

THAI INTERPOLATIONS IN THE STORY OF ANIRUDDHA

by

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Aniruddha is the grandson of Kṛiṣṇa. His story, which is not lengthy, is in the Kṛiṣṇāvatāra ("Account of the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Kṛiṣṇa"). Aniruddha's story is depicted in two Thai literary works: *Anirut Kham Chan* and *Bot Lakhṇ Rū'ang Unarut*. The first is supposed to have been written during the early Ayudhya period (?1529-1550). The second, which is a *lakhṇ* or dance drama text, was written in the early Ratanakosin period (1783). In the present article I shall discuss primarily the *Anirut Kham Chan (AKC)*.

The prototype of *AKC*, according to Thai tradition, is the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Dhanit Yupho writes in his introduction to the play *Bot Lakhṇ Rū'ang Unarut* that "the story of Aniruddha has been widely known from the Ayudhya period. The most prominent version is the *Anirut Kham Chan* composed by Si Prāt who lived in the reign of King Nārāi the Great. The story, names of the characters and of places in the *Anirut Kham Chan* correspond to those in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*."¹

But the internal evidence does not quite agree with this suggestion. I prefer to regard the *Harivaṃśa* as the prototype of *AKC*. *Harivaṃśa* is the celebrated poem, supplementary to the *Mahābhārata*, on the history and adventures of Kṛiṣṇa. The close similarities between the *Harivaṃśa* and *AKC* can be clearly seen in the fighting episodes in the later part of the story. A comparison of similar incidents is illustrated in the table at the end of this article.

The first part of the story of Aniruddha in the *Harivaṃśa* is as follows. Uṣā, the daughter of the Demon King Bāṇa, is one of the attendants of the goddess Umā. One day, seeing Umā enjoying the act of love together with her consort, Śiva, Uṣā wants very much to have the same experience. Umā discovers Uṣā's wish. She foretells that Uṣā is to enjoy sexual intercourse with a man in her dream on the twelfth night in the month of Vaiśākha. That man is to be her husband.

On the predicted night a young man does violate Uṣā's virginity in her dream. When Uṣā wakes up she finds that her dress is soaked with blood ("sā svapne rambhitā tena sribhāvam cāpi lambhitā, śonitūktā prarudatī sahasaivotthitā niśi"). She is very upset over what has happened. Citralekhā, her close friend, helps her to find out who the man is. She paints the portraits of all the gods and heroes, including Aniruddha, for Uṣā. She also uses her magic power to bring him from his own city to be reunited with Uṣā².

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1. ธนิต อยู่โพธิ์. "เรื่องที่มาของอนิรุทธคำฉันท์ และบทละครอนิรุทธ" , *บทละครอนิรุทธภาคต้น*. พระราชนิพนธ์ พระบาทสมเด็จพระพุทธยอดฟ้าจุฬาโลก. พระนคร: 2508.
2. *Harivaṃśa*. Poona, 1936.

In the *Harivaṃśa* the couple do meet each other in reality, not just in a dream. This seems to be the same as in *AKC*. But the meeting in the *Harivaṃśa* is not treated as the most important part of the story. The battle episodes are more emphasized and depicted at great length. In *AKC*, however, the meeting of the couple is so emphasized, expanded and lengthened that it has become the main part of the work. Besides, an important character has been interpolated. He plays a very remarkable role in the story, the role of a matchmaker.

In *AKC*, Anirut while on a tour in the forest sleeps in his chariot under a great banyan tree. Before he goes to sleep he prays to the spirit of the sacred tree for protection. Phra Sai, or the Banyan Tree Spirit, is very pleased and wants to give Anirut something in return for his reverent behaviour. The spirit also feels pity for Anirut who is sleeping out in the lonely forest. He concludes that it is fit and proper to take him to sleep with Uṣā. He carries Anirut to Uṣā's palace. The meeting of the couple is depicted in erotic verse at length. At dawn Anirut is carried by the Tree Spirit back to his royal chariot³. After this episode the story is similar to that in the *Harivaṃśa*.

Where can the prototype of this beneficial tree spirit be found? In *Jataka* No. 493 ("mahā vaṇija jātaka"), a beneficial tree is mentioned. The spirit of a Serpent King in a banyan tree gives all kinds of desirable possessions including wealth and voluptuous girls to some merchants. But there is no episode of a hero being carried away to meet any one of the girls⁴.

