REVIEW ARTICLE

ON TRANSLATING THAI POETRY

The reason for putting together this article from miscellaneous papers written several years ago is to review three monographs on translating Thai poetry and make something coherent out of them. The three monographs are *Trends and Structure of Contemporary Thai Poetry*, by James N. Mosel; *Story and Translations of Sri Praj*, by Premchaya; and *Interpretative Translations of Thai Poets*, by *M.R.* Seni Pramoj. The forms used are mainly *glon 8* (กลอน ๘) and *kloang 4* (โคลง ๔ สุภาพ); I might add at the start that I much prefer the *kloang* to the *glon*, so that most of the examples are in that format. At the same time I will sketch in a brief background to Thai poetry and a short history of Thai literature. This broadens the scope of the paper considerably, so some hot air can be expected. It would be no bad thing, however, if future translators acquired both a better sense of humor and a firmer grasp of Thai poetry than the pioneers who have worked in this area! I should add also that Thai poetry in this context means only Central Thai poetry. The north, northeast and south all have their own literature, which will not be touched upon in this paper.

A. Background to Thai poetry

1. Thai poems can be divided into two main categories: poetry and rural rhymes (called *pleng* which means "song"). Greek and Latin poetry, as well as Pali and Sanskrit, are quantitative. English poetry is stressed, while in Thai both quantity and stress are used in combination. Modern poets, particularly in America, are talking a great deal about discarding stress and using quantity instead, but I don't think they really understand what quantity is. Or let us say, they cannot adapt quantity to any regular measure and so defeat their own end.

2 (a) The *pleng* or "spontaneous" rural rhymes are played as a pastime in all parts of the country. There are many varieties—the "harvest *pleng*" (เพลงเกี่ยวข้าว), the "boat *pleng*" (เพลงเรือ), etc. in the central or Menam Chao Phya Plain—and I think they all follow the same pattern. Briefly this is what happens in, say, the harvest *pleng* (the boat *pleng* being an affair of the high-water season, when boats in their hundreds gather after some festival and the pastime is then carried out.) When a farmer wants to harvest his crop, he appoints a day and invites his friends and relatives to help him in the work. He supplies food and drinks, and when the work is done the fun begins. The singers divide themselves into two groups—men and women—and stand in a circle, clapping their hands or stamping on the ground to mark time. After the preliminaries of invoking past teachers (ไหว้ครู), the men, or rather one man, starts to make advances to a woman. The woman puts him off. One example: "How can a girl fall in love with a man when her family loses a buffalo every time he comes to call?" Another: after the man had sung that the night before he came to call and shouted at the top of his lungs but got no answer—she must sleep like a log—the girl's reply is given in 2 (b) below. At times the men become vulgar, while the women positively rude. The repartee is spontaneous and the words are sung out as fast as possible—hesitation being an admission of defeat and an object of ridicule. Sometimes a story is followed, with the players singing separate parts. Such is the *pleng* and it goes on for all sorts of hours—presumably till the sun heralds the new day.

(b) Basic rhyme scheme of the *pleng*:

ได้ยินเสียงคนมาปนเสียงหมา ไม่รู้จะจำเสียงไหน

Man's voice mixed with the bitches' bark
Didn't know to hark which voice

The measure is iambic. The rhyming between the fourth and sixth words (คน-ปน/with-bitch) is an internal rhyme, which is optional; while rhyming between the eighth and twelfth words (หมา-จำ/bark-hark) is an external rhyme to bind the two parts of the line, and is compulsory.

3 (a) Genres of Thai poetry (*kawa, chan, kloang, glon* and *rai:* กาพย์ ฉันท์ โคลง กลอน ร่าย): each subdivided into many varieties. The *kawa* and *chan* are of Indian origin and the Thai have adapted them by adding rhymes, while the other three are indigenous. Thai is a tonal language and all forms have both tone and rhyme rules. In fact all Thai poetry can be sung, and some poets, when they read their masterpiece aloud, will rack your brain with a sort of euphonious cacophony. But not me.

(b) *The glon*: the easiest and most popular of our forms (the *pleng* above is a primitive form of the *glon*).

Rhyme scheme of the *glon 8* (meaning each line has eight syllables, sometimes extending to nine) :

O O O O O O O R
O O R O R O O r
O O O O O O O r
O O r O r O O T.

The rhymes in the second and fourth lines can be placed optionally in the third or fifth words. The last word in the quatrain (T) is the 'throw word' to which the next quatrain must attach itself. In this way a *glon* poem one thousand pages long would be connected from the first line to the last.

Example of the glon 8 (not a good one, I am afraid) :

Count one two you are yet alive
Three four *five* you are far from dead
Six seven when a hen an egg laid
Eight nine ten then to *bed* on a bier (T)
Ten nine eight rather late to get up
Seven six mix a *cup* of good cheer
Five four three we'll take breakfast here
Two one what! no beer? cheerio (T)

This is no matter for laughing For without quaffing beerio
Makes me feel, I fear, queerio Aweary go, O alack, back to bed.

The last line is a typical *glon* line, with two internal or optional rhymes (go/O and lack/back). If we change the line to read "So deario, aweary go-back to bed" the line would swing better, but it would not be so Thai in the modern form. The penultimate line could be written in iambics if we say "Makes me, I fear, feel queerio" but the Thai breaks the line into 3, 2, 3 instead of the caesura cutting the line in half as in the iambic line. In Thai poetry both quantity and stress are used. Internal rhymes and alliteration are the means of turning a stressed line into a quantitative one, and *vice versa*. This theme will be developed later.

(c) *The kloang :* most sophisticated form; can be written in regal language or Billingsgate slang.

Rhyme scheme of the *kloang 4 suparb* (quatrain *kloang*)

O O O O O O R (O O)
O O O O R O r
O O O O R O O (O O)
O O O O r O O O O.

Parentheses are called *soi kloang*, consisting of one sense word and one sound word. When written down the quatrain looks like this :–

O O O O O O R (O O)
O O O O R O r
O O O O R O O (O O)
O O O O r O O O O.

◎ หนึ่งสองสามสี่ห้า หกเจ็ด แปดแฮ
เก้าสิบต่อสิบเอ็ด นับเค้า
ร้อยพันหมื่นแสนเสร็จ ล้านโกฏิ ก็ดี
ทุกหน่วยสิบคูณเข้า สุดขั้นอสงไขย ฯ

One two three four five six seven
Eight nine ten eleven Egad!
Hundreds, thousands, then millions,
Billions, trillions *Ad* *Infinitum.*

The *soi kloang*, consisting of sounds like *lae, na,* etc. (แฮ, แล, นา, นอ ฯลฯ) can be quite a good flowing device between lines, but in English I dispense with it if possible. However let us have just one example.

Single rhymes without soi:

One moon doth orbit the earth
Then science gave birth : Sputniks!
And what is the worth of that?
More 'n' more Lunatiks will orbit earth.

Single rhymes with soi (in third line):

Marriage is something strange
'Tis not in my range of life
I meet a sweet ang- el like thee lae (แล)
I would take thee wife wert thou virgin.

Double and triple rhymes (hospital/lost-it all):

Christmas comes in Dec- ember
After November is past
Just can't remember what day
I've thought till at last I lost my mind,

And write this in hos- pital
Just what was it all about?
Can't say—lost it all somewhere
What was in went out what's out went in.

(d) *The kloang 2 form:* Besides the *kloang 4*, there are also *kloang 2*, *kloang 3* and *kloang 5*. The *kloang 2* form is a fourteen-word composition with just one rhyme (a *soi* can also be used optionally as in the first and third lines of a *kloang 4*.) But in Thai the form is more difficult than the *kloang 4* because seven of the fourteen words must conform to tone rules. In English however it is far easier.

One two three four five My fingers I strive
To count them all.

For examples I will put into this form some translations of Sappho's fragments made by several hands. The translator of the first fragment claims that he has used the sapphic meter, though I doubt if Sappho herself used rhymes. A *kloang 4* is also included for comparison.

1.

Ah, if my breasts could still give suck
And my womb bear a child, wouldn't I come
Quickly without a qualm to another

Bridegroom and bed!
Innumerable now are the wrinkles spread
Across my flesh by age, and Love
Does not fly to me, chase me, give me again

His beautiful pain.

2.

To what, dear bridgroom, may I thee compare?
A slender sapling were an image fair.

What are you like, sweet bridegroom, what?
Like a tender sapling, bridegroom, that.

3.

'Tis midnight, but the moon has set,
The Pleiades leave the sky,
Journeyman Time is on his way :
Alone I lie.

* * *

The moon has set and the Pleiades; it is midnight, the time is going by and I lie alone.

* * *

The moon has gone
The Pleiades gone
In dead of night
Time passes on
I lie alone.

* * *

The moon has hidden her light
The Pleiades in flight have gone
The time is midnight and time
Passes on—Alone, alone I lie

Are you stout? Slender? Likened to tender
Sapling, sweet groom.
If my breasts could still Give suck, and my womb will
Bear me a child,
I would to the room Of a new bridegroom
And lie with him.
But now wrinkles line This old flesh of mine,
And love does not
Chase me any more, Give me as before.
His beautiful pain.
The Moon, the Pleiades—gone! Midnight! Time marches on
And alone I lie

4. Main subjects for Thai poetry:

(a) *Eulogies:* all forms used. Written for special occasions, ceremonies.

(b) *Dance drama:* invariably written in the *glon 7* form. The main stories are "Ramakien", the Thai version of the Indian epic "Ramayana" (used for *khon*, the masked play), and "Inao", story of the legendary Javanese hero, Airlangga.

(c) *Religious pieces:* mainly in the *rai* form (Jataka birth stories, the Buddha's teachings, etc). The great works in this category were written by monks for use in their discourses at special church festivals. The "Dhammapada" is a great favourite and has been translated into many genres.

(d) *Stories in verse:* in the late Ayudhia period, some stories that have come down to our day were written in the *kawa* form, but in the early Bangkok period the *glon* was used in the main.

(e) *Love epistles, 'nirats'* [นิราศ] *(travelogues, real or imaginary):* all forms. The *nirat* is a conventional exercise and in the *kloang* form has been written continuously for five centuries. The convention is that the poet has to go on a journey and be separated from his love. He moans and groans all the way—with his tongue in his cheek. First he moans that, left behind, she will be unfaithful to him or that she, jewel that she is, will be stolen by some sneak-thief. Then he starts on his journey and groans all the way: when he sees, or rather imagines, say, a parrot, he will ask the bird to fly with a message back to his love; or if it happens to be a crow instead of a parrot, he will wish the crow could crow like a parrot and take a message back to his love. Then if he arrives at a district whose name he can refer back to his love he will do so with alacrity (such as the "Bang Khun Thien" [บางขุนเทียน] piece from "Nirat Narindr" [นิราสนรินทร์] that is printed below). Such is the *nirat*. The trick is in the variations the poet can produce on the same old theme. For instance when Narindra In was writing, there was no electricity and people used torches and candles, but today power cables carrying electric currents can be seen everywhere; also ladies then wore a tab of cloth to cover their upper parts, whereas now ladies uncover their lower parts and call it a mini-skirt. Let us try a modern example, written by a short-sighted fellah who went on a journey up country and wrote a *nirat* about what he couldn't see very well.

Power posts—legs wide	apart
Recalls my dear heart	to me
Closer, with a start,	I look
And what do I see?	No mini-skirt!
◎ บางขุนเทียนถิ่นบ้าน	นามมี
เทียนว่าเทียนแสงศรี	สว่างเหย้า
เย็นยามพระสุริยลี	ลาโลก ลงแม่
เทียนแม่จุดจักเข้า	สู่ห้องหาใคร ฯ
Bang Khun Thien, a district	by name
Thien, a candle whose flame	gives light.
By candlelight she came	for whom
At this time of night	was she seeking?

With this translation of Narindr In's "Bang Khun Thien" piece, the subject of this paper on translating Thai poetry begins. It would be as well to have some terms of reference, or perhaps a road map of what can be expected. Should poetry be translated from one language to another at all? People have said that poetry is untranslatable, and even if that is true, I think it still should be translated. Poets sometimes have lofty thoughts which they express in some outlandish language, and as far as I am concerned, the only way said lofty thoughts can get to me is through translations. For that reason if nothing else, poetry should be translated. Then there is the question of whether poetry should be translated into prose or verse. I would say verse every time, and if the translation is from Thai, I would say also that rhymes should be used because rhymes are indigenous to Thai poetry. But no doubt verse translation is more difficult than prose. The next question is whether verse translation should be made in some verse form of the language translated into, say into English with end rhymes, or, say again, in the case of translation of a Thai *kloang*, whether the original form should be kept. I have strong views that the original form is the best, but here again, just as verse translation is more difficult than prose, so is this kind of translation more difficult than ordinary verse. Then there is the question of how much paraphrasing should be

allowed. This rather depends on the ability of the translator, but obviously prose translation should be straight and, I might add, accurate. A little paraphrase is probably necessary in verse translation, and a great deal more in translation into its own form. I will return to this subject after a few more examples.

B. Brief history of Thai literature

1. *19th century Buddhist Era (B.E.; about 1250 A.D. onwards)*: Some of the Sukothai inscriptions were written in the *rai* form.

2. *20th century B.E. (1350-1450 A.D.)*: Ayudhia was founded in 1350, but nothing from the first century has come down to our day. The language used must have contained a great many Khmer words.

3. *21st century B.E. (1450-1550 A.D.)*: Period of King Trailok (1449-1488) and his younger son Ramatipati II (1492-1530). Golden Age of Ayudhia poetry. In this period the language of Sukothai mixed with the Khmerised Thai of Ayudhia to become nearly the Thai we know today. The great works, all in the *kloang* form, were:

(a) "*Phra Law*" (พระลอ): A romance of two warring city-states in the north. It is a tragedy of young love very similar to Romeo and Juliet, except that there are two heroines who were sisters instead of Shakespeare's one. There is also a Shan version called "Chao Sam Law" where there is but one heroine called Nang Oo Pim (เจ้าสามลอกับนางอูบีม). King Trailok died in 1488, so "Phra Law" was written nearly a century before Shakespeare was born.

(b) "*Yuan Pai*" (ยวนพ่าย): Eulogy of King Trailok's victory over Tilokaraj of Chiengmai in 1473. It was written at Pitsanulok in the north, so the language is not unlike that in the Sukothai inscriptions.

(c) "*Kamsuan*" (กำศรวล; mistakenly called "Kamsuan Sri Praj"): Probably written by King Boromaraja III, Trailok's elder son, who was king at Ayudhia when Trailok moved his capital to Pitsanulok to wage his war with Chiengmai. It is a *nirat* of a journey by sea, probably written in 1488, when the king went on an expedition to put down a

rebellion in Tavoy (now in Lower Burma on the Indian Ocean). The language is early Ayudhian and contains many Khmer words.

(d) "*Twatosmas*" (ทวาทศมาส; "Twelve months"): This is a *nirat* without a journey. The poet moans throughout the year, using the festivals and ceremonies of each month as 'background'. It was written by one Prince Yaovaraj (with two or three assistants) in a language when those of Sukothai and early Ayudhia were combined.

