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 (มน/*a*) and kloang 4 (โธ/*a*/†); 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*" (พระฤดีวิหาร), the "boat *pleng*" (พระทำไม่), etc. in the central or Menam Chao Phaya 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 (หิน), 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*:

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<th>Man's voice mixed with the bitches' bark</th>
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<td>ได้ยินเสียงขวัญบ้างเสียงมา ไม่รู้จะจับมันไหม</td>
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The measure is iambic. The rhyming between the fourth and sixth words (มุ-ด้วย/with-bitch) is an internal rhyme, which is optional; while rhyming between the eighth and twelfth words (เม-ย/earl-bark) 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*): 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):

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O O O O O O O R
O O R O R O O R
O O O O O O O O R
O O O R O O O T.
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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/0 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 superb (quatrain kloang)

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

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One two three four five
Eight nine ten eleven
Hundreds, thousands, then
Billions, trillions $Ad$

Infinitum.
The *sot kloang*, consisting of sounds like *lae, na*, etc. (悤, 悤, โย, โย GetComponent) 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 angel el like thee lae (悤)
I would take thee wife wert thou virgin.

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

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

And write this in hospital
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 bridegroom, 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
The Pleiades in flight
The time is midnight
Passes on—Alone,

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 kava form, but in the early Bangkok period the glon was used in the main.

(e) Love epistles, 'nirats' (นิรัต) (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 Thienn" [บางคุณธีเรน] piece from "Nirat Narinr" [นิรัตนารินร] 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
Recalls my dear heart
Closer, with a start,
And what do I see?

บาง ขุนที่นั่น
เก็บน้ำที่นั่นแล้ว
เห็นท้ายพระจันทร์
เห็นแม่มงคลที่นั่น

Bang Khun Thien, a district
Thien, a candle whose flame
By candlelight she came
At this time of night

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" (ภราว): 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 (นางอุปปิม). King Trailok died in 1488, so "Phra Law" was written nearly a century before Shakespeare was born.

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

   (c) "Kamsuan" (คำสูง; 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 Chiangmai. It is a nira 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) "Twatosmus" (หน้าทอส์มัส; "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 Haripunchai" (นิราทหริพุ่นชา: "Journey from Chiangmai 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 (พระมหาราจกุล). But the scholar's son, Sri Praj (ศิริพร) 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):

What karma does us part
Sadness unalloyed

At the start of our joy?
Follows me where I go.
It ends with a *kloang* which rather gives the whole show away (again translated by M.R. Seni):

<>

Sad are these lines on homesick ladies
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 Kla, 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 “Rama-kien”, the masked play, and “Inao”. Beside Lertla, another of the great poets of all periods was the prince-patriarch, Paramanuit. 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 the same time. Two exceptions in this period were Narindr In and Sunthon 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" (ไก่ข้าว) 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" (คลองกอกท้อ: คลอง = "canal", โกก = "mound", ท้อ = "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.

Kok-Kham – the Tama
Young tamarinds around of Bliss – heaven bound On thy mound they dwell To Kok Tao, a canal No tortoise of the name My thoughts are for shame Wishing to thy mound

Kok-Kham – the Well
My thoughts are for shame
I found
I could return.
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 (mainly 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 Kiao. 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.

Translators from the "Lokanit Kloangs"

A swan had feathers
Which her owner sold
And then greed got hold
He defeathered nude

When new feathers grew
The swan's golden strain
The moral, it is plain
Defeather not swans

Broke? bear it, and o'en
Carve not flesh nor meat
Maintain, I repeat,
A starving tiger fends

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เกียรติพงษ์ แสงทอง

Yam laddhaṁ tena tuṭṭhabbaṁ
Hamsaṁ rajam gahetvāna
Aitlobho hi pūpako
Suvannā pariḥayati

A swan had feathers
Which her owner sold
And then greed got hold
He defeathered nude

When new feathers grew
The swan's golden strain
The moral, it is plain
Defeather not swans

Broke? bear it, and o'en
Carve not flesh nor meat
Maintain, I repeat,
A starving tiger fends
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.