There is a strikingly similar story in the *Daśakumāracarita*, a Sanskrit romantic tale written by a famous poet Daṇḍin (fifth or sixth century A.D.). In chapter X a man comes to sleep under a very tall tree on the side of a mountain in the Vindhya. He too prays to the spirit of the tree for protection before he goes to sleep. A moment later, he finds that he is sleeping by the side of a beautiful girl on the terrace of her palace. He falls in love with her at first sight. He just touches her gently and wakes her up. She also falls in love with him. But the couple do not make love to each other. They just lie together and sleep. When the man wakes up again he finds himself back on his bed of leaves under that sacred tree. Then the spirit appears to him and explains what has happened. It is his mother who has been cursed to forget all her past life and to stay in that sacred tree. At first, without recognizing her son, she had carried him to sleep in the palace of a princess in order to protect him from wild beasts when she had to leave the tree for a while. Here the spirit has a reasonable motive to carry the man to the girl's palace. Later, the spirit and her son are able to recognize each other. She, however, is unable to help him further. When the man knows the truth he takes leave of his mother, the spirit, and wanders about searching for the girl. He comes to her city and is discovered by her maid. The girl has painted

3. [ศรีปราชญ์]. *อนิรุทธคำฉันท์*. พระนคร: ศิลปากร, 2503.

4. *The Jataka*: vol IV, translated by W.H.D. Rouse. Cambridge, 1901.

his portrait and let her maid see it and then go in search of him⁵. The recognition of a man by means of a painting is similar to the story of Aniruddha in the Puranas. But the role of a tree spirit is new. Whether the spirit in the *Daśakumāracarita* has any influence on that in *AKC* or not cannot be proved, but the similarity is still very striking.

This carrying of a man to the bedroom of a girl whose lover he is to become is widely referred to in Thai as Um Som, literally "to carry in the arm and to match". It can hardly be said, however, that it is Thai local convention. There are about a dozen Thai plays extant. (These are traditional nonclassical plays called *lakhṇ nṅk*.) Most of which have more or less the same plot, and even identical episodes or incidents. But none of these plays has any beneficial tree spirit at all. In only one play called *Yō Phra Klin* a beneficial bamboo tree is mentioned. Indra leaves his daughter inside the bamboo tree. She remains there until the hero finds her⁶. But no spirit of this bamboo tree is ever mentioned.

In *AKC* the name of the tree spirit is not given. But in a Buddhist work called *Samuthakhot Kham Chan (SKC)* its name is Sī Phromarak (Sanskrit: Sṛī Brahmaṛakṣa).

The word Sī Phromarak appears in two literary works which are supposed to be earlier than *AKC*. They are *Lilit Ongkān Chaeng Nam*⁷ and *Lilit Phra Lō*⁸. The former is a sacred text recited in the ceremony of "Drinking the Water of Allegiance". The latter is the legend of the great love of a northern prince. In these two works Sī Phromarak seems to be a kind of a tree spirit because it is preceded by a word 'phanatbōdi' (Sanskrit: *vanaspati*), meaning "Lord of the Woods". In neither work does Sī Phromarak act as a matchmaker. But in *Lilit Phra Lō* this kind of spirit is in the entourage of a *rishi*-like sorcerer who, by means of his sorcery, brings the prince away from his family and his kingdom to the twin princesses who crave madly for him. The Tree Spirit, who does much the same thing for Anirut, might get his name from Sī Phromarak in *Lilit Phra Lō*. But it is more likely that Sī Phromarak in both works comes from the same source which has not been discovered yet.

An episode of matchmaking brought about by a tree spirit is also found in *SKC*. What is surprising is that this is the story of a Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva's story, in his birth as Prince Samuddaghosa, is also told in a non-canonical Pali book of Jatakas called *Paññāsajātaka*. It has nothing at all to do with a tree spirit or 'Um Som'. In the Pali Jataka tale the prince hears of a beautiful princess. He desires very much to have her as his wife. He goes to her city, displays his skill in music, and is allowed to marry the princess⁹.

5. Daṇḍin. *Daśakumāracarita*, edited by M.R. Kale. Bombay, 1917.

6. Sowlak Anantasant, *The Ayudhya Lakhon Nok Manuscripts*, unpublished thesis. Chulalongkorn University. Bangkok, 1972.

7. วชิร รมยะนนทน. *ลิลิตและนิราศ*. พระนคร: พิมพ์, 2517.