(e) "*Nirat Hariphunchai*" (นิราศหริภุญชัย; "Journey from Chiengmai to Lamphun", old Hariphunchai): Made in 1517 A.D.; written in the Northern or Lanna language.

4. *22nd century B.E.* : Period of the first Burmese war. Nothing has come down to our day.

5 (a) *23rd century B.E. (1650-1750 A.D.)*: Later Ayudhia period, from the reign of King Narai (1655-88) to the fall of Ayudhia in 1767 A.D. This period can be divided into two parts, namely the reign of Narai and that of King Boromakot just before the fall of the capital.

(b) *King Narai* was himself a poet, and had many poets in his court, the most famous of whom was the poet-scholar, Phra Maharaj Guru (พระมหาราชครู). But the scholar's son, Sri Praj (ศรีปราชญ์) is better known as a poet, and while not very much of his writing has come down to us, what little there is frequently quoted today. The story of Sri Praj will appear later.

(c) *Boromakot*, the penultimate ruler of Ayudhia, was another poet-king; so was his eldest son, Prince Thammatibes, one of the greatest Thai poets. Thammatibes had already been made Crown Prince, but he too, like Sri Praj before him, fooled about with court ladies and was executed. His chief work is a 'stationary *nirat*' which he wrote in a combined *kawa-kloang* form. The piece starts with a *kawa* (translated by *M.R.* Seni Pramoj in his *Interpretative Translations of Thai Poets*):

๏ กรรมใดให้จำจาก	ให้วิบากพรากกันจร
ไกลข้างร้างแรมอร	ให้พี่คร่ำร่ำโศกา
What *karma* does us part	At the start of our joy?
Sadness unalloyed	Follows me where I go.

It ends with a *kloang* which rather gives the whole show away (again translated by *M.R.* Seni) :

◎ โคลงดรวญกลอนกล่าวอ้าง	นารี
โศกสร้อยถึงสาวศรี	เสกหว้า
แต่งตามประเพณี	ธิรภาคย์
เมียมึงพรั่งพร้อมหน้า	ห่อนได้จากกัน ฯ
Sad are these lines on	ladies
Stricken with malady	homesick
Written as customary	by poets
All my wives still stick	around the house.

Seni adds, perhaps rather fatuously, "the lines were written when polygamy was still blessed in Siam, thus explaining the plurality of princely consorts".

6 (a) *24th century B.E. (about 1750-1850 A.D.)*: This period can be divided into two parts: (i) the reigns of kings Taksin (who had his capital at Dhonburi) and Yodfa, founder of Bangkok and first of the present Chakri dynasty; and (ii) reigns of kings Lertla and his son Phra Nang Klao, which was another 'Golden Age' in Thai literature.

(b) *King Lertla* was the greatest Thai poet of all ages. His main works were drama verses of which we have already mentioned "Ramakien", the masked play, and "Inao". Beside Lertla, another of the great poets of all periods was the prince-patriarch, Paramanujit. Poetically speaking, the Thai gene seems able to transmit the poetic strain from father to son (Sri Praj and Prince Thammatibes being sons of poets), but in this respect the Chakri family was unique. I am not aware of the poetic strain being transmitted in such profusion anywhere else.

The first six kings of the dynasty, as well as countless princes, all wrote poetry. Out of a hundred poets perhaps half would be of the Royal Family, so we have fathers and sons, brothers and cousins, all writing at at the same time. Two exceptions in this period were Narindr In and Sunthorn Phu, who were courtiers and not princes.

(c) *Narindr In*, or Nai Narindr Thibes (In) in full, was, like Sri Praj, a minor poet because not enough of his writings have come down to us for him to be classified as a major. Only one work remains, a *nirat* of about 150 quatrains, which is called "Nirat Narindr" after his name. We have already had an example (the "Bang Khun Thien" verse, see section A above), and now we will have two more. The first, the "Kok Kham" (โคกขาม) piece ("Tamarind Mound"), is probably the best verse in the work. People have told me that they could remember the quatrain for its euphonious sounds long before they knew the sense. I should explain that Narindr In was a romantic, also very young, so his imagery was sensuous, though very delicate. There is nothing salacious about them. I am afraid my translations are not very good : perhaps I have made the whole thing too plain, which spoils their finesse; but then a tamarind tree can hardly give a very poetic picture to a Western scholar. The second piece, "Klong Kok Tao" (คลองโคกเต่า: คลอง="canal", โคก="mound", เต่า ="tortoise") pairs with the first because of the word *kok*, but it is nothing as famous as its brother. Again a tortoise can hardly produce a satisfactory image even if the translation is straight.

◎ โคกขามดอนโคกคล้าย	สัณฐาน
ขามร่นริมธารสนาน	สนุกน์
พูนเพียงโคกพ้าลาน	แลโลด ลีวแม่
ถนัดหนึ่งโคกขามช์	ช่องให้เรียมเห็น ฯ
◎ มาคลองโคกเต่าตั้ง	ใจฉงาย
ตัวเต่าฤามีหมาย	โคกอ้าง
เจ็บอกพี่อวนอาย	ออกโอษฐ์ ได้ฤา
คืนคิดโคกขวัญร้าง	อยู่เร้นแรมเกษม ฯ
Kok-Kham – the Tama	rind Mound
Young tamarinds around	the Well
of Bliss – heaven bound	my thoughts
On thy mound they dwell	thy well of bliss.
To Kok Tao, a canal	I came
No tortoise of the name	I found
My thoughts are for shame	unspok't
Wishing to thy mound	I could return.

(d) *Inscriptions of Wat Po*: When Ayudhia fell to the Burmese in 1767, much of the manuscript literature was lost. Restoration, which was started when Bangkok was founded, continued in the next two reigns, culminating in the inscriptions set up at Wat Po when the monastery was repaired and enlarged. Work was started on religious texts, poetry for the dance drama, and prose translations of the *Chinese Dynastic Chronicles*, of which the story of Sam Kok (สามก๊ก: the "Three Kingdoms") became a classic at once. Collecting and repairing texts continued in the following reigns, and two major works came into being, namely the Jataka story of Prince Vessantara, called "Mahajati", the Buddha's last birth before his Enlightenment; and the Sebha story of Khun Chang Khun Phan, a purely Thai story with palace and home settings. These two stories might well be called, respectively, ecclesiastical and secular entertainment for the common people, as opposed to the dance drama of court entertainment.

Wat Jetupon in Bangkok, commonly known as "Wat Po", was built by King Yodfa and enlarged by King Nang Klao. At that time one of the greatest of Thai poets, Prince Paramanujit, was Lord Abbot, and the King decided to set up inscriptions. These were written on marble slabs and put up on the walls of the outer buildings. The subjects dealt with can be divided under two main headings, 'medicine' (prose) and 'poetry' (mainly didactic, but all the forms of Thai poetry are present). The best known of the didactic pieces is called "Lokanit Kloangs", a collection of ancient proverbs of nearly 600 verses edited by Prince Dejadissorn. Some are from Pali sources (Dhammapada, Hitopadesa, etc.) but most of the originals have not been identified. Thai poets have translated from the Pali since ancient times, but only recently from and into English. Some translations from the Pali were bad, some middling, while others have become classics and the "Lokanit" is one such. The following quatrain is not too good a translation but it is adequate, and I have ventured to translate it into English. In essence this proverb is the same as the story of the goose that laid the golden egg. Imagine putting *that* into a verse of 30 words with two sets of rhymes! The whole thing is such a frustration that I have to add a verse of my own—just to give it some sort of moral, I suppose. Other verses have also been translated

to show the mundane character of the "Lokanit" proverbs. About half of the original lines are good, and about half of the translations passable.

Translations from the "Lokanit Kloangs"

ยं ลทฺธं เตน ตุฏฐพฺพं อติโลโภ หิ ปาปโก
หงฺสं ราชं คเหตวาน สุวณฺณา ปริหายติ

◎ ได้สินทรัพย์เพื่อค้า ขนหงส์
เลี้ยงชีพช้ายืนยง อยู่แล้ว
ภายหลังโลภไปตรง ใจต่อ
ถอนทั่วตัวหงส์แคลัว คลาดเส้นเสื่อมทอง ฯ

Yaṃ laddhaṃ tena tutthabbaṃ *Atilobho hi pāpako*
Haṃsaṃ rajaṃ gahetvāna *Suvannā parihayati*

A swan had feathers of gold
Which her owner sold for food
And then greed got hold of him
He defeathered nude that golden swan.

When new feathers grew again
The swan's golden strain was gone
The moral, it is plain to see
Defeather not swans nor dames denude.

◎ ถึงจนทนสู้กัด กินเกลือ
อย่าเที่ยวแล่เนื้อเถือ พวกพ้อง
อดอยากเยี่ยงอย่างเสือ สงวนศักดิ์ ไว้นา
โซกเสาะใส่ท้อง จับเนื้อกินเอง

Broke? bear it, and e' en salt eat
Carve not flesh nor meat from friends
Maintain, I repeat, your pride
A starving tiger fends for its own meal.

◎ เสือผอมกวางวิ่งเข้า	โจมขวิด
ไป่ว่าเสือมีฤทธิ์	เลิศล้ำ
เล็บเสือคมดังกฤช	เสือซ่อน ไว้นา
ครั้นปะปามล้มขว้ำ	จึ่งรู้จักเสือ ฯ
A buck attacked a	skinny
Tiger without any	terror
Didn't think that hid be	sharp claws
Too late, by its error,	it knew Tiger.
◎ โคควายวายชีพได้	เขาหนัง
เป็นสิ่งเป็นอันยัง	อยู่ไซร้
คนเด็ดดับสูญสัง	ขารร่วง
เป็นชื่อเป็นเสียงได้	แต่ร้ายกับดี ฯ
After a bull or buff–	alo's died
Horns and skin still abide	on earth
But man has no hide	to leave
His name's his sole worth	for good or ill.

Some "Lokanit Kloangs" and verses from "Nirat Narindr" have also been translated into the *kloang* form by *M.R.* Seni Pramoj in his *Interpretative Translations of Thai Poets.* His translations are freer than my strait-laced versions above.

(e) *Sunthorn Phu* was the master of a *glon* form, the *glon 8*, which he used so distinctively that the form is also called "market *glon*" (กลอนตลาด). *M.R.* Seni Pramoj is a more ardent admirer of the poet than I am, so I quote from his monograph as a contribution to a noble cause.

> One hundred and eighty years ago, only four years after the founding of Bangkok, the poet Phu was born into a world which he was to come to love through suffering. Such suffering stemmed mainly from love and wine, and the same intoxicants at least once landed him in jail and certainly more than once drove him into exile from the Royal Court which was his normal habitat. No one knew better than Phu the harmful effects of over-indulgence in either love or wine, but being a full-blooded Siamese, he could not or would not abstain. Yet he lived under four reigns and had reached the old age, by Thai standards, of seventy when he died.

By way of self-confession, he wrote . . .

This dog wine always hounds a poet's track!

Nevertheless, because he shared the faults of mankind, Phu came nearer to any Thai poet to understanding his fellow men. Unlike the sophisticated Court cynic, Sri Praj, Phu was essentially a sincere poet of the commonalty. Upon banishment, it was to the common people that he turned in his distress, and they, because he was one of them, gave him succour. His attitude is reflected in this moving poem.

Oh, this land lying large on this earth,
Over millions of acres being free.
Not an inch's available for small me,
In adversity wander I like the air.

Phu's direct contact with the people had an immense influence on his work as a poet. Thus, through his writings, one sees the whole panorama of Thai life as it was, say, a hundred and fifty years ago. He tells of the people's joys and sorrows, their loves and hatreds, wit and humour, homes and occupations, their customs, families, virtues, beliefs and superstitions. It can safely be said that apart from King Mongkut, in whose reign Phu also wrote, no Thai has ever written so much about the Thai people. Phu's voluminous writings form a rich source of information on Thai social habits and thinking. Strange to say, such habits and ways of thinking do not seem to have changed a great deal, even after the passage of a hundred and fifty years, especially among the country people who represent the major proportion of our population.

The children of my generation were fortunate in that we were given Phu to read in early life. His *glons* and *garps* not only taught us the system of Thai intonation and spelling, but also left the music of Thai poetry forever singing in our hearts.

Sunthorn Phu's longest and possibly greatest work was "Phra Abhaimani". He also wrote many *nirats*. The following stanza was translated by *M.R.* Seni :

๏ ถึงบางพรหมพรหมมีอยู่สี่พักตร์
คนรู้จักแจ้งจิตทุกทิศา
ทุกวันนี้มีมนุษย์อยุธยา
เป็นร้อยหน้าพันหน้ายึงกว่าพรหม ฯ

To Bang Brahma, Brahma has but four faces
Thus known to all races near and far.
But good men of Sri Ayuthya
Out-face old Brahma in double-face.

Note: This quotation is from a *nirat*, where the convention is that the poet says something, usually by punning, about a place he arrives at on his journey. Bang Brahma, pronounced "Barng Prom", is a village on the way to the Buddha's Footprint where Phu was journeying on a pilgrimage.

Ayuthya was the old capital which was sacked by the Burmese 200 years ago, when the new capital was moved to Dhonburi nearer the sea, then to Bangkok on the opposite bank of the river. Sri Ayuthia in the text refers to the whole country that is today called Sri Thailand.

7 (a) *25th century B.E. (1850-1950)*: Early in the century printing came in, which gave poets a larger circulation than in the days of manuscripts. About the middle of the century (1900 A.D.) students were sent to be educated abroad, which further broadened the scope of Thai poetry; and the period produced several great poets. Prose also developed along Western lines, first with translations and adaptations, soon followed by creative indigenous writing, of which dissertations on Buddhism still hold a very important place. Meanwhile, we are now at the beginning of a new century (26th B.E.), and the poetic situation is rather bleak. But as poetry is one of our great national heritages, I have no doubt that before the century is out, about the year 2050 A.D., we shall, if we can live as long as Methusalah, see some good things again.

(b) *H.R.H. Prince Naradhip* : Just as King Lertla (Rama II), the patriarch-poet Paramanujit, and Sunthorn Phu were the great poets of

the 24th century B.E., so were Prince Naradhip, King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and Prince Bidya the great poets of the 25th century. The former trio specialised in one or two genres, while the latter used all forms fluently; and they also translated from English. Of Prince Naradhip's voluminous works, some people consider his translation of Fitz Gerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* into the Thai *kloang* form to have been his masterpiece. At the end of the book, presumably so that the naive readers of his day would not think that he had embraced the religion of the Prophet, the Prince also translated some Buddhist formulas from the Pali. One such was the "Ye Dhamma" stanza.

The story goes that Upatissa, the future Sariputta, who became one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, asked Assaji, an *arahant* or Buddhist saint, to give his Lord's teaching in as few words as possible. Assaji's reply, known as the "Ye Dhamma" stanza, is probably the most famous verse in the whole Buddhist literature—why, every schoolboy knows it by heart and even I have only to look up one and a half of the two lines. It was cut in stone from earliest times; etched into wax for casting into bronze by the *cire perdue* process; and written into clay before baking into bricks. The formula is here given in roman and Thai scripts and, as a superb anticlimax of centuries past, my own translation into English in the Thai *kloang* form.

