thus;

“L'héritage littéraire de l'Inde ancienne est encore plus apparent que l'héritage religieux. Pendant toute la période hindoue, le Râmâyana et le Mahâbhârata, le Harivamça et les Purânas ont été les principales, sinon les uniques sources d'inspiration des littératures locales. Dans toute l'Indochine indienne, en Malaisie, à Java, toute cette littérature épique et légendaire constitue encore la trame du théâtre classique, des danses, du théâtre d'ombres et de marionnettes. D'un extrémité à l'autre de l'Inde extérieure, les spectateurs continuent à pleurer sur les malheurs de Râma et Sitâ.”

As to the other feature of interest in the second section, the foregoing analysis has shown how closely the *Rama Jakata* resembles the Thai *Ramakien* in its main details and in the extra episodes not found in the classical *Ramayana* of Valmiki. 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, only lately standardized by the *Ramakien* of 1798 otherwise known as the Version of the First Reign

---

5. For a parallel in locating the story of Rama to the *raconteur's* world, see Huber: *Etudes indochinoises*, I, BEFEO, V, p. 168. I have also been told by M. P. Mus that the parallel exists too in Cham literature.

6. Coedès: *Histoire ancienne des Etats hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient*, Hanoi 1944. p. 329.

## IV

Only one more consideration now remains—that of chronology. Within the work itself there is but little direct indication of its age. Unfortunately my ignorance of the dialects of the north-east prevents me altogether from a philological examination of the text beyond gauging its meaning. Whether the name Inthapat referred to the classic capital of Angkor or any later capital such as Lovek that need not put us off the track too far, for the mention of the founding of Ayuthya—though an incidental one and not at all accurate in point of fact—would set the earliest limits to its age within the XIVth century. Another incidental mention of a town called Nakon Raj, an old name of Korat before its renaming by King Narai in the XVIIth century as Nakon Rajasima sets a limit to the other end. I have been moreover told by the Right Rev., Somdech Phra Maha Viravongs, an authority on Lao philology and literature, himself a native of Ubol, a big settlement of former Wiengcan people, that the work was probably written during the golden age of Lanchang literature under King Setthathiraj (1548—1571), with which surmise I shall have to rest content till some more definite proof is available to the contrary.

---

## SOME INVESTIGATIONS ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRE-BANGKOK COINAGE.

by

U. GÜEHLER

The following investigations are based on the studies of *le May*, published in the book *The Coinage of Siam* (issued in 1932 by the Thailand Research Society). The purpose of the new researches on the evolution of the Pre-Bangkok Baht-Coinage is to attempt a definition of the approximate age of each coin, or at least its respective place in the line of all known coins. Since *le May* wrote his book, additional old coins have been discovered and new assumptions or even facts can be deduced from these discoveries. I believe that by systematically and repeatedly approaching the problem from different angles, it will be possible to come nearer to a solution of that capital question: *to which reign or at least to which period each coin should be ascribed*. If no documentary evidence about the coins used in past reigns comes to light, — and I feel that the hope is a forlorn one — it will at least be possible to limit the circle of possibilities, and so, step by step, we may come nearer to our goal. But unless such studies, even if they produce only partial results, are published, they will remain unknown and all future research work will have to start from scratch again.

Let us at first recapitulate some results of *le May's* investigations:

1) Most of the old bullet coins of Pre-Bangkok periods have cuts on either shoulder. Some of them, but only a few, have cuts *and* in addition one small elliptical nick, called in Thai *Met Kau San*. All the rest have no cuts but very often a nick.