8. *ลิลิตพระลอ*. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 9, พระนคร: ศรีสุภา, 2507.

9. สมุทโฆษชาดก. *ปัญญาสาชดก*, เล่ม 1; พระนคร, 2467.

SKC, however, is not a mere translation of the Pali Jataka. The beginning part in the Thai Samuddaghosa story is very similar indeed to the *AKC*. Prince Samuthakhhot also goes on tour in the forest. He also spends the night in his chariot under a sacred tree, but here it is a *bo* tree. Before he goes to sleep he also prays to the spirit of the tree for protection. The *Bo* Tree Spirit thinks along the same lines as Phra Sai in *AKC*. He wants to make the prince less lonely in the night and to match him with a suitable girl. He then does the same as the Banyan Tree Spirit does for Anirut. Moreover, the prince is also recognized by his portrait painted by the girl's nurse and is also brought back to the girl by her nurse by means of magic power, as is Anirut by Phīchhitekhā, Uṣā's close attendant. The story from this point onwards is more or less similar to the Pali *Paññāsajātaka*, and quite dissimilar to the Anirut legend¹⁰.

It is at one point mentioned in *SKC* that, desiring to match Samuthakhhot with Winthumadī, the Bo Tree Spirit carries him to her, "in the same manner as the Banyan Tree Spirit carried Anirut to Uṣā"¹¹. This attests that the story of Anirut with the interpolated part was already well known at the time of the composition of this part of *SKC*. But it is not necessary that this story of Anirut is the selfsame story with the extant *AKC*.

As for the date of *AKC*, Thai tradition says that Sī Prāt, a poet of King Nārāi's court, composed *AKC* in order to compete with the *SKC* written by King Nārāi and Phra Mahārāṭchakhrū, the royal preceptor. Evidence from the Thai chronicles makes it clear that Sī Prāt did not live during King Nārāi's reign (1657-1688 A.D.) but some time after, either during the reign of King Nārāi's son or his grandson¹². Evidence from the eulogy on King Nārāi¹³ (date uncertain) makes no mention of Sī Prāt and *SKC*. Little or no weight, therefore, may be placed upon the Thai tradition.

Moreover the comparison of language and imagery in *AKC* with that of early Ayudhya works, such as, *Lilit Phra Lō*, *Mahā Chūt Kham Lūāng* and *Lilit Yūān Phōi* shows that *AKC* was composed at more or less the same time as these works. This might be during the sixteenth century¹⁴.

Why must there be an interpolation in these two stories, even when it sometimes causes awkwardness? In *SKC*, Samuthakhhot stays with Winthumadī for only a few days, then he has to be taken back to his men waiting in the forest. All this

10. สมุทรโฆษคำฉันท์, พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 8, พระนคร : คุรุสภา, 2519.

11. *Ibid.*

12. คำให้การชาวกรุงเก่า คำให้การขุนหลวงหาวัด และพระราชพงศาวดารกรุงเก่า ฉบับหลวงประเสริฐอักษรนิติ. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 2, พระนคร : คลังวิทยา, 2515.

13. ศรีมโหสถ, พระ. โคลงเฉลิมพระเกียรติสมเด็จพระนารายณ์มหาราช. พระนคร:โสภณพิพรรฒธนากร, 2467.

14. Sumalie Kieyakul, *The Ayudhya Portions of Samuthrakhhot Khamchan: A Historical Analysis and Criticism*, unpublished thesis. Chulalongkorn University. Bangkok, 1976.

happens before he comes back again to Winthumadi's city to take part in her swayamvara wedding ceremony. He there wins the competition and is married to Winthumadi as his reward¹⁵. In fact it seems that there are two incidents, one following the other, recounting the gaining of a girl by the hero in the selfsame story. In *AKC* Anirut and Uṣā are conscious when they meet each other and make love to each other. But neither of them asks who the other is. Uṣā tells Phichitlekhā, her maid and confidante, that, contrary to her expectations, Anirut has left without uttering a word to her. We can say that the Sanskrit version has better reason to explain why the identity of Anirut is a secret. No talk passes between them during their first meeting. In the Puranas, Uṣā is not quite sure whether it is in a dream or not when she meets Aniruddha.