Unatissa's request

Appaṃ vā bahuṃ vā bhāsassu	*atthameva me bhāsahi*
attheneva me atthō	*kiṃ kahasi byañjanam bahuṃ.*
อปฺปํ วา พหุ์ วา ภาสสฺสุ	อตฺถเมว เม ภาสหิ
อตฺเถเนว เม อตฺโถ	กึ กาเหสิ พยญฺชนํ พหุ์
Tell me what your Lord	teaches
Tell me what He preaches	shortly :
Tell me that which reaches	one's heart
Mere verbosity	is waste of time.

Assaji's reply ("Ye Dhamma")

Ye Dhammā hetupabhava *tesaṃ hetum tathāgatō*
tesañcayō nirōdhō ca *evaṃ vadi mahāsamano.*

เย ธมฺมา เหตุปฺปภวา เตสญ์ เหตุ์ ตถาคโต
เตสญฺจ โย นิโรโธ จ เอวฺ วาที มหาสมโณ

๏ ธรรมใดมีเหตุให้ สังหรณ์ เหิมแย
พระตรัสเหตุนั้นสอน สัต์รู้
บอกเหตุดับเหตุถอน ทางดับ ด้วยรา
นี่แหละวาทีผู้ พุทธเจ้าจอมนิพพาน ฯ

Whatsoever arise their causes
He tells of their sources also
How they cease He endorses as well
The Great Samano Such is His Dharm'!

Strange as it may seem, I cannot remember coming across a translation of this stanza into English verse. The nearest I have seen is a translation by Henry Clarke Warren in his *Buddhism in Translation* :

> The Buddha has the causes told
> Of all things springing from a cause
> And also how things cease to be—
> 'Tis this the mighty monk proclaims.

(c) *H.H. Prince Bidyalongkorn*, or Prince Bidya for short (1876-1945) was the last of the great court poets of the traditional school. His last work "Sam Krung" (สามกรุง, or "Three Capitals") was published posthumously. *M.R.* Seni has translated a short piece of *rai* and *kloang* from the work. I will print the *rai* as well as his remarks on the poet.

> Prince Phityalongkorn (*sic*), as I was privileged to know him when I was a young man, was so modestly mannered and unassuming in appearance that a stranger would be surprised by his deep intellectuality. His writings, like those of Prince Isarayan, continue to surprise and charm.
>
> Apart from many outstanding works such as Wetan, the prince wrote his Three Cities (*sic*) in 1944, a year before Japan's capitula-

tion at the end of World War II. The work, employing nearly all the poetic forms, describes the fall of Ayuthia, the founding of Dhonburi and of Bangkok, and tells of the important historical events which occurred during the period of the three cities. At the conclusion, it refers to the Japanese invasion of the country and poses poignantly the question whether the Bangkok era together with the freedom of the Thais was to survive the war. Under the heading of philosophy, I have already cited his *kloang* on alien domination and his *rai* on the fall of Ayuthya.

Assuming the cloak of poetic historical writing, Prince Phitya-longkorn commented on the military dictatorship then imposed on the country with such freedom and courage that it is extraordinary he escaped political persecution. Other princes were sent to prison for saying less.

๏ ในปีกุนนพศก นราธิปกปีนอยุธยา ดราวราสนาโรยร่วง
เหมือนมะม่วงงอมหล่น นึกน่าข่นเคืองจิต ชวนให้คิดคำนึง
ถึงบางคราวบางครา ไทยปรีดาอิสรภาพ ปราบปรปักษ์หักหาญ
ใช่แหลกลาญเช่นนี้ บางสมัยไทยก็ กาจกล้าการณรงค์ ยิ่งแล ฯ

'In the Year of the Pig, of monarchic Ayuthya, It was marred by the foe, Dropping like a mango overripe, Mindful of the tide that turned, When Thais spurned all enemies, No liberties being taken, Of our awakened Nation, Wouldn't have befallen such calamity, In unity there was strength, In strength there was safety; In safety Thais prospered Manifold. Here ends.'

C. Translations into English and Thai

Before starting on our subject proper, let us have a section of translations from several languages into English and Thai. This is not relevant to the subject of translating Thai poetry, but it serves to fill a vacuum in the history of Thai literature.

Translations from the Greek

W.H. Auden, in the preface to his *The Portable Greek Reader*, has this to say :

If Greek literature has to be read in translation, then the approach can no longer be an aesthetic one. The aesthetic loss in translation from one language into another is always immense; in the case of languages and cultures as far apart as Greek and English, it becomes practically fatal; one can almost say that the better a translation is as English poetry, the less like Greek poetry it is (e.g. Pope's *Iliad*) and vice versa.

Pope's translation: The Death of Hector.

What god, O muse! assisted Hector's force,
With Fate itself so long to hold the course?
Phoebus it was; who in its latest hour
Endued his knees with strength, his nerves with power:
And great Achilles, lest some Greek's advance
Should snatch the glory from his lifted lance,
Sign'd to the troops to yield his foe the way,
And leave untouch'd the honour of the day.
Jove lifts the golden balances that show
The fates of mortal men and things below;
Here each contending hero's lot tries,
And weighs with equal hand their destinies.
Low sinks the scale surcharged with Hector's fate;
Heavy with death it sinks, and well receives the weight
Then Phoebus left him...

To begin with [continues Auden], there is the prosodic difficulty; quantitative unrhymed verse and qualitative rhymed verse have nothing in common except that they are both rhythmical patterns. An English poet can have much fun attempting, as a technical exercise or an act of piety, to write quantitatively:

With these words Hermes sped away for lofty Olympos:
And Priam all fearlessly from off his chariot alighted,
Ordering Idaeus to remain i' the entry to keep watch
Over the beasts; th' old king meanwhile strode doughtily onward...

(Robert Bridges, *Iliad*, XXLV, 468-471)

But no one can read this except as a qualitative meter of an eccentric kind, and eccentricity is a very unhomeric characteristic.

I am not sure if Mr. Auden is altogether right. If Pope and Bridges had been bilingual poets and could write Greek poetry as well as they wrote English poetry, then their translations might have been

better, or at least have retained more of the original flavour. Verse translation can be both quantitatively and qualitatively satistying, provided internal and middle rhymes are used in the Thai way, that is to say, the same word can be used twice in the same quatrain, or even in the same line, and be stressed or made long and short at will, bearing in mind of course the natural sounds of speech rather than any rigid rules of metre. Certainly this is not only possible in Thai, but quite easy, though perhaps the cadence is more like prose. But then prose is is not always bad; in fact bad prose, with its adages and cliches, can sometimes be quite good poetry. This is true of Thai poetry anyway, and probably not altogether false in other languages. But this is a subject that had better be left to some other occasion.

Translation from the Sanskrit

We now look at a translation from the Indian epic, "Ramayana", made by Mr. Romesh Dutt, of Kumbha-karna's speech in the council of war. The story is as follows: Ravan, king of the Rakshas (demons) abducted Sita, Rama's wife, and took her to his island kingdom, Lanka. Rama collected an army of monkeys and war is inevitable. Ravan called a council of war, at which were present the Demon Lords, including his two brothers, Kumbha-karna and Bibishan. The Lords all wanted war except Bibishan, who censured his brother for the wrong he had done and thought that Sita should be returned. Kumbha-karna, the other brother, also censured his brother, but thought that as the deed was already done, it was no use making amends. They should fight.

Kumbha-karna's determination

"Ravan's brother Kumbha-karna, from his wonted slumber woke:
Mightiest he of all the Rakshas, thus in solemn accents spoke:
"Truly speaks the wise Bibishan; ere he stole a hermit's wife,
Ravan should have thought and pondered, courts not a causeless strife,
Ere he did this deed of folly, Ravan should have counsel sought,
Tardy is the vain repentance when the work of shame is wrought!
... Ravan, thou hast sought unwisely Sita in her calm retreat,
As the wild and heedless hunter feeds upon the poisoned meat,
Nathless, faithful Kumbha-karna will his loyal duty know,

He shall fight his monarch's battle, he shall face his brother's fore
True to brother and to monarch, be he right or be he wrong,
Kumbha-karna fights for Lanka 'gainst her foemen fierce and strong...
Wiser heads than Kumbha-karna right or true from wrong may know,
Faithful to his race and monarch he shall face the haughty foe.
Joy thee in thy pleasure, Ravan, rule thy realm in regal pride,
When I slay the hermit Rama, widowed Sita be thy bride!

Translation from the Chinese

Professor Arthur Waley, in the preface to his *Chinese Poems*, says:

> I have aimed at literal translation, not paraphrase. It may be perfectly legitimate for a poet to borrow foreign themes or material, but this should not be called translation.
>
> Above all, considering imagery to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original.
>
> Any literal translation of Chinese poetry is bound to be to some extent rhythmical, for the rhythm of the original obtrudes itself... I have not used rhyme . . . What is generally known as 'blank verse' is the worst medium for translating Chinese poetry, because the essence of blank verse is that it varies the position of its pauses, whereas in Chinese the stop always comes at the end of the couplet.

The following examples are from Professor Waley's translation of Po Chu-i (772-846 A.D.). The first is from "The Chrysanthemums in the Eastern Garden", written when the poet was in his late forties, and the second from "A Mad Poem Addressed to my Nephews and Nieces", written when the poet was in his sixties.

1.

I remember when I was young,
How quickly my mood changed from sad to gay.
If I saw wine, no matter at what season,
Before I drank it, my heart was already glad.
But now that age comes
A moment of joy is harder and harder to get.
And always I feel that when I am quite old
The strongest liquor will leave me comfortless.

2.

And all the more in the last lingering years
What I shall need are very few things.
A single rug to warm me through the winter;
One meal to last me the whole day.
It does not matter that my house is rather small;
One cannot sleep in more than one room!
It does not matter that I have not many horses;
One cannot ride on two horses at once!
As fortunate as me among the people of the world
Possibly one would find seven out of ten.
As contented as me among a hundred men
Look as you may, you will not find one.

This is enough. We have had two examples of rhymed translations from unrhymed originals (Pope and Dutt), and two of unrhymed translations into their own 'forms' (Bridges and Waley). Which are better can be left open, though I would say of translation of poetry in general that it should be poetry in the language translated into, that is, it should be literature in its own right. As for Thai, as rhymes are the very essence of Thai poetry, I would say translations should be rhymed as well, otherwise the whole atmosphere is lost. Such have the Thai masters translated from ancient times when they translated from the Pali; and such should be the aim of future translators of Thai poetry. This is not easy, I admit, but if the masters could do it, there is no reason why the new generation should not be able to duplicate their feat.

Translations from the Persian and into Thai

How should Thai poetry be translated–particularly into English? Perhaps translations of Persian poems might be cited as examples. Persian poetry was first translated into English by Sir William Jones in 1772, and there is a tradition about it that translation of Thai poetry might well follow. Professor A.J. Arberry, in the preface to his *Persian Poems*, an anthology of verse translations, wrote:

How should Persian poetry be translated? Sir William Jones elected to use rhyming verse : his choice, obviously influenced by the tradition of his century, has been generally applauded and followed by his successors. In a Persian song he paraphrased, though not so freely as did FitzGerald in his *Rubaiyat*...

First and last stanzas : "A Persian Song"

Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

Go boldly forth, my simple lay,
Whose accents flow with artless ease,
Like orient pearls at random strung :
Thy notes are sweet the damsels say;
But Oh ! far sweeter, if they please
The nymph for whom these notes are sung.

For nearly two centuries now metre, and usually rhyme, have been thought indispensable to any respectable version of Persian poetry. All the examples collected in this volume are in metre; most are also rhymed. So far no successful translation into the modern unrhymed and rhythmic cadences has been published; therefore none is quoted, though this does not mean that the editor is convinced that no such rendering will ever succeed. That is for the future to say...

There is much food for thought in the above. Persian poetry is much more international than Thai poetry. Not only in Persia is it written, but also in India; and it ranges from contemporary times back a thousand years. So it has attracted good translators, including poets of sizeable stature like Sir Edwin Arnold, author of *The Light of Asia*, and Edward FitzGerald. A giant has yet to appear as translator of Thai poetry. The main point is that Thai poetry, like Persian poetry, should be translated into poetry, not into hack verse and nearly inspired prose as it is being done today.

Now let us have another example of Persian poetry translated into English, and its retranslation into Thai by a master. The verses are the first three quatrains of FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat*, first edition of 1858, and the Thai is by the late H.R.H. Prince Naradhip.

Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And lo: the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

Dreaming when Dawn's left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a voice within the Tavern cry:
'Awake, my little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry.'

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted: 'Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more.'

◎ ตื่นเถิดอุทัยเจิดเล้า รัตยา ผยองเอย
ดาวเจิ่งเว้งสวรรค์ลา ลิบแล้ว
พรานบูรพ์ทอดบ่วงถา โถมคล่อม คล้องแย
ปราสาทซุลต่านแพร้ว เพรื่อสร้านฉานแสง ฯ

◎ ปางอรุณเริงเรื่อพ้า เรียมผิน
ถวิลแว่วดวงชีวัน โหวกร้อง
"ฟื้นเถิดเบิดทวารบรร เทิงเชิบ ชดแช
องุ่นชีพก่อนชวดต้อง เด็งแห้งแหนงนิรา" ฯ

◎ ไก่ขันเอ้กอี่เอ้กก้อง ตโกนโขมง ใครยือ
"เร็วเถิดเบิดปตูโรง ดื่มเหล้า
รู้ไหมใช่ใครชโลง ลเลิงนั่ง นานเลย
ไปละลับกลับเหย้า อีกครั้งหวังไฉน" ฯ

FitzGerald's quatrain contains 40 syllables, with one line left floating about unrhymed. The Prince used the very taut *kloang suparb* genre, perhaps the most difficult in Thai poetry, with its two sets of essential rhyme and essential tone rules, to be compressed into 30 syllables, with all four lines closely knit. Professor Arberry, a translator of Persian poetry himself, remarks:

> Rhymed translation is always something of an acrobatic performance: translation of monorhyme might be likened to setting an elephant to cross a tightrope.

But this is a land of elephants. It is also a land of rhymes. So the Prince, in throwing one, sometimes two, internal rhymes into almost every line, has not so much as set a white elephant to cross a tightrope, but rather he has put a pink one into a biscuit barrel.

Of the Prince's voluminous works, many people consider this translation of the *Rubaiyat* to be his masterpiece. Yet it is not as well known as the two translations of the story of Nala from the Indian epic "Mahabharata", made by King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) and Prince Bidya, respectively. Just as King Lertla, the prince-patriarch poet Paramanujit and Sunthorn Phu were the great poets of the 24th century B.E. (this year being 2518 B.E.), so were these three the great poets of the last century. In some ways they were greater—at least they were greater 'all-rounders'—for they were fluent in all the genres of poetry; and they wrote prose that was elegant in thought and style that I for one cannot even approach—and by this, I might add, I mean that nobody writing today can approach. There seems to be some poetical frogs and 'prosical' toads who imagine that they can blow themselves up to the size of baby buffaloes. Let us have no more of this nonsense. These three were and still remain the greatest all-rounders in the whole of Thai literature. They were and still are unique, be it in prose or poetry. But then this is something we expect from great poets.