(c) 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" (ตลาดกลอน). 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 commonality. 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 gloms 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:
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 Ayuthya 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 *elre 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**

\[ \text{Appaṇī vā bahum vā bhāsassu} \]
\[ \text{attheneva me athū} \]
\[ \text{kīṃ kahasi byañjanam bahum.} \]

Tell me what your Lord teaches
Tell me what He preaches
Tell me that which reaches one's heart
Mere verbosity is waste of time.
Ye Dhammā hetupabhava
tesaṅcaṣṭo nirodho ca
evam hetum tathāgato
evam vadi mahāsamano.

Whatsoever arise
He tells of their sources
How they cease He endorses
The Great Samano

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" (สามบุรี, 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 Phityalongkorn 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.

Translation:

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:

* 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.*
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*, XXV, 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 satisfying, 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 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 be of all the Rakshas, thus in solemn accents spoke:
“Truly speaks the wise Bibishan; ere be 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 foe.
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.
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 transla-
tions 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.

Translators 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 back 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.’

FitzGerald’s quatrain contains 40 syllables, with one line left
floating about unrhymed. The Prince used the very taut kloang superb
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 bunting 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

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.
The Swan said to Damayanti

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.
ข้อที่ 1

การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ

การเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ มันไม่ได้รับการพัฒนาอย่างเป็นรูปแบบที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยามที่มีความหมายเชิงบวกถึงการเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพ การศึกษาเรียนรู้ที่มีคุณภาพมีความหมายในเชิงการสร้างนิยม
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. Indeed, 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 *klaang* 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
My lips cannot repeat
The tongue's indiscreet
With but a word or sigh

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

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.
These kloangs are In Mem-
In accord with Siam's
Can't think what I am
Life is transition
Opas was still young
At twenty-five came
He yet had his name
He breathed his last breath

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

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:

ข้ารู้สึกเหมือนใจที่ ปกครอง ชรา
ตามพรหมีไทย
ไม่รู้จะว่าอะไร
บรรดาทุกข์

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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:

A poet's pen's not a Sheaffer
Neither an Ever-
Nor a numbered Parker-
Use anything when
Merr' Xmas, New Year

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—
Hundred years ago born
Long dead but not gone
His poems still blow

longkorn
and now
for good
like a fresh breeze.

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
J'écris un petit mot
Avec respect et ado-
Pour le centenaire

These words of mine are
Because I was born
Granddad died, long gone
He just did not wait

fait beau
en vers
ration
de mon grand'père.

forlorn
too late
from us
to teach me things.
Le plus génial des hommes
de lettres
His works are still warm
with wit
He was my dad's dad
Prince de poésie

Sam Krung ("Three Capitals")
Thai verses by H.H. Prince Bidya,
French translation by M.R. Yenta Rajani

ยอดนิยมประจำคู่
มีความหมายความหมาย
ฉ้ออบพร้อมความหมาย
เพราะพระองค์ทรงหมาย

พระพจน์นมผิดมาแต่
สรรเสริญสวัสดิ์โคตร
ราชพระפיתโร
ยืดเยื้อมา

คำแนะนำพระเจ้า
cการมีความกล้า
殿堂เป็นตัว
ไทรงามแล้ว

ถ้วยภูมิใจให้
บวชรากรในกระดาษ
ผู้ยิ้มยิ้มอยู่ร่วมกัน
ทรงนั่นแก้วเจ้า

ยอดนิยมประจำคู่ รัช

ยอดนิยมประจำคู่ รัช
Moi, dans ma jeunesse
Fonctionnaire sous Ra-
En suivant mes pas
Peu à peu, sans crainte,

... 

Plus tard arrive l'oc-
D'une grande promotion
Ma satisfaction
Department. En bref

... 

Devant l'assemblée
Un jour le roi parle
Que je change pas mal
'Bien fait, c'est taifauta

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.

This old ditty was used by the author to illustrate the *gion 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]
REVIEW ARTICLE

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."

\[\textit{pho: phlad phlad paj ko caj tae:g}\]

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. \textit{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."

\[\textit{thae:b ca plaeg maj ru:cag caw kho:ng}\]

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."

\[\textit{bun phi no:j mi daj ruam caw khun tho:ng daj prakhong khang kan thawnan-oei.}\]

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 Chiangmai
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.

Come up North

Come up North, where the mountains high
Stand on guard over old Chiangmai
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.
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 1923 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.
Have these nymphs made mistakes in their dancing?
I pray thee, Lord, make known thy displeasure.

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.

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.
"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 lotuses 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.

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:

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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.

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.

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.
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:

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...
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.