Thus it is hard to justify the interpolation in *SKC* by claiming that it is an improvement in the original story. But the tree-spirit episode in *AKC* may have more justification. We can suggest that Phra Sai is interpolated into the story to make the character of Anirut more prominent. It is most unlikely that the reason for the interpolation is so that Phra Sai can please Kṛiṣṇa, Anirut's grandfather, by matching Anirut with Uṣā. After all, Phra Sai does not even know who Anirut is. It is only out of sympathy that Phra Sai carries Anirut to Uṣā's palace. Phra Sai thinks that Anirut, who might be either a most powerful god or a very handsome king, should not sleep alone without a girl to entertain him.

This heightens the importance of Anirut. It concords well with a later episode. When Anirut is fighting with the soldiers of Bāṇa he is praised as if he is Kṛiṣṇa himself. His valiant fighting is described at great length and with even more colour than the battle between Kṛiṣṇa and Bāṇa.

The interpolated part makes clear that the work is supposed to be the story of the renowned Anirut, and not that of Kṛiṣṇa. It is true that the fight of Kṛiṣṇa against Bāṇa, the devotee of Śiva, is a necessarily related part of the whole story. But this episode is not depicted at great length. It occupies only one fourth of the whole story. Moreover, the narrative is not composed with great care and neatness as it is in the episodes on Anirut. Some passages are repeated to fill up the story. It is more like a note to show that the Thai story of Anirut has its origin in one of the well-known stories of Kṛiṣṇa related in the Sanskrit Puranas.

But here there is a question: why should a romantic—even erotic—interlude be interpolated in stories as religious in motivation as the Anirut and Samuthakhot stories purport to be? Formerly the stories of Aniruddha and of Rāma were played by the Thai in order to eulogize the god Viṣṇu and to bring auspicious things to both the performers and the audience. That was why these two stories were regarded as sacred and religious so that only the king's troop of actors was allowed to play these two stories.

15. See footnote 10.

For the Thai audience and reader, a story which has romance as the main theme is always popular. *Lilit Phra Lū*, a great romance of a prince and his love for twin princesses, has always been highly praised until now. Early romantic and erotic poems, such as *Khlōng Thawā Thotsamat* and *Khlōng Kamsūān Sī Prāt*, through their popularity, have been closely imitated by many famous later poets.

A story which does not have love as its main theme may actually be well-known on account of its romantic passages. For example, the passage called the 'Lament to His Concubines', spoken by the Burmese crown prince in *Lilit Taleng Phūi*, a history of the battle between the Thai and the Burmese, is remembered and recited more often than the fighting scene between the two crown princes. This suggests a possible reason for the erotic interpolation in *AKC*, which, without it, would be mainly preoccupied with the long series of fights in a symbolic battle between the forces of Śiva represented by Bāṇa and Uṣā and those of Viṣṇu represented by Kriṣṇa and his grandson Anirut.

Moreover, works written in the style of a sentimental poem called *nirāt* are famous and widely read when they are about love, and separation from the object of love, but not so much when they are mere descriptions of places visited. This suggests a possible reason for the interpolation at the commencement of *SKC*, for, subsequently, after the marriage, the story is taken up almost entirely with travels in the Himavanta (in which there is more emphasis on tourism, as it were, than on the delights of a honeymoon) and with a melodramatic conclusion in which the lovers find each other after a tragic separation and arduous wanderings.

Furthermore, episodes on love and love intrigues in Thai classical plays are put on the stage more often than war episodes. For example, it is the love stories of Hanumān, not the battles between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, that have been performed and depicted on the stage most often. Many of these episodes are, in fact, also interpolations and are not found in the better-known Indian versions of the epic. For example, the 'Floating Maiden' episode contains an element of romance, for the journey back to Lanka made by Benyakāt, escorted by Hanumān, has a short scene of passion interpolated, when the monkey declares his love to her, and after persistent, ardent wooing, Benyakāt succumbs and the love match is consummated¹⁶. None of this find an equivalent in Vālmiki.

Turning to *AKC*, we can find something similar in the interpolation concerning 'Um Som' and the tree spirit. An element of fantasy, reminding us of Hanumān's fantastic adventures, enters into the story, and it is accompanied by a similar erotic sequel. It is not surprising that, for Thais as for many other peoples, a taste for mystery and romantic, may be behind the adaptations and interpolations in many traditional stories.