We now come to King Vajiravudh's and the late H.H. Prince Bidya's translations of the story of Nala into Thai. This story was translated by Sir Monier Monier-Williams from the original Sanskrit into English. The translation was literal and was printed on opposite pages to the original line by line. King Vajiravudh used mainly the *kloang 4* genre, and Prince Bidya the *chan*, perhaps the longest *chan* in the language. The two translations are accurate (the authors used both Sanskrit and English texts) and most poetical, though at times particularly towards the end, Prince Bidya inserted short *nirats* in his own inimitable style.

The following examples are from the first chapter, when the Golden Swan acted as go-between. The story is as follows : Nala, lord of Nishadha, is renowned for his beauty, as is the princess Damayanti.

One day Nala was out hunting and he caught a golden swan. The bird asked him to spare it, and in return would fly to Damayanti and praise his qualities to her. Nala agreed and the swan flew off on its mission, returning later with the princess' reply. Only the swan's words to Nala and to Damayanti are here given.

The Swan said to Nala

หน์ตวโยสมิ น เต ราชน์	กริษยามิ ตว ปริยม์
หมยน์ ตีสกาเศ ตวาง	กถิษยามิ ไนษธ
ยถา ตวทนยม์ ปุรุษ์	นสา มสยติ กรหิจิต์ ฯ

Slay me not, O gentle monarch! I will do thee service true;
So in Damayanti's presence will I praise Nishadha's king,
Never after shall the maiden think of mortal man but thee.

พระนลคำหลวง

๏ อ้าองค์อิศเรศร์ล้ำ	โลกธาตุ
ขออย่าทรงพิฆาฏ	เข่นข้า
ข้าคงจะสามารถ	รับกิจ ท่านนา
สนองพระเดชเจ้าหล้า	สิทธ์ด้วยใจจินต์ ฯ
๏ จะบินไปสู่แคว้น	กรุงศรี วิทรรภ์แฮ
เผ้าพระทัมยน์ตี	แน่งน้อย
จะกล่าวกลั่นวาที	เทิดเกียรติ
แห่งนิษัทราชถ้อย	ถ่องแท้เลอสรร ฯ
๏ แต่นั้นเยาวลักษณ์น้อย	นาเรศร์
ชายอื่นจักไม่เจตน์	จิตรต้อง
ผูกสมัครรักนฤเบศร์	บพิตร โสดแล
หวังสนิทชิดห้อง	ห่างแล้แดยัน ฯ

พระนลคำฉันท์

๏ อ้าองค์พระทรงสุรมเห	ศรศักดิ์นเรศวร
ภูวนาถพระบาทยุคลควร	ภพพึ่งสำนึงนาน

๏ แม้นทรงพระคุณกรุณาโปรด สละโทษมิสังหาร
ขอรองลอองพระบทมาลย์ กลทูตทำนูลเสมอ
๏ แด่นางพระราชบีย์ยุพา พระธิดาวิทรรภ์เธอ
สำแดงพระคุณอดุลเลอ นลราชนเรสูร
๏ นางทราบยุบลพระนลแล้ว ฤจะแคล้วอุราดูร
จักครวญจะไคร่หทยภูล จิตเล่ห์เสน่หา ฯ

The Swan said to Damayanti

ทมยันติ นโล นาม นิษเธษุ มหีปติห์
อศวิโนห์ สทฤศ รูเป น สมาส นัย มานุษาห
ตัสย ไว ยทิ ภารยา ตวัม ภเวถา วรวรรณินิ
สผล เต ภเวช์ ชันม รูป เจท์ สุมัธยเม

วย์ หิ เทวคันธ์รวมานุโษรครากษสา์
ทฤษฏวันโต น จาสมาภิร์ ทฤษฏปูรวัส ตถาวิธห์
ต์ว จาปี รัตน์ นารีณาง นฌรษุ จ นโล วรห์
วิศิษฏายา วิศิษย์เฏน สังคโม คุณวาน์ ภเวต์ ฯ

Damayanti, in Nishadha Nala dwells the noble king;
Like the Asvinas in beauty, peerless among men is he.
O incomparable princess, to this hero wert thou wed,
Noble birth and perfect beauty not unworthy fruit had borne.
Gods, Gandharvas, men, the Serpents, and the Rakshasas we've seen;
All we've seen—of noble Nala never have we seen the peer.
Pearl art thou among all women, Nala is the pride of men.
If the peerless wed the peerless, blessed must the union be.

พระนลคำหลวง

๏ อ้านางนามเชิดชั้ ทมยัน ตีนา
ในนิษัทกรุงศรี สวัสดิ์ไชรั
มีองค์มหิบดี เกียรติกระหลบ
นามพระนลนารถไท้ ธิราชล้ำเลอสรร ฯ

๏ ทรงธรรม์งามรูปเพี๊ยง อัศวิน เทพแฮ
ปวงมนุษย์ในดิน ไป่สู้
แม้องค์ยอดนารินทร์ ครองคู่ พระฤา
สมยศสมศักดิ์รู้ รักแล้วฤาจาง ฯ

๏ พระนางกำเนิดแล้ว เลิศดี
เอวกล่อมพร้อมเพริศศรี ผ่องแผ้ว
แม้ครองคู่ชีวี สมสนิท กันนอ
ผลจะไม่มีแคล้ว คลาดต้นพลสรรพ์ ฯ

๏ เทวัญคนธรรพะถ้วน ตัวหมด
มนุษย์นาคอีกรากษส กาจกล้า
จะมีที่งามงด เงื่อนเท่า
องค์พระนลหนุ่มหน้า หน่อยนั้นฤาหา ฯ

๏ พระธิดาภีมราชเจ้า จอมกษัตริย์
เป็นเอกนารีรัตน์ เลิศหล้า
พระนลพระทรงสวัสดิ์ โสภาคย์
เป็นเอกนรรัตน์กล้า กาจเพี๊ยงไกรสร ฯ

๏ บังอรแม้ได้คู่ นโรดม ราชแฮ
วิสิฐคู่วิวิฐสม แน่แท้
คุณจะเกิดกองถม ทดมาก มวลนอ
สุขจะเต็มไปล่แป๊ล ปราศพ้นภยัน ฯ

พระนลคำฉันท์

๏ อ้าองค์พระราชวรบุตรี ศุภศรีฉวีกาญจน์
เพ็ญพักตร์พิมลกลสุมาลย์ อรเอี่ยมอุไรพรรณ์

๏ อันในนิษัทขติยนาถ อธิราชยะรังสรรค์
ไพศาลพิศลย์ผลอนันต์ นลผู้ผดุงเมือง

๏ อันองค์พระนลพิมลเฉิด ฉวิเลิศวิไลเรือง
บุญญาภิฤทธิ์พิชิตเปลือง ปรภาพบ่พึงเผลอ

๏ คนธรรพ์อุรุคสุรและราก ษสมากบ่มีเสมอ
ดาวเดือนบ่เหมือนพระนลเธอ นิติธรนิกรพิง

๏ ฉันใดพระองค์อรประเสริฐ สิริเลิศฌะเหล่าหญิง
ฉันนั้นพระนลวิมลจริง จิตรเลิศฌะเหล่าชาย

๏ ชายเลิศผิร่วมสมรเลิศ จะประเสริฐะแหล่หลาย
โลกหล้าจะหาอุภยะผาย ภทระเหมือนมิพึงมี ฯ

At this point, if the reader would bear with me a minute further, I wish to eulogize those two pieces and Prince Naradhip's translation of *Omar Khayyam*. Translations have less chance of survival than original creations. They are by their nature parasitic. Offhand, in English, I can only think of FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyam* that is still read for pleasure today. Dryden's Virgil has gone down the drain, as has Pope's *Iliad* and no doubt many equally illustrious names and efforts. Ineed, these translations into Thai verses should be the starting point for anybody knowing English to study Thai poetry. It is no use telling me that Prince Bidya's "Phra Nala" is better than King Vajiravudh's version. The fact of the matter is that both pieces are as typical of the poets as anything they ever wrote; and we want both of them. King Vajiravudh's translation is so literal as almost not to be poetry, but who wants to read *chan* nowadays? Yet *chan* is not so very difficult once you have acquired the knack of it—here I mean traditional *chan*, not the stuffy stuff written today. But this is a lost art, just as the two poets are lost poets. They were the first and perhaps the last of the 'educated poets'. They could handle Sanskrit, Pali and English with ease. They could out-professor any professor of their time. But they were true poets and no professor could out-poet them. They should have been the pioneers to a new generation of fine poetry. But instead they became the 'last of the Mohicans' as far as our poetic heritage is concerned. All very sad.

One final example of translating into Thai. A few years ago I introduced the Thai *kloang* to an international poetry society (United Poets Laureate International), and several poets tried the form. I have not seen many of their verses, though I was told that somebody wrote a whole sequence of them. However the late *M.R.* Supanpa Ladawan, a lady poet, came across a quatrain and translated it into Thai.

Love is what you taste too sweet
My lips cannot repeat nor try
The tongue's indiscreet reply
With but a word or sigh inadequately.

Thil Raoland,
Long Beach, California, U.S.A.

© ลิ้มรสรักฉ่ำซึ้ง แสนหวาน ยิ่งแล
ริมโอษฐ์ฤาจักหาญ กล่าวย้ำ
ชิวหามิอาจประมาณ คำตอบ เลยนา
เพียงพลอดทอดฤทัยซ้ำ ห่อนซึ้งเสมอสมาน ฯ

ม.ร.ว. สุพรรณภา ลดาวัลย์ แปล.

This is an adequate and business-like effort, because the translator has kept the straight sense of the original. The rest of this paper will deal with the question of translating Thai poetry into English, particularly translations of the *kloang* form. It may seem strange to say so, but the above example (into Thai) is far easier than translating a Thai verse into English in its own form. The reason is because English has too much grammar for poetry, particularly Thai poetry, and many more words are required to say the same thing in Thai. I suppose in the final analysis, the problem is how much paraphrase can be allowed before a translation is no longer a translation. Let us have just one example.

Once I went to the funeral of a young man named Opas who had died when in his twenty-fifth year. Paper and pencil were put into my hands, and I was asked to write something for a small booklet that was being printed for distribution at the cremation in a few days' time. Though the place was hardly one I would have chosen to write any verse, I somehow managed to produce a couple of quatrains which were duly printed in time. Later I tried to translate the two verses into English. Seven of the eight lines were rendered straight enough, but one line (third line of second verse) beat me completely. (Thammasat University is hardly a name that would go easily into a *kloang* line even without any rhyme!). So I changed the line.

๏ โคลงนี้แต่งเพื่อไว้ อาลัย
ตามประเพณีไทย ทั่วรู้
ไม่รู้จะว่าอะไร เร็ววีบ
ธรรมดาทุกผู้ เกิดแล้วต้องตาย ฯ

๏ โอภาสอายุน้อย ตายไป
เบญจเพสเยาว์วัย หนุ่มเหน้า
เพิ่งจบวิทยาลัย ธรรมศาสตร์
ยังมิทันที่เจ้า จักเต้าด่วนตาย ฯ

These *kloangs* are In Mem- oriam
In accord with Siam's tradition
Can't think what I am to say
Life is transition from birth to death.

Opas was still young in frame
At twenty-five came his death
He yet had his name to make
He breathed his last breath too soon, too soon.

This is the trouble with translations. If I had written these two languages together, I could easily have changed the seventh line to read

ชื่อเสียงบ่ทันได ทันด่วน ขาดนา

The line may not be as good as it was, but it would have had the same meaning. So on the whole I would say the first verse is a translation, while the second is not.

But this is not to say that the *kloang* is not a very good, and indeed easy, medium to use in English. I hope to present a paper or two on this subject when the stars in the firmament have uncrossed themselves and form better aspects for all concerned. Meanwhile for those who know English and would like to play about with the Thai *kloang* form as a possible instrument for translating Thai poetry later on, the best way to practise is to mix words in the two languages :

◎ ปากกากวีใช้ใช่	Sheaffer
ใช่ปากกา Ever-	sharp ใช้
นับเบอร์ใช่ Parker	เบอร์นั่น นี่แน
ใช้อะไรใช้ได้	หากให้แหลมพอ ฯ

Sometimes people write letters to me in the *kloang* form, presumably to keep their hand in, and I answer in the same genre. In a reply to a letter from someone who was born before the end of the year (late November), there is a verse that goes :

◎ อีกบทยังขีดถ้อย	เขียนแถม
แต่บ่มีอะหยังแหยม	ดอกเจ้า
Merry Christmas แกม	ปีใหม่
ก่อนกระต่ายย้ายเข้า	Happy Birthday.

กระต่าย in the last line means the Naksat Year of the Hare (ปีเถาะ 1974-5). In a mixed composition like this, the meters and rhyme scheme of the Thai form must be kept, and the English sounds should also conform to the tone rules ("happy" : แฮป๊ปี้). I will translate these two quatrains as a formality, the first as a *kloang* 4, and the second, which seems to have more sounds than sense, as a *kloang 2* :

A poet's pen's not a	Sheaffer
Neither an Ever-	sharp even
Nor a numbered Parker-	Poets
Use anything when	it's sharp enough.
Merr' Xmas, New Year	'Fore the Hare gets here
	Happy Birthday

I myself cannot translate adequately, and I very much doubt whether I could handle a sequence of *kloangs*. This of course is not to say that other people will not be able to do it, in fact they may have the necessary aptitude and can deal with the subject with ease. Instead of translating I prefer to compose separately in the two languages. Again just one example.

The publication of this issue of the *Journal of the Siam Society* coincides with the centennial of H.H. Prince Bidyalongkorn (10 January 1977) and I have written a few verses for the occasion, of which two are reproduced. The sentiments expressed are the same in both languages, but they are not translations. In fact the verses are probably more satisfying than if I had tried to translate from either language to the other.

H.H. Prince Bidya— longkorn
Hundred years ago born and now
Long dead but not gone for good
His poems still blow like a fresh breeze.

© เสด็จในกรมพิทย์ลั้น พระชนม์
เกิดแก่ว่ายเวียนวน วัฏเวง
คำกวีพระนิพนธ์ ยังอยู่
เปี่ยงพรวดพรวดเปี่ยงเปี่ยง คาบน้ำตาวาย ๆ

On this occasion one of the Prince's granddaughters has also produced a few quatrains in French, English and Thai, as well as translated a few verses from her grandfather's "Sam Krung" ("Three Capitals"). I do not know enough French to say whether her grammar is as immaculate as that of a French-born speaker, but her aim is to use ear-rhymes in the Thai way, in contrast to my eye-rhymes in the English verse above. It should be understood that the whole exercise is only an experiment, and should be accepted as such.