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?

อ่ ฮารีนุ่มนิมนต์
อ่ ฮารีนุ่มนิมนต์
นิมนต์
นิมนต์

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

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.

Grieve me not by such
Ha, hunter, sparing arrow
If shot I’m t’be now
Hurts much this mockery

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.

Make not such naughty eye
Gaze not such bizarre
If love’s what you are
Here I’m, take not fright,

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

Oho! Bunny loves
It will fall so soon
As bees’ swarm will cool
Such love fancy flight,

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

Ah! How foolish
Reaching far out there
Say I, who would dare
Ah, as if you might
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:

Mother Earth! Be my 1-by Archarn* nonetheless
If I have sinned—Yes,
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.

* 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 k/oang 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 k/oang suparb form.

Shall I leave thee with
Indr' would swoop thee high
Leave with the earth? Why
Earth Lord's, O my love,

Leave with the waters?
Naga would I vow
'Tis fit, I allow,
Thee with thee—thy stake

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".
Charlee, thou boat-load of slime
Thee—thine 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
My mother's Mathri Charlee
My father's Phra Sri Princess
Grandfather's no less Vessan- dorn na
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.)

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't hare
Low station unaware of self
Peacock cock’tb 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
to gaze
High, high, doth he dare 'tis spring
Creatures are aware we both belong.
Blame me not my daze
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.

True my every vow to thee
As a jewel would be,
Come, love, share with me
Come, believe me, try

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.
Such a sight was one
Seeing what was done
I hurried home and shoved

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 you 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.

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 jure au suprême*  
*Je jure par Dieu même*  
*Je jure, p’tit poulet,*  

Je jure  
je t’aime  
degré  
par Diable  
je n’aime que toi.

I drew thy likeness  
Vihara, sala, hall  
Seraphims, short ‘n’ tall,  
They like’t, they stole it

filled wall  
’s whole writ  
they looked  
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.)

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—
Duck, Mushrooms, Fish, Shell—
Prawns, Curry, Stew—Well
Onions and Garlic—
Sweet smell!
fish, Chick,
yum-yum:
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 Frühjahr (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 Kambeng’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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The following exchange 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. 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.

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 *Klungs of the Ancient Poets* (*Klungs 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 *Some aspects of literature*, printed in *Kam Suan Sripread-Nirat Narin, Phrae Phitya: 2502* P. ja 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.

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 contempla-
tion; 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 ten pleng is usually performed in the glon form, on this
occasion the more sophisticated kloang 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:

4. The kloang form:

\[
\begin{align*}
O & O O O O & O a (O O) \\
O & O O O a & O b \\
O & O O O a & O O (O O) \\
O & O O O b & O O O O
\end{align*}
\]

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.
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:

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:

Ma'am, I've looked you up and down:
Not too short, I've found,
Slim your figure, round
Just one flaw, that's all:

The Queen retaliates vehemently:

Just one more thing:
I'm not so tall;
Your waist is too small.
You bucket of slime,
Your mother’s a free
Your father, Old Sri
While you’re kept around but
Chaali,
old slut
sells charcoal—ugh!
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:

No, you’ve got the wrong
My mother’s Mathri,
Father is Phra Sri
While Grandpa’s no less
Chaali,
a princess.
Vessantara,
then King Sanchai.

The King retains his complimentary tone:

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:

This splendor! The sun’s bright light?
No sun sears my sight
Vishnu! Am I right?
Not quite—King Narai

has come calling.
King Narai:

This glamor! The moon's fair face?
No, that's not the case at all.
Such celestial grace! 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.

5) This line is ambiguous. Absorn (อาสน) a celestial being, is sometimes pronounced Aksorn (เอกซ์) 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 "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 temperamental, 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 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.)
This exchange is like a race:
Samatchai, sets a pace
Soramuk gives chase
Neither first nor last—

Thewi:

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:

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:

The exchange is like
Samatchai, sets a pace
Soramuk gives chase
Neither first nor last—
The rabbit leaps moonward
Foolish, don't you know
The peacock wants to go
But it's, oh, so base

Ho Ho! Ha Ha!
your place?
to the clouds
an animal.

Sri Praad is not to be discouraged:

The rabbit leaps moonward
For all he can see,
Animals all, we
Don't think you're so high—

with glee—Heigh Ho!
to the sky.
were meant to mate.
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.