THAI INTERPOLATIONS IN THE STORY OF ANIRUDDHA

by

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. [_scripteography]. อธิบายตัวอักษร. พระนคร: ติเต้หงษ์, 2503.
his portrait and let her maid see it and then go in search of him. The recognition of a man by means of a painting is similar to the story of Aniruddha in the Puranas. But the role of a tree spirit is new. Whether the spirit in the Daśakumāracarita has any influence on that in AKC or not cannot be proved, but the similarity is still very striking.

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

In AKC the name of the tree spirit is not given. But in a Buddhist work called Samuthakhot Kham Chan (SKC) its name is Si Phromarak (Sanskrit: Śrī Brahmārakṣa).

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

An episode of matchmaking brought about by a tree spirit is also found in SKC. What is surprising is that this is the story of a Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva's story, in his birth as Prince Samuddaghosa, is also told in a non-canonical Pali book of Jatakas called Pāññāsajātaka. It has nothing at all to do with a tree spirit or 'Um Som'. In the Pali Jataka tale the prince hears of a beautiful princess. He desires very much to have her as his wife. He goes to her city, displays his skill in music, and is allowed to marry the princess.
SKC, however, is not a mere translation of the Pali Jataka. The beginning part in the Thai Samuddaghosa story is very similar indeed to the AKC. Prince Samuthakhot also goes on tour in the forest. He also spends the night in his chariot under a sacred tree, but here it is a bo tree. Before he goes to sleep he also prays to the spirit of the tree for protection. The Bo Tree Spirit thinks along the same lines as Phra Sai in AKC. He wants to make the prince less lonely in the night and to match him with a suitable girl. He then does the same as the Banyan Tree Spirit does for Anirut. Moreover, the prince is also recognized by his portrait painted by the girl's nurse and is also brought back to the girl by her nurse by means of magic power, as is Anirut by Phiñhitlekhā, Uśa's close attendant. The story from this point onwards is more or less similar to the Pali Paññāsajātaka, and quite dissimilar to the Anirut legend.

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

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

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

Why must there be an interpolation in these two stories, even when it sometimes causes awkwardness? In SKC, Samuthakhot stays with Winthumadī for only a few days, then he has to be taken back to his men waiting in the forest. All this...
happens before he comes back again to Winthumadi's city to take part in her swayamvara wedding ceremony. He there wins the competition and is married to Winthumadi as his reward. In fact it seems that there are two incidents, one following the other, recounting the gaining of a girl by the hero in the selfsame story. In AKC Anirut and Usā are conscious when they meet each other and make love to each other. But neither of them asks who the other is. Usā tells Phichitalekha, her maid and confidante, that, contrary to her expectations, Anirut has left without uttering a word to her. We can say that the Sanskrit version has better reason to explain why the identity of Anirut is a secret. No talk passes between them during their first meeting. In the Puranas, Usā is not quite sure whether it is in a dream or not when she meets Aniruddha.

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

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

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

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

15. See footnote 10.
For the Thai audience and reader, a story which has romance as the main theme is always popular. *Lilit Phra Lu* (a great romance of a prince and his love for twin princesses), has always been highly praised until now. Early romantic and erotic poems, such as, *Khlong Thawon Thotsaman* and