Aujourd'hui comme il *fait beau*
J'écris un petit mot *en vers*
Avec respect et ado- *ration*
Pour le centenaire *de mon grand'père.*

These words of mine are forlorn
Because I was born too late
Granddad died, long gone from us
He just did not wait to teach me things.

© น.ม.ส. ชื่อนี้ หอมหวล จริงเชย

Le plus génial des hommes *de lettres*
His works are still warm with wit
He was my dad's dad *Prince de poèsie*

๏ ร้อยเปื่อยร้อยเรื่อยเจ๊ือย ตามสบาย
ร้อยร่วมร้อยเรียงราย แต่น้อย
ร้อยเรียบเร่งร้อยถวาย เสด็จบู๋ ตูนา
ร้อยวโรกาสร้อย เมื่อร้อยบี๋กวี ฯ

หม่อมราชวงศ์เย็นตา รัชนี

Sam Krung ("Three Capitals")

Thai verses by H.H. Prince Bidya,
French translation by *M.R.* Yenta Rajani

๏ สยามินทร์ ปิ่นธเรศเจ้า จุลจอม จักรเอย
นึกพระนามความหอม ห่อหุ้ม
อวลอบกระหลบออม ใจอื่ม
เพราะพระองค์ทรงอุ้ม โอบเอื้อเหลือหลาย ฯ.

๏ พระพจน์หมดเหมาะแท้ ทุกน้ย
ตรัสเล่นตรัสจริงใคร จักค้าน
วาจาพระปราโส สุดเสนาะ
จับจิตคิดทุกด้าน เด่นข้อคำไข ฯ

๏ คำหนึ่งซึ่งพระเจ้า อยู่หัว
ตรัสหมิ่นยินควรกลัว กลับกล้า
สาธยกเป็นตัว อย่างหน่อย เถิดนอ
ใครบ่ยินแต่ข้า พเจ้าเสาวนา ฯ

๏ ตูในวัยหนุ่มได้ ทำงาน
รับราชการในรัชกาล ที่ห้า
น้อยน้อยค่อยชำนาญ น่าที่
หลั่นหลั่นคั่นช้าช้า ช่องชั้นบันได ฯ

Moi, dans ma jeunesse *Je tra-vaille hae*
Fonctionnaire sous Ra- *ma Cinq*
En suivant mes pas *J'avance*
Peu à' peu, sans crainte, *Je monte en haut.*

๏ ตอนกลางทางเบื่อให้ เห็นสม ใจแฮ
ตำแหน่งหัวหน้ากรม ครึกครื้น
ไปช้าสบอารมณ์ เร็วรวด
กรมใหม่ใหญ่ยิ่งขึ้น ฯ คั่นก้าวยาวยืน ฯ

Plus tard arrive l'oc- *casion*
D'une grande promotion *d'etre chef*
Ma satisfaction *de tout*
Department. En bref *tout va très bien.*

๏ วันหนึ่งในที่เผ้า ภูบาล
มีราชวโรงการ แก่ข้า
ในเรื่องถูกย้ายงาน บ่อยบ่อย
ตรัสว่าสมน้ำหน้า ที่ใช้ได้ดี ฯ

Devant l'assemblée *royale*
Un jour le roi parle *très haut*
Que je change pas mal *de postes*
'Bien fait, c'est taffaute *tu es trop bien.'*

D. Trends and structure in contemporary Thai poetry

The writer of a booklet of the above title, James N. Mosel, was given a grant by the Ford Foundation to spend a year in Thailand to do his research. The whole project is thoroughly meritorious, for it brings Thai poetry to the notice of a wider audience, though of course one year is too little even for one fully acclimatized beforehand. So Mr. Mosel cannot expect any favourable comment from me or, I should imagine, from the poets he has translated.

The author's guide and mentor was *Acharn* Davi Dvi-Vatana, to whom be acknowledged: "It was his generosity, patience, and profound knowledge of Thai literature that made my year of study with him an extremely rewarding experience." *Khun* Davi evidently led him straight to the *glon 8*, the basest of all our poetic forms. This is a great pity, for Mr. Mosel himself remarks: "It is also probably true that Thailand possesses a richer and more extensive heritage of poetic literature than does any other southeast Asian country."

But in fairness it should also be recorded that there are no poets today. The late H.H. Prince Bidya's "Sam Krung" was written during the war, and since then there has been perhaps one, or possibly two at the very most, books of poetry published. This dearth is unprecedented. It is not a question of this being an age of bad poetry: it is a question of there being no poetry whatsoever.

Mr. Mosel's paper is divided into three parts: I. "Contemporary trends and characteristics"; II. "The *glon* verse form"; and III. "Translations". Poets translated include *M.R.* Kukrit Pramoj, Mrs. Prakin Chumsaim, the Misses Kulasap Rungrudi and Nari Nantawat, Mrs. Chayasri Sunthornphiphit and Messrs. Sawat Thongsicharoen, Chetsada Wichit and Ratana Yawaprapat; and all pieces translated are in the *glon 8* form.

All *glon* poetry must be lyrical, that is to say, the poet must have music in his ears as he composes. Not for nothing is *glon* called *pleng* (a "tune" or "song"). To write *glon lakorn* ("drama-verse") you must have the tune in your mind's ear, and the movement of the dance in your mind's eye; to write *sebha*, you must have the rattle of castenets in your mind's ear; and while *glon 8* may lack the dignity of *glon lakorn* and the variations of *sebha*, there is no reason why it should also lack the 'songiness' of the *pleng* as well. Most of the authors selected for translation have not this tunefulness fully developed.

Also they are what we might call 'town poets'. Of old there were 'court poets' and 'rural rhymesters' *(kawi* and *nak glon)*. The word 'rhymester' has rather a deprecatory sense today, though rhyme is the very essence of Thai poetry, be it metropolitan or rural. Milord Byron

was not above telling his publisher: "Print this quickly or I shall overflow with rhyme." Court poets have rather passed away except for a few dying spasms in the newspapers, and their place has been taken by these armchair poets who write of nature as seen in their studies through rose-coloured glasses.

(๏) นกขุนทองของเราแต่เก่าก่อน
ไปร่วมคอนกับนกแก้วเสียแล้วหนอ
ชิชะช่างกระไรน้ำใจคอ
ติดนกต่อแล้วก็หลงจากกรงทอง
โผผลัดผลัดไปก็ใจแตก
แทบจะแปลกไม่รู้จักทักเจ้าของ
บุญพี่น้อยมิได้ร่วมเจ้าขุนทอง
ได้ประคองเคียงกันเท่านั้นเอย ฯ

This old ditty was used by the author to illustrate the *glon 8* form. Translation by Mr. W.A. Graham is given to show the Thai scheme of rhyming, while Mr. Mosel himself gives a more literal prose rendering.

It might be explained that there are many variations of this song, some contradictory. We know the version Mosel translated from because he gives a transcription of it in Mary Haas' system; but we do not know the version Graham used, and he may have made a correct translation of it for all we know. However, we have no choice but to compare his translation with the version Mosel used.

Graham's translation is as follows:

The Minah, once my pride, my own,
Has flown off with the Popinjay.
Ah me! what shall my poor heart say?
Left for gay and gaudy parrot.
Broken my heart, Oh cruel fate,
Changed my state, we meet not again.
Luckless all hope to hold in vain,
I feel our love is at an end.

To achieve his effect, Graham had to take considerable liberty with the original Thai meaning. The following is a more literal translation provided by the present writer: [Mosel]

The Minah bird, mine from former times
Has gone off with the parrot, perch and all.
Alas! Damn my heart and character
You fell for that bird and so have strayed from your golden cage
As soon as you fled my heart broke
I'm almost changed, beyond recognition, you'd not know your owner
My merit was so small, I didn't get to dwell with you, Minah bird
I only got to carry you carefully, close to me, and that was all-*oei*!

If the kind reader would bear with a little repetition, we will have the whole thing over again. The transcription is in Mary Haas' system, as given by Mr. Mosel (but without the accent marks which are not available locally), except for one word missing which I have supplied.

nog khun tho: ng kho:ng raw tae kaw ko:n
Graham: The Minah, once my pride, my own.
Mosel: The Minah bird, mine from former times.

About the same, though perhaps Graham's is more in tone, for the Thai has an affectionate note.

paj ruam kho:n kab caw kae:w sia lae:w no
Graham: Has flown off with the Popinjay.
Mosel: Has gone off with the parrot, perch and all,

Graham has an essential rhyme (flown) but he has left a word out. Mosel's is incorrect. The Thai says: "Has gone to the same perch as Polly."

chicha cha: ng kraraj namcaj kho:
Graham: Ah me! what shall my poor heart say?
Mosel: Alas! Damn my heart and character.

Alas! Ah me! Both are wrong! The poet is talking to the bird, not to himself. Well, well, what heartlessness (has the minah).

tid nog to: lae:w ko long ju: krong tho: ng
Graham: Left for gay and gaudy parrot.
Mosel: You fell for that bird and so have strayed from your golden cage.

Graham has one essential rhyme, but the second is missing. Mosel's is correct enough, though the sense of *nog to* is a bait—"You swallowed that bird bait and strayed from your golden cage."

pho: phlad phlad paj ko caj tae:g

Graham: Broken my heart, Oh cruel fate.

Mosel: As soon as you fled my heart broke.

Both wrong. The poet is again addressing the bird. *Caj tae:g* is an idiom and its meaning is to be found in any Thai dictionary. It has nothing to do with broken hearts. Something like this is nearer the Thai: "You strayed and became addicted to your new-found pleasures."

thae:b ca plae:g maj ru:cag thag caw kho:ng

Graham: Changed my state, we meet not again.

Mosel: I'm almost changed beyond recognition, you'd not know your owner.

Graham has two essential rhymes, but his translation is all paraphrase. Mosel's is incorrect. The poet is again addressing the bird: "You have so changed that you hardly recognise [say hello to] your owner."

bun phi no:j mi daj ruam caw khun tho:ng
daj prakhong khiang kan thawnan-oei.

Graham: Luckless all hope to hold in vain
I feel our love is at an end.

Mosel: My merit was so small, I didn't get to dwell with you, Minah bird,
I only got to carry you carefully, close to me, and that was all.

Both adequate, though Mosel's is rather windy. Graham lacks an essential rhyme in the last line. It should be something like: "Our love, our pain, is at an end." But this is a minor point.

Thai translations

How should Thai poetry be translated? Obviously in the same way that Thai poets have translated from other languages—as poetry. Translations from Pali, particularly the Jataka tales, have been made from ancient times: from English quite recently, the first pieces perhaps being done less that 50 years ago when King Rama VI translated his own *Madana Badha*, a play in verse. But let us first have an example of translation into Thai prose by Methi Prajakom.

Come up North

Come up North, where the mountains high
Stand on guard over old Chiengmai
Where orchids bloom on the giant trees
And whispering pine trees scent the breeze
Where the lads are bold and the girls are fair
Where smiling faces are everywhere
The hilltops gleam in the morning light
And many a sparkling torrent bright
From the mountain's bosom gushes forth
Come up North.

ลำยึงกระชิบ

เชิญขึ้นเหนือ
ผืนแผ่นดินซึ่งมียุนเขาสูงตระหง่านเง้อม
เสมือนปราการแกร่งของนครพิงค์
เอื้องบ่าสยายกลีบประดับคาคบอันละลิ่ว
แลกลิ่นไม้สนซึ่งอบอวลลอยู่ท่ามกลางสายลมรำเพย
ดินแดนซึ่งเต็มไปด้วยหนุ่มผู้ทรนงและสาวแสนบรรเจิด
พร้อมด้วยใบหน้าซึ่งผ่องอำระรื่น
ยอดดอยเด่นโรจน์ด้วยรังษีอรุณ
พิไลเพราะโกรกธารอันใสผ่อง
ซึ่งทลักออกมาจากอกผาละลิ่ว
เชิญขึ้นเหนือ ฯ

I would say the translation is better than the original. The English is rather schoolgirlish, whereas the Thai seems to have the true feeling of the north (it was translated by a Chiengmai man). But on the whole, translating poetry into prose, though it reaches a wider audience, is hardly worthwhile as an artistic medium, particularly when the translation is slipshod and inaccurate. Today people are even translating Thai poetry into Thai prose. I cannot possibly imagine how the translation can be better than the original, so why people should waste their time and energy is beyond me.

In a history of Thai literature yet to be written, a chapter on translating Thai poetry could start with King Vajiravudh (Rama VI). The King wrote a play in the *chan* genre called *Madana Badha*, which he himself started to translate into English but died before the work could be finished. This unfinished English version was first printed only a few years ago, and H.H. Prince Dhani, *Krommuen Bidyalabh*, wrote in the preface:

> In 1925 the King translated his play into English, finishing it in May. The translation had taken him several months. It was supplemented by a learned glossary of terms and names.
>
> The English version was, however, done in prose; and, being aware of His Majesty's ardent admiration of Shakespeare and the Shakespearean blank verse, I suggested that the value of his translation would be much enhanced if he could find time to put it into such a form. The suggestion was at first only partially adopted, for the King merely chose the original lyrical portion for versification. Nevertheless a few months later, in August in fact, a metrical translation of the first act of some 600 lines took shape . . . and towards the end of October the King contracted an illness which proved fatal. death taking place in the early hours of the 26th of November.

Here we have not only the record of a landmark in the history of Thai literature, but also the view of an eminent Thai scholar on how Thai poetry should be translated–viz., not into prose!

The story in the translation that follows is that Sudesna, a lord of the celestial plane, and Chitrasena have been watching a dance of the nymphs. The dance was stopped by Sudesna.

Chitrasena

อันนางอัปสรศรี รำมิดีประการใด
ขอเทวะฤทธิ์ได้ โปรดตำหนิติประทาน

Have these nymphs made mistakes in their dancing?
I pray thee, Lord, make known thy displeasure.

Sudesna

ดีแล้วทั้งการรำ และลำนำก็ขับหวาน
ทั้งดนตรีประสาน ก็พึงไพเราะเสนาะดี
แต่กูที่ใจเศร้า และงมเหงาอยู่เช่นนี้
ตัวเจ้าก็รู้ดี ว่าเหตุนั้นเป็นฉันใด

They did quite well, both dance and song were good
And the accompaniment pleased the ear;
But I am sad and moping like this
For what reason thou knowest all full well.

Chitrasena

ข้าทราบและพลอยโศก อันโรครักนี้หนักใจ
แต่ในสุราลัย สุรางค์ดีก็มีถม
ข้าเชื่อว่าพระองค์ ประสงค์นางสอางชม
คงได้สัมฤทธิ์สม หทัยแท้ทุกนงคราญ

I know! This love-pain doth oppress the heart;
But here one finds many celestial maids,
And, I am sure, shouldst thou but deign to love,
Thou couldst well have thy choice in anyone.

Blank verse can be a magnificent instrument, even in such an Eastern story as Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, but Thai poetry is so based on rhymes that I think rhyming is essential to retain the atmosphere. Let us continue with King Vajiravudh's translation of *Madana*. In this passage Sudesna replies to Chitrasena's remark above.

Sudesna

จริงอยู่นะเจ้าเอย ผิจะเชยสมัครสมาน
นางใดฉแมนการ ก็จะสิทธิสมฤดี
เว้นเดียวก็แต่โฉม มะทะนาวิสุทธิศรี
ผู้เลิศสุรางค์มี วรรปวิเลขวิไล
แต่เห็นอนงค์รา มะประเสริฐวิเศษวิสัย
ไม่มีอนงค์ใด นะจะเทียบจะเทียมจะทัน.
งามผิวประไพผ่อง กลทาบสุภาพสุพรรณ.
งามแก้มแฉล้มฉัน พระอรุณแอร่มละลาน.
งามเกศะดำขำ กลน้ำฌเท้องละหาน.
งามเนตร์พินิศปาน สุมณีมโนหะรา.
งามทรวงสล้างสอง วรถันสุมนสุมา
ลีเลิศประเสริฐกว่า วรรปสสะโรชะมาศ
งามเอวอนงค์คราว สุรศิลปีชาญฉลาด
เกลากลึงประหนึ่งวาด วรรปพิไลยพะวง.
งามกรประหนึ่งงวง สุรคชสุเรนทะทรง.
นวยนาฏวิลาศวง ดุจรำระบำระเบง
ช้าไพเราะน้ำเสียง อรเพียงพิรมประเลง.
ได้พึ่งก็วังเวง บ่มิว่างมิวายถวิล.
นางใดจะมีเทียบ มะทะนาฌเพ้ำฌเดิน
เป็นยอดและจอดจิน ตะนะแน่วฌเอกฌใจ.

"Tis true, my friend, if I did but aspire
To have any, I could have my desire,
Except sweet Madana, peerlessly fair,
The best of maids, lovely as painting rare.
Having seen her, so beautifully sweet,
There's none like her, none with her to compete!
Her skin, as though tinted with gold, doth gleam.
Her cheeks as lovely as the blushing morn;
Her hair dark as the depth of mountain stream,
Her eyes, like heart-delighting gems, adorn;

Her bosom decked with those twin-buds tender,
Like young lotutes in the golden pool;
Her waist, as by an artist made, slender–
A fine picture, painted correct to rule;
Her arm to trunk of Indra's mount compare,
In movement graceful as rhythmic dancing;
Added to all, her voice is music rare,
Fost'ring desire, for it is so 'trancing.
No peer has Madana on earth or sky;
Ador'd within my heart, valued most high.

This is more like it, though of course it is only a beginning. We have now had short examples of several genres of Thai poetry translated into several forms–Mosel's translation of a *glon* into English prose; King Vajiravudh's translation of a *chan* into rhymed pentameters; Graham's translation of a *glon* into its own form; and *M.R.* Seni's translations of a *kawa*, *kloang*, *glon* and *rai* into their own forms. The examples are too short for any definite decision to be made as to the best way poetry in general should be translated, but my preference is for Graham's and Seni's translations, only unfortunately both have paraphrased too much, and Seni's control of the prosody of the genres he translated from is not quite firm enough. But he is on the right track.

I presume the first aim in translating poetry is to be accurate; and after that to keep as much of the spirit or esthetic sense as possible. Also of course the translation should be poetry in the language translated into, or more specifically as far as this discussion is concerned, be 'poetry in English', which of course is not the same as being English poetry. My priorities are different. I think the translation should be made in the form of the original, with as much sense and/or spirit being retained as possible. Reading poetry is an acquired taste; and reading translations even more so. Translations and original compositions cannot possibly have the same taste, and translations into their own form retain much more of the original flavour. The ideal translator of course should be that very, very rare animal, a bilingual poet. As far as I know, no English translator, past or present, is such a creature, but that is no reason why future translators should not develop their talents.

The next part of this paper will deal exclusively with translating the Thai *kloang*. Though I am tempted to do so, I will not say that the best way to translate all poetry (of the world) is into its own form; nor will I even say that the best way to translate Thai poetry of all genres is to do it in the same way; but I will certainly say that the best way to translate the Thai *kloang* is as a *kloang*. If the case I present in the next part of this paper stands up, then of course the problem of the other Thai genres being translated into their own forms will come into immediate focus; and perhaps even the poetry of the world being translated in the same way might become a question that could well be looked at again with advantage. Let the *kloang* be a test case.

(๏) ศรีเปรมศรีปราชญ์ทั้ง	ศรีจันทร์
คราวหน้ามาพบกัน	เพื่อนแก้ว
ทั้งแปลและแต่งประชัน	เชิงประชด
แล้วไม่รู้จักแล้ว	แย่แล้วแก้วตา ฯ
Sri Prem, Sri Praj and	Sri Chand
Next time, all on hand	all friends!
Translate, compose and	compete
What has ended still wends	still without end.

E. Premchaya's "Story of Sri Praj"

The greatest poet of this period was undoubtedly Sri Praj, whose love lyrics enriched Thai literature and are frequently quoted today. He was the son of the King's favourite scholar, himself a poet of note. One day his father was called upon by the King to complete a poem left unfinished in the form of a riddle, a favourite literary pastime of the court:

๏ อันใดย้ำแก้มแม่	หมองหมาย
ยุงเหลือบฤาร้านพราย	ลอบกล้ำ
๏ ผิวชนแต่จักกราย	ยังยาก
ใครจักอาจให้ช้ำ	ชอกเนื้อเรียมสงวน ฯ

What stain is that on my beloved's cheek?
What midge, mosquito, or sprite put it there?...

The old scholar took the verses home with him and, being unable to work on them then, retired to bed. The next morning, he was amazed to find that the missing lines of the quatrain had been filled in and that their wit and style were of a high order:

...Merely to touch no man dare even seek;
Who then could stain a lovely cheek so rare?

After all the others in the house had been questioned, his eight-year-old son confessed to having written the lines. This was duly reported to the King, who sent for young Sri and made him one of the royal pages. Trained by the royal master, Sri grew up to be a talented poet and a firm favourite of the King. Sri was susceptible to feminine charms and wrote superb love lyrics.

๏ ออกปากไว้กับเจ้า เป็นสัจ
ดังหนึ่งเหลี่ยมเพ็ชรรัตน์ ยอดตั้ง
ขอร่วมภิรมย์สวัสดิ์ เสมอชีพ
จงแม่เชื่อเรียมครั้ง หนึ่งน้ำลองดู ฯ

A true vow of love for thee I swear,
That like a jewel set on high doth shine.
Come live with me, this love of ours we'll share;
Believe this, once tried, forever thine.

๏ เจ้าอย่าย้ายค้วไห้ เรียมเหงา
ดูดุจนายพรานเขา ล่อเน้อ
จะยิงก็ยิงเอา อกพี่ ราแม่
เจ็บไปบ่ปานเจ้าเง้อ เงือดแล้วราถอย ฯ

Let not thy arrow-eyes my fate foretell,
Cornering thy prey like a hunter fell,
If thou must shoot, then shoot right in my heart:
'Twould be more cruel to threaten, then depart.

◎ หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมจันทร์
มันบ่เจียมตัวมัน	ต่ำต้อย
นกยูงหากกระสัน	หาเมฆ
มันบ่เจียมตัวน้อย	ต่ำเตี้ยเตี้ยรฉาน ฯ
◎ หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมแข
สูงส่งสุดตาแล	สู่ฟ้า
ฤดูฤดีแด	สัตว์สู่ กันนา
อย่าว่าเราเจ้าข้า	อยู่พื้นดินเดียว ฯ

Once a high-born poetess of the court whom he presumed to love addressed the following verses to him:

Shall a puny hare leap to kiss the moon,
Remembering not its own low degree?
Shall a vain peacock vie with clouds so soon,
Knowing not its place, its base pedigree?

Sri Praj immediately answered:

A puny hare doth leap to kiss the moon,
When he aims high, and look into the sky,
And knows that mating season will come soon—
Yet we both tread earth, thou as well as I.

One day, however, he overstepped the mark in addressing some verses to the consort of the King, who in a fit of anger exiled him to a southern province. On his way there by boat, Sri Praj wrote his immortal "Kamsuan", or "Lament", addressed to his lady love:

◎ โฉมแม่จักฝากฟ้า	เกรงอินทร์ หยอกนา
อินทรท่านเทิกเอา	สู่ฟ้า
โฉมแม่จักฝากดิน	ดินท่าน แล้วแฮ
ดินฤาขัดเจ้าหล้า	สู่สม สองสม ฯ

Should I entrust thee to the lofty sky?
Nay, Indra else will take thee up above.
Should I leave thee on this good earth to lie?
Nay, Father Earth will take thee for his love...

๏ สารนี้นุชแนบไว้	ในหมอน
อย่าแม่อย่าควรเอา	อ่านเหลือ
ยามนอนนาฏเอานอน	เป็นเพื่อน ราแม่
คืนค่ำฤาได้เว้น	ว่างใด ๆ

These verses put in thy soft pillowcase–
O never, never read them just in fun–
Keep them forever in a true friend's place,
When thou retirest, and the day is done.

Then, in the place of his exile, he committed the same indiscretion when he declared his love for the governor's wife. The governor recognized no value in the poet or his poetry, and ordered him to be executed. Immediately before his death, Sri Praj wrote his last poem, prophesying that the same sword used for beheading him would also sever the governor's head. The prophecy came true. The King, desiring Sri Praj's recall from exile, was informed of the poet's sad end; and, rendering poetic justice, ordered the governor to be beheaded with the same sword which had taken the life of one of the greatest Thai poets.

Here ends Premchaya's "Story of Sri Praj".

M.R. Seni's interpretative translations. Of the seven quatrains translated by Premchaya, *M.R.* Seni Pramoj, in his *Interpretative Translations of Thai Poets*, has also translated the first, third, fourth and fifth verses into its own *kloang* form.

What stain is that on my beloved's cheek, etc.

อันใดย้ำแก้มแม่	หมองหมาย ๆลา
Who blemished thy cheeks	do tell;
Perhaps those fleas fell	thee slaked!
Such liberties love itself	wouldn't take!
What man makes mistake	to dare?

Let not thy arrow-eyes my fate foretell, etc.

เจ้าอย่าย้ายค้ำให้	เรียมเหงา ฯลฯ
Grieve me not by such	sad brow,
Ha, hunter, sparing arrow	for quarry!
If shot I'm t'be now	do shoot!
Hurts much this mockery	love unrequited.

The above verse is one of a matched pair that starts with the same line, the other being 'said' by a young poet, the Yaovaraja, thought to have been the King of Chiengmai who was brought down to Ayudhya as a hostage. Seni has also translated this second verse, but not Premchaya.

© เจ้าอย่าย้ายค้ำช่า	เมลืองมา
อย่าม่ายเมียงหางตา	ล่อเหล้น
จะมาก็มารา	อย่าเหนี่ยว นานเลย
ครั้นพี่มาอย่าเร้น	เรียกเจ้าจงมา ฯ
Make not such naughty eye	so far.
Gaze not such bizarre	love light.
If love's what you are	spying my way,
Here I'm, take not fright,	you might lose love!

Shall a puny hare leap to kiss the moon, etc.

หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมจันทร์ ฯลฯ
Oho! Bunny loves	high moon.
It will fall so soon	from height.
As bees' swarm will cool	in clouds,
Such love fancy flight,	it might not be.

A puny hare doth leap to kiss the moon, etc.

หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมแข ฯลฯ
Aha! How foolish	such care,
Reaching far out there	the height.
Say I, who would dare	to love lonely?
Ah, as if you might	walk this earth alone.

F. Translating Sri Praj

Premchaya is a confirmed romantic. Ah, those Oxford men! I wouldn't be surprised if they all wore pink glasses! As a start, "Kamsuan", the so-called "Sri Praj's Lament", is a good two centuries before Sri Praj's time. This dating is widely accepted today. But we will let it pass. It is a pity, though, that Premchaya has not translated Sri Praj's last piece, so here it is translated into its own *kloang* form:

◎ ธรณีภพนี้เพ่ง	ทิพพยาน หน่อยรา
เรากู้ลูกอาจารย์	หนึ่งอ้าง
เราผิดท่านประหาร	เราชอบ
เราบ่ผิดท่านมล้าง	ดาบนี้ดื่นสนอง ฯ
Mother Earth! Be my	Witness
I-by *Archarn** nonetheless	begot
If I have sinned—Yes,	Slay me
If sinned I have not	'Venge me, O Sword!'

As a fact, of the meagre material that has come down to our day from King Narai's reign, most of it is straight doggerel, though the free and natural humour, sometimes broad but always spontaneous as in *sakrawa* and rural rhymes, has not been recorded in the *kloang* form from other periods. Let us have an example to show this quality. In this quatrain, Sri Praj and the gatekeeper are talking together. The story goes that one day as Sri Praj was leaving the palace, he was wearing a ring. He showed it to the gatekeeper who asked him, in the first line, how he got it. Sri Praj told him in line 2; the keeper asked another question in line 3; and Sri Praj again replied in the last line.

◎ แหวนนี้ท่านได้แต่	ใดมา
เจ้าพิภพโลกา	ท่านให้
ท่าชอบสิ่งใดหวา	วานบอก
เราถวายกาพย์โคลงไท้	ท่านให้รางวัล ฯ
"How come did you get	this ring?"
"To me has the king	given it."
"What then was the thing	you did?"
"Doggerel my merit	I wrote for him."

* *Archarn*: great teacher, mystic, spiritual leader, oracle, confessor, near-deity, or any professor.

Before continuing with Sri Praj and his verses, I will first discuss Premchaya's translation of the "Kamsuan" piece. This verse is one of a matched pair, and as far as I know nobody has ever quoted or used the one without the other—in fact, the climax is in the last line of the second verse, and the first verse by itself is pointless. "Kamsuan" is what we call a *nirat*, a conventional moanin'-an'-groanin' piece. In the matched pair from "Kamsuan", the poet is moaning before his departure. The following translation is more literal than Premchaya's, but, with rhyme, not all the shades of meaning could be retained in 30 words; and the rhyme scheme is also different from the original. "Kamsuan" was written in *kloang dun*, an archaic form popular in the early Ayudhia period, a good century before Shakespeare wrote his first play; whereas the translation is in the more modern *kloang suparb* form.

๏ โฉมแม่จักฝากพ้า	เกรงอินทร์ หยอกนา
อินทรท่านเทิกเอา	สู่พ้า
โฉมแม่จักฝากดิน	ดินท่าน แล้วนา
ดินฤขัดเจ้าหล้า	สู่สม สองสม ฯ
๏ โฉมแม่ฝากน่านน้ำ	อรรณพ
เยียวนาคเชยชมอก	พี่ไหม้
โฉมแม่รำพึงจบ	ไตรโลก
โฉมแม่ใครสงวนได้	เท่าเจ้าสงวนเอง ฯ

Shall I leave thee with	the sky?
Indr' would swoop thee high	above
Leave with the earth? Why	Nay, Nay!
Earth Lord's, O my love,	would thee seduce.
Leave with the waters?	Enow
Naga would I vow	thee take
'Tis fit, I allow,	to leave
Thee with thee—thy stake	thine own conscience.