16. พุทธชยคพิงพำโลก, พระบาทสมเด็จพระ. *รวมแก้บทกวี*. พระนคร : คลังวัฒนธรรม, 2506, 4 เล่ม.

I.	Umā foretells Uṣā that she will see her future husband in a dream during the month of Vaiśākha.	The episode is similar to <i>V P I</i> .	Anirut hears of the forest and wants to go there.
II.	Uṣā sees Aniruddha in her dream.	Uṣā is violated by Aniruddha in her dream.	Pura Sai, the holy spirit of a banyan tree carries Anirut to Uṣā's chamber. In the morning he carries him back to his couch under the tree.
III.	Citrālekḥā, Uṣā's companion, paints the portraits of gods and all heroes including Aniruddha in order to help Uṣā identify her future husband.	This episode is similar to <i>V P III</i> .	The episode is similar to <i>V P</i> and <i>H III</i> .
IV.	Citrālekḥā, by her magic power, brings Aniruddha from Dvāravatī to Uṣā's chamber in Śonitapura.	The episode is similar to <i>V P IV</i> .	The episode is similar to <i>V P</i> and <i>H IV</i> .
V.	When Aniruddha is discovered in Uṣā's palace, King Bāṇa sends his soldiers to arrest him. Finding that Aniruddha is not easily seized, Bāṇa arrests him by using his arrow of snakes.	This episode is similar to <i>V P V</i> .	The episode is similar to <i>V P</i> and <i>H V</i> .
VI.	Sage Nārada tells Kriṣṇa of Aniruddha's fate.	The episode is similar to <i>V P VI</i> .	The episode is the same as <i>V P</i> and <i>H VI</i> .
VII.	Kriṣṇa, Baladeva and Pradyumna fight with Jvara, or Fever, created by Śiva. Fever seizes Baladeva with burning heat, but the latter is relieved by clinging to Kriṣṇa. Kriṣṇa expels Fever from his own body by a fever which he himself has created. Brahma asks him to spare Fever's life.	Kriṣṇa fights with the five Fire Gods. He kills Aṅgira who is the leader. The other Fire Gods run away. The episode is similar to <i>V P VIII</i> .	The episode is similar to <i>V P VIII</i> , but is almost identical with <i>H VII</i> and follows <i>H</i> 's order of episodes. Angkhirot (Angira) is mentioned by name here too.

VISNU PURANA
(VP)

HARIVAMSA
(H)

ANIRUT KHAM CHAN
(AKC)

VIII.	Kriṣṇa fights with the five Fire Gods and kills them. No names of the gods are mentioned.	The episode is similar to <i>V P VII</i> . But here Fever is spared due to an injunction from heaven.	The episode is similar to <i>H VIII</i> . Even the injunction from above is mentioned.
IX.	Kriṣṇa fights with Śiva and Kartikeya. Śiva succumbs to a magic arrow which causes incessant yawning and is unable to fight. Kartikeya runs away.	Kriṣṇa fights with Śiva, Kartikeya and Nandī. Brahma intervenes. He reminds Śiva that Śiva and Kriṣṇa are the same. Śiva then retires from the battle. Kotavi, the eighth part of Parvatī, asks Kriṣṇa to spare Kartikeya's life.	Kritsana fights with Isuan accompanied by Khanthakuman (Skandakumara) and Wikhanet (Vighnesa). Isuan asks Kritsana to spare Khanthakumān's life. Sages beg Isuan not to open his third eye. Whether Isuan retires from the battle or not is not mentioned.
X.	Kriṣṇa fights with Bāṇa on Nandī and cuts off all his arms even though the mystical goddess Koṭavi appears naked and asks him not to do so. Śiva asks him to spare Bāṇa's life.	Kriṣṇa fights with Bāṇa. Śiva sends Nandī to help Bāṇa. Umā appears naked and begs Kriṣṇa not to kill Bāṇa. Kriṣṇa therefore cuts off all his arms except two.	Kritsana fights with Phān (Bāṇa). He cuts off all Phān's arms except two.
XI.	The snakes that bind Aniruddha are destroyed by Garuḍa. Kriṣṇa, Baladeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Uṣā go back to Dvāravatī.	The snakes flee away at the sight of Garuḍa. Kriṣṇa installs Kumbhandha, Bāṇa's minister, upon the throne of Śoṇitapura. Kriṣṇa marries Aniruddha to Uṣā in Śoṇitapura.	The episode is similar to <i>V P XI</i> .