Let us have another example of this spontaneity from the same period. This is a non-Sri Praj piece: it was spoken by Charlee, the king's boatswain, to the "queen".

◎ เรียมพิศแต่บาททท้าว ถึงผม
บ่ต่ำบ่สูงสม แน่งน้อย
อ้อนแอ้นอ่อนเอวกลม กำรอบ
ดิแต่นมเล็กหน้อย หนึ่งนั้นเสียโฉม ฯ

◎ ชาลีเชื้อชาติซึ่ง ชาลี
นามแม่อามอัปรีย์ ต่ำต้อ
พ่อมึงชื่อตาสี ขายถ่าน
ส่วนตัวมึงคือกรอ แต่งไว้วิดเรือ ฯ

◎ ชาลีใช่ชาติเชื้อ ชาลี
นามแม่นาฏมัทรี เผ่าท้าว
บิดุเรศชื่อพระศรี เพศยัน ดรนา
บู่ข้าผู้หาญห้าว ชื่อท้าวสญชัย ฯ

From heel to head up and down
Nor short nor tall found my d'light
Thy waist, ah, so round so p'tite
One thing's not quite right: Thy tits too small.

The good lady replied (somewhat paraphrased):

Charlee, thou boat-load of slime
Thee–thy mother's crime to birth
Thy sire selleth grime charcoal
Whilst thou–thine sole worth: To bale a boat.

Charlee the boatswain then introduced a lot of rigmarole from the "Vessantara Jataka" (story of the Buddha's penultimate birth before Enlightenment) where he becomes the grandson of King Sanjaya and son of Prince Pesyandorn (*sic*) and Princess Mathri. All good spontaneous fun.

Of noble birth indeed Charlee
My mother's Mathri Princess
My father's Phra Sri Vessan- dorn *na*
Grandfather's no less than King Sanchai.

Two pieces translated by Premchaya, about the hare aiming for the moon, are also of this occasion. 'Twas a moonlit night in the high-water season, and the king's boat had moored alongside that of the queen's. Spontaneous repartee took place between the sexes in the difficult *kloang* genre. Thirteen verses are recorded for our admiration and delight; and now five have been translated. Somebody should have translated the whole set long ago. (This has now been done; included in the appendix below.)

Now the late Ayudhia piece. Premchaya has translated it as a lyric—and in truth a lyric it is. But it is more: it is also legerdemain: it plays with words in repetition and punning, with a superb last line that comes bang down to earth in sheer lyrical humour in a manner most fitting to a well-brought-up young lady—why, she wasn't even addressing Sri Praj!

The *kloang* has a sense of urgency about it that somehow seems slowed down by end-rhymes. In my translations I have clipped off light syllables left and right to keep this particular quality, though of course counterpoint could also be used without losing the essential rhythm. Further on is a verse that starts "I hapt 'pon horses in fun", and the rhythm of this line could be sprung to read "I happened upon some horses in fun" without losing the characteristic of the genre. But end-rhymes seem to turn good red meat to chocolate cake in your mouth, or like rare Scotch diluted with a pail of tap water. I have no quarrel with end-rhymes as such—in fact I much prefer them to prose translations of verse, which latter is like diluting Scotch with three pails of dishwater. Particularly a verse like the one under discussion, which is perhaps the best-known single piece in the whole language; and was inscribed on stone at Wat Jetupon in Bangkok.

As I have said, this verse is one of a set of 13. Before this verse, the King had said to the 'queen', an elderly lady perhaps of the previous reign—"Come live with me and be my love"—and the queen had replied that she was old and, as the King was a young man who should produce a dynasty, she will give him one of her 'daughters', of whom she had a bountiful supply. At this point Sri Praj cut in by remarking that he had

set his heart on becoming an in-law of this 'palace'; and the King, who was young, should try an old 'un who knew all the tricks of the trade. One of the young ladies of the queen's retinue replied on her mistress' behalf; and Sri Praj replied once more (as translated by Premchaya). In my retranslation of the young lady's verse, the last four words are paraphrased, but not as much as might appear at first sight; for I wish to keep more to the spirit of the thing than has Premchaya, who has kept to the sense. The pun may appear rather excessive in English, and if the reader cannot stand it, he may of course substitute Premchaya's more formal ending without disturbing the rhyme-scheme. (The first verse is given in the form inscribed at Wat Jetupon.)

◎ หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมจันทร์
มัน	ต้อย
มันบ่เจียมตัว	ต่ำ เตียรฉาน
น้อย	เตี้ย
นกยูงหากกระสัน	หาเมฆ
◎ หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมแข
สูงส่งสุดตาแล	สู่ฟ้า
ฤดูฤดีแด	สัตว์สู่ กันนา
อย่าว่าเราเจ้าข้า	อยู่พื้นดินเดียว ฯ

Sri Prem's translation

Shall a puny hare leap to kiss the moon,
Remembering not its own low degree?
Shall a vain peacock vie with clouds so soon,
Knowing not its place, its base pedigree?

Sri Chand's translation

Au clair de la loon	moon'th hare
Low station unaware	of self
Peacock cock'th eye where	clouds ride
Low station, low shelf,	low underwear.

Compared to the lady's, Sri Praj's rejoinder is straight doggerel that hardly rises any higher than some fairly tall grass, but we will translate it nevertheless, to show how much paraphrase should be permissible.

Sri Prem's translation

A puny hare doth leap to kiss the moon
When he aims high, and look into the sky,
And knows that mating season will come soon,
Yet we both tread earth, thou as well as I.

Sri Chand's translation

The hare at the moon	doth aim
The hare do you blame	him not
We tread this self-same	good earth
'Tis spring, well you wot,	when creatures wed.

In my translation the lines are all mixed up, whereas Premchaya's are straight. Also I have used the word 'spring' when the Thai do not recognise spring as the mating season. But then Premchaya's expression of kissing the moon is not Thai either. Perhaps both contain too much paraphrase. That is one point, another and more important point is the pertinent question: is the spirit of Premchaya's translation Sri Praj's or Sri Prem's? Is the spirit of my translation Sri Praj's or Sri Chand's? Obviously each translator has his own interpretation on such an abstract point as this. But on the whole the most important point in these two quatrains is that Sri Praj repeated the lady's first line, and this the translator must do to retain the correct atmosphere. So let us translate the verses again.

The lady's quatrain

Au clair de la lune	mooneth hare
Low station, unaware	of self
Peacock cocketh eye where	clouds ride
Low station, poor elf,	poor pedigree.

Sri Praj's reply

Au clair de la lune	mooneth hare
High, high, doth he dare	to gaze
Creatures are aware	'tis spring
Blame me not my daze	we both belong.

A friend who is a visiting lecturer at Chiang Mai University has tried his hand at translating another of Sri Praj's verses into its own *kloang* form. The quatrain was one Premchaya has already translated. As Premchaya uses 40 syllables with two rhyme words in his pentameter form, while the *kloang* has 30 syllables with three rhymes, Premchaya's translation should be more accurate and, in fact, better in every way. I wonder if it is. I wonder if in the third line Sri Praj was really asking the girl to marry him or to do something far more poetical.

A true vow of love for thee I swear
That like a jewel set on high doth shine.
Come live with me, this love of ours we'll share,
Believe this, once tried, forever thine.

◎ ออกปากไว้กับเจ้า	เป็นสัจ
ดังหนึ่งเหลี่ยมเพ็ชรรัตน์	ยอดตั้ง
ขอร่วมภิรมย์สวัสดิ์	เสมอชีพ
จงแม่เชื่อเรียมครั้ง	หนึ่งลองดู ฯ
True my every vow	to thee
As a jewel would be,	set high
Come, love, share with me	life's bliss
Come, believe me, try	me just this once.

Before leaving this late Ayudhia period altogether for Sri Chand's even worse doggerel than Sri Praj's, may we have just one more example of this brave and mundane humour of three centuries ago? I will translate this verse only provided that the reader will understand that Thai poetry does not consist merely of stuff like this, but that it could rise to the heights or sink to the depths. I do not quite know in what category to classify this one. It could stand up with the world's best in ribaldry if that is any criterion. The piece is supposed to have been written by one Sri Thanonchaya, an even more fabulous character in Thai literature than Sri Praj. We talk of some poetic thought being Miltonic or Byronic; in Thai the 'Thanonchayonic' thought has its very own characteristic. Siamese talk is a modern expression, but it is something Sri Thanonchaya used long ago. It is, or should be, just as famous as Siamese cats or Siamese twins.

◎ มลักเห็นม้าซ้อนเมื่อ	มันสุข
ลวนเล่ห์กลยลสนุก	ใช่น้อย
มาเห็นเมื่อมันคลุก	กันอยู่
แหนงจึ่งกลับไปจ้อย	แม่เหย้าเรือนตน ฯ

I hapt on horses	in fun
Such a sight was one	I loved
Seeing what was done	frenziedly
I hurried home and shoved	my dear, deer wife.

G. Translating Sri Chand

We now come to the modern period—to be exact, to the *kloangs* of Sri Chand, commonly known as "My Man Monday". The *kloang* is essentially a 30-word composition. One or two more sense-words can be used in the first or third line or both, accompanied by one or two sound-words like *hae*, *ha*, *na*, *noh*, *ra*, etc. This is called *soi kloang*. If a sense-word is used, then the *soi* is said to be *jetanang*, whatever that means. The easiest way to explain is to have a quick sample.

I swear, honeybunch,	I love thee *hae*
I swear by Heav'n above	I do
I swear, yea, my dove,	I swear-
I swear by Hell too!	That I love thee.

The *soi* in the first line is correct. If we say 'I love thee dear', that would be a *jetanang*. You can say 'I love you *hoo*' (though *hoo* is not a usual *soi* sound), but you can't say 'I love yoo *hoo*', for that would be using two sound-words. I don't quite know how the *soi kloang* should be treated in translation. They are difficult enough to deal with in Thai.

There are two other points in the above that might be mentioned. I have used 'I love thee' instead of 'I love you' because 'you' in the last line would give a surfeit of rhymes. We call this *rok sampat*. This is a common mistake for beginners to make. To the Thai ear the alliteration of 'that-thee' is much more pleasing.

The other point is the 'I do' in the second line. This could mean 'I do swear' or 'I do love you'. Thai poets are fond of this little but difficult device, and translators should keep a lookout for it. It is not punning in the English sense of "they told the sexton and the sexton tolled the bell", unless we call it semantic punning. We will have another even more difficult example in a minute. Finally, this *kloang* is called a *kloang kratoo yuen*, where the first word or words of the first line are left 'standing' in the other remaining lines. This is a common device and need not frighten people into considering it anything acrobatic. The main point is not to be pedantic and use it in the wrong place. Now let us translate the above into Thai.

◎ เยาวยอดพี่จอดเจ้า	สาบาน ให้แช
เชิญเทพถ้วนถี่นสถาน	ทุกชั้น
เทพสวรรค์เทพบาดาล	พยานทิพ พี่รา
ว่าอะหมยักอะฮั้น	เทพเจ้าฮาตึง ๆ

The reader may not even consider the above to be a translation at all because there is altogether too much paraphrase. I personally, and seriously, consider it to be a passable translation because it has the same spirit as the original, though the humour might smack more of the music hall.

The ending is intentional, There were four words left over, that is to say, after all the sense had been covered I still had four words to play with, so I switched the whole tone. We will now translate another quatrain where the tail is again twisted, but differently. The start is like any lyric, the exaggeration is built up slowly and, again with four words left, I switched the whole imagery. The reader should understand that now I am no longer talking about translating poetry only, but that I want to show a glimpse of the potentialities of the *kloang* as well. In odd pieces like this there can of course be no question of sustained thought or anything like that. It is a question of banging in your stuff as quickly as possible, and praying that you can do something with the last four words. In short, you either lick these four words, or they lick you.

The Thai *kloang* form seems to be making its way around nicely. This particular quatrain has been translated (?) into French, which I reproduce below not because it is poetry, but simply because it is a piece of good fun.

Je jure, mon ange, que *je t'aime*
Je jure au suprême *degré*
Je jure par Dieu même *par Diable*
Je jure, p'tit poulet, *je n'aime que toi.*

◎ พี่วาดภาพน้องติด เต็มฝา
ผนังวิหารศาลา โบสถ์ลัน
ผีฟ้าต่ำสูงมา ชมชอบ
เพื่อนลักทั้งผนังปลัน เปลี่ยวเศร้าสุโขทัย ฯ

I drew thy likeness filled wall
Vihara, sala, hall 's whole writ
Seraphims, short 'n' tall, they looked
They like't, they stole it Poor Sukothai.

N.B.: Sukothai was one of the early capitals of the Thai. It became deserted, and today some *stupas* and columns are still standing, but the roofs and walls have disappeared.

It might be mentioned that in this case the Thai was written first and the English is a translation, whereas in the other example the English was first written and then translated. I would say from my vast experience of translating these two verses, that translating from Thai into English is much easier than *vice versa* (sorry, no pun is here intended!). This is as it should be, for the prosody of the *kloang* requires not only essential rhymes but also essential tones, the latter a subject I have not touched upon in this paper. Of course I have the advantage of translating my own stuff, so I can change the English to fit the Thai or the other about at my convenience. The second example, both Thai and translation, didn't take more than two or three minutes. But speed of composition means nothing, and here of course we are not talking about quality. Spontaneity is a knack Thai poets develop to a high degree, and I have myself seen a poet dictate a whole article in verse.

Would the reader bear with another example if we translate it twice? Perhaps I'd better not ask because it is rather necessary. We have had an example of a verse first written in English and then translated; of two versions written together, so to say; and this last example is a Thai *kloang* written without any intention of it being translated. This should cover everything from soup to nuts on the menu.

One day four or five of us were sitting in a cook-shop, and it was decided to play *kloang sot* (spontaneous rhyme-making in the *kloang* genre). One of the subjects was whatever the eye could see in the shop, and each had to write a quick quatrain. I simply cheated by taking the words out of the menu and stringing them together. (The verse is a *kloang kratoo yuen*, each line starting with the word *horm*, which can mean "onions", or "sweet-smelling", or both.)

◎ หอม สันสลัดผักต้ม	ยำหมู
หอม เป็ดเห็ดปลาปู	ไก่กุ้ง
หอม แกงกะหรี่สตู	สุดเสตอะ
หอม กระเทียมหอมพุ่ง	ห่อนให้ชวนเสวย ฯ

Translation: "beef, salad, soup, pork, duck, mushrooms, fish, crab, chicken, prawns, curry, stew, onions and garlic—what a menu!"

The trick here is that *horm* can mean "onions" or "sweet-smelling", and the two meanings can be read '*versa vice*' or *vice versa*. We might call this semantic double-punning.

Ah! Beef, Salad, Soup, Pork	Sweet smell!
Duck, Mushrooms, Fish, Shell—	fish, Chick,
Prawns, Curry, Stew—Well	yum-yum:
Onions and Garlic	gives tum-tum ache.

This is altogether too acrobatic to be a practical example. I do not of course mean the translation by itself because that is just a list of words out of a menu: but rather the combination of *kratoo yuen* (not difficult), double pun (not so easy) and nearly word-to-word translation, is really too good to be true, particularly as the question of translating the piece was never even considered when it was hurriedly written.

But seriously, semantic or double-puns are good fun. I have just remembered an example in English. It is a simple-looking limerick, and goes:

There was a young fellow named Hall,
Who fell in the spring in the fall.
'Twould have been a sad thing
Had he died in the spring,
But he didn't—he died in the fall.

There is no record of who wrote this limerick, but it has been translated into German. The editor of the book the limerick is printed in, remarked: "The pun about dying in the spring instead of the fall completely stymied the translator. Thereupon he resorted to two translations. In one the word 'spring' was given as *Frujahr* (the season). In the other it became *Quelle* (a flow of water), while 'fall' was rendered both as *Herbst* (the season) and *Wasser-fall*."

This double pun would give four different translations, but the two words, "spring" and "fall", also mean to leap up and to fall down, so perhaps as many as a dozen translations could be made without repeating the sense, of which there wasn't any to start with anyway. This is a rather exceptional case, so don't let it discourage would-be translators. It is one of those impossible things that are sent to try us, so don't touch it. Leave it alone with a barge pole.

Perhaps before concluding, I may be permitted to put in a complaint on behalf of poets now dead and gone. There is altogether too much nonsense talked amongst those who should know far better about euphony being the most important element in Thai poetry. Poetry can be euphonious, yes, but euphony by itself cannot be poetry. You can get a sweet face to chant a sweet piece of doggerel, and in the end the piece is still doggerel. People who cannot write poetry hope that what they write will be euphonious, but a poet does not even bother to think about it because euphony is something that is built-in in him. He may use it or he may not: it depends on him and the piece he happens to be writing. In judging Thai poetry, then, one should distinguish between sense and sounds, and leave sweet faces and sweet nonsense out of it altogether.

In conclusion, I do not think that translations of Thai poetry should be done in prose or even blank verse; they should at least be rhymed to retain the original essential flavour. Paraphrase, as in all verse translation, is permissible to a certain extent. There is no need to keep the Thai rhyme-scheme, though in the case of the *kloang*, with the so-called external or essential rhymes falling on the fifth words, a good epigram effect could be obtained. In essence the *kloang* is an epigram—or limerick, except that it could be used in all seriousness or playfully, as most of the examples in this paper have been, and still retain that certain grace which is found in the most noble poetry. Also it has about it what we might call 'manliness' rather than spontaneity, a major characteristic of late Ayudhia poetry. Good Thai writing, from Ram Kamheng's inscriptions down, has this quality of being manly even in prose. But unfortunately—unfortunately for translators, that is—the *kloang* can be walking on solid *terra firma* one minute, and in the next it can be flying through the air with the greatest of ease straight into the 'sputnik' atmosphere without losing poise or pomp. Then it could spin straight down to earth again even in the same quatrain, and in a most explosive anticlimax. Such pieces are not easy to translate in 60 words, let alone the 30 of the Thai without undue paraphrasing or losing the full finesse of the original. So translations like Premchaya's are much easier and safer—he uses 40 words against 30, and his terms of reference, so to speak, are clearly laid down without compromise. But this is only a start. Translating Thai poetry is still in the pioneer stage, and we could wish that Premchaya would continue translating: and at the same time experiment with other forms.

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APPENDIX

ROYAL REPARTEE

Extemporaneous rhymes in the seventeeth century

The following exchange[1] cannot be dated with any certainty, but from the internal evidence we can construct a likely scenario: a night during the high-water season early in the reign of King Narai. The moon is full, and the river brimming. The King and his court are out in their boats, having participated earlier in the day in some water ceremony and the ensuing boat race[2]. King Narai has had his boat moored next to that of one of his queens, Thewi, and is about to engage her in a rhyming contest similar to the *len pleng*, which continues to be played in parts of Thailand to this day[3].

In *len pleng*, the contestants are divided into at least two teams, male and female, which begin by offering rhymed compliments to each other. As the teams warm up, the compliments turn to insults, and light-hearted barbs come thick and fast—any hesitation being an admission of defeat. In general, the women's role is trickier than that of the

1) What we have here may not be a continuous exchange, but rather a series of fragments from a longer exchange. The earliest written record is from the โคลงกวีโบราณ (*"Kloangs of the Ancient Poets"*), compiled by Phraya Trang in the first or second reign of the Bangkok dynasty, an attempt to put down on paper what remained of the Ayutthayan oral tradition. In this compilation, the verses are given in the following order: 1,2,6,8,7,9,10,11,3,4,5,12,13. In his article บางแง่ในวรรณคดี ("Some aspects of literature", printed in *Kam Suan Sri Praad-Nirat Narin*, Phrae Phitya: 2502) P. ṇa Pramuanmark (pseudonym of *M.C.* Chand Chirayu Rajani) renumbered the verses to give some dramatic sense to the whole. I have followed his renumbering, and for the most part his interpretation, in my translations. I might add that, were it not for his patient guidance, I could never have attempted, much less completed, the work.

2) For a description of these festivities as held in the time of King Narai, see Jeremy Kemp, *Aspects of Siamese Kingship in the Seventeenth Century* (Bangkok, Social Science Association Press of Thailand, 1969), pp. 20-22.

3) For an excellent introduction to the *len pleng* in general, and the *pleng rya* in particular, see H.H. Prince Bidyalongkorn, "The pastime of rhyme-making and singing in rural Siam", published in *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. xx pt. 2, pp. 101-127.

men. As in any courting situation, the man's basic interest is taken for granted, and he can afford to be as insulting and offensive as possible. The woman must remain cool to his advances, but not to the point of being frigid. Her verbal attacks should serve not to discourage, but to arouse. In the exchange we are about to witness, the women play their role with aplomb.

The game is essentially a display of wit: the ability to think on one's feet, to parry an opponent's thrust, and penetrate his defenses. The poetic art involved is the art of strategy, not of romantic contemplation; and the strategy is that of the light touch–the ability to wound one's opponent without demolishing him. As in *tagraw*, the enjoyment lies in keeping the ball in the air as long as possible. In my translations, perhaps at some cost, I have tried to preserve this element of light-hearted, spontaneous wit.

Although *len pleng* is usually performed in the *glon* form, on this occasion the more sophisticated *kloang*[4] was used.

The personages involved: King Narai; Thewi, a queen, possibly from a previous reign or from a conquered province; Chaali, the King's boatswain, a lesser nobleman; Sri Praad, a courtier, the best-known poet of the time; an unidentified princess (?), a member of Queen Thewi's encourage.

King Narai opens the formalities in a fairly typical manner:

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4. The *kloang* form:

O O O O O	O a (O O)
O O O O a	O b
O O O O a	O O (O O)
O O O O b	O O O O

In addition to the required rhymes, there are certain tonal restrictions which need not concern us here. The words in parentheses are optional, and consist of one sense and one sound word. English equivalents would be "ah", "ugh", "ha", "oh", "eh ?". In my translations I have tried to adhere to the original form, taking a few liberties which I felt were demanded by English grammar.

พระเรียมมาแขกน้อง	ถึงกง
มีมโนรถจง	จอดเจ้า
เรียมคลาคละไลหงส์	บารนี มาแม่
คุณบารนีน้องเหน้า	หน่อไท้เทวี ฯ
A call, dear Queen, we've come	to pay
We've something to say	in mind.
Afloat on our gay	Swan Boat
We visit our kind,	our worthy Queen.

Thewi, also typically, cuts him short:

พระผัวพระผ่านเผ้า	นฤพาน
ไฟไบ่ดับแดดาล	หม่นม้วย
สดักลูกเหลนหลาน	เรียงรอบ ตัวแช
เถ้าวอกเว้ากัดกลัวย	ริริ้อทำสาว ฯ
My royal husband	newly dead,
His ashes still red	and warm,
Grandchildren swarm my bed	about—
And you want to charm	an hag like me?

Chaali takes advantage of a slight pause to offer his thoughts on the subject:

เรียมพิศแต่บาทเท้า	ถึงผม
บ่ต่ำบ่สูงสม	แน่งน้อย
อ้อนแอ้นอ่อนเอวกลม	กำรอบ
ดิแต่นมเล็กหน้อย	หนึ่งนั้นเสียโฉม ฯ
Ma'am, I've looked you up	and down:
Not too short, I've found,	nor tall;
Slim your figure, round	your waist;
Just one flaw, that's all:	your tit's too small.

The Queen retaliates vehemently:

ชาลีเช้อชาติชั่ง	ชาลี
นามแม่อามอัปรีย์	ต่ำต้อ
พ่อมึงชื่อตาสี	ขายถ่าน
ส่วนตัวมึงคือกร้อ	แต่งไว้วิดเรือ ฯ

You bucket of slime,	Chaali,
Your mother's a free	old slut
Your father, Old Sri	sells charcoal–ugh!
While you're kept around but	for bailing boats.

Chaali's retort is based on the fact that Phra Vessantara–the Buddha's next-to-last incarnation–had a son also named Chaali:

ชาลีใช่ชาติเชื้อ	ชาลี
นามแม่นาฏมัทรี	เผ่าท้าว
บิตุเรศชื่อพระศรี	เพศยัน ดรนา
บู่ข้าผู้หาญห้าว	ชื่อท้าวสญชัย ฯ
No, you've got the wrong	Chaali,
My mother's Mathri,	a princess.
Father is Phra Sri	Vessantara,
While Grandpa's no less	than King Sanchai.

The King retains his complimentary tone:

ทังหลายว่าแม่เถ้า	มานยาว
พระว่านางยังสาว	ไปเถ้า
ทัดดอกพลับพลึงขาว	แซมเกศ
สระกว่าสาวสิบเข้า	แข่งหน้าบูรณ์จันทร์ ฯ
They say, dear Queen, you've lost	your flair.
We're struck by how fair	you are.
Entwined in your hair	a lily–ah!
You're fresher by far	than a moon-faced girl.

Thewi:

ทินกรวรเดชฤา	งามยึง ยึงแฮ
อ้าใช่อาทิตย์จง	อยู่เกล้า
นารายณ์เสด็จลง	มาแปลก ปลอมฤา
อ้าใช่นารายณ์เจ้า	พระผู้เสด็จมา ฯ
This splendor! The sun's	bright light?
No sun sears my sight	from on high.
Vishnu! Am I right?	you've descended, eh?
Not quite–King Narai	has come calling.

King Narai:

ศศิวรเดชฤๅ	งามนัก
อ้าใช่เดือนเพ็ญพักตร์	หนุ่มเหน้า
อัษรบวรลักษณ์[5]	เลื่องแต่ง ผจงฤๅ
อ้าใช่นางฟ้าเจ้า	พี่ใช้อย่าไฉน ฯ
This glamor! The moon's	fair face?
No, that's not the case	at all.
Such celestial grace![5]	A goddess, eh?
No goddess--why stall?	Come when I call.

Sri Praad intervenes. His observations are based on the customary boat race which followed the King's yearly water *kathin*. It was believed that if the Queen's boat "Soramuk" won, good harvests were in store; while a victory by the King's boat, "Samatchai", augured famine and anarchy. Obviously, it was thought wise in Narai's time to arrange a tie[6].

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5) This line is ambiguous. Absorn (อัปสร), a celestial being, is sometimes pronounced Aksorn (อักษร) in old poetry. The translator has used this interpretation, but Aksorn can also mean "letters" (of the alphabet), and the line could be read as a compliment to the Queen who was a well-known poetess. The ambiguity is intentional.–*M.C.* Chand.

6) A note given in H.H. Prince Bidyalongkorn's สามกรุง ("Three Capitals") offers the following conjecture: "If the queen's boat lost, the populace would fear troubles ahead. If, however, the queen's boat won and if the king were tempermental, there could be troubles of a different sort. Secondly, if the race forecasts a plentiful harvest, and the forecast proved incorrect, the holiness of the augury would deteriorate. Therefore it was thought best to keep it in the middle, i.e. arrange a tie." In later years the augury was reinterpreted. According to the นางนพมาส (Library edition, B.E. 2468, 39/4) a victory by the king's boat augured good foreign trade, but poor harvests; while a victory by the queen's boat augured good harvests, but a lack of imported goods. If there were a draw, it was said that the city would have less of everything. (This latter forecast was probably the perceived result of so many prearranged ties.)

โคลงสองธ กล่าวอ้าง หฦิงชาย
คือสมรรถไชยพาย เฟื่องฟ้น
สรมุขวิ่งวางสาย ชลเชี่ยว
สองอาจแขงขมังขื้น แข่งให้เสมอกัน ฯ

This exchange is like a race:
Samatchai, sets a pace fleet and fast,
Soramuk gives chase like the wind.
Neither first nor last— Let them both win.

Thewi:

เชิญไทธิราชไท้ เสด็จยูร ยาตร์แฮ
กั้นก่อภพไอศูรย์ สืบหล้า
ขอถวายธิดาทูล ทรงบาท
แด่บพิตร์เจ้าฟ้า ผ่านหล้าครองเมือง ฯ

Your splendor, my king. may it shine.
May your sun-like line give birth.
This daughter of mine I offer
To you, Lord of Earth, my monarch, my king.

Sri Praad makes a show of having designs on the girl:

หวังตามาลั้นได้ เป็นเขย
สรวลแต่ชาวเราเหย หะห้าย
เชิญพระตระกองเกย กรหนุ่ม ดีพ่อ
นางแก่กลกามหม้าย หม่นเศร้าเสียโฉม ฯ

The girl? On, my heart will break!
Let's laugh for my sake, Ho Ho!
But it's best you take the girl, Sir, Yes!
Old widowed women know too many tricks.

An unidentified girl in the Queen's boat is amused by Sri Praad's over-weaning ambitions:

หะหายกระต่ายเต้น ชมจันทร์
มันบ่เจียมตัวมัน ต่ำต้อย
นกยูงหากกระสัน ถึงเมฆ
มันบ่เจียมตัวน้อย ต่ำเตี้ยเตียรฉาน ฯ

The rabbit leaps moonward	Ho Ho! Ha Ha!
Foolish, don't you know	your place?
The peacock wants to go	to the clouds
But it's, oh, so base	an animal.

Sri Praad is not to be discouraged:

หะหายกระต่ายเต้น	ชมแข
สูงส่งสุดตาแล	สู่ฟ้า
ฤดูฤดีแด	สัตว์สู่ กันนา
อย่าว่าเราเจ้าข้า	อยู่พื้นดินเดียว ๆ
The rabbit leaps moonward	with glee—Heigh Ho!
For all he can see,	to the sky.
Animals all, we	were meant to mate.
Don't think you're so high—	We walk the same earth.

Whether or not the exchange continued, this is all that has been recorded. This seems a fitting place, at any rate, to conclude. The final pair of verses have become favorites of Thai literature, classic statements of the clash between social and animal pride.

Geoffrey de Graff

Chiang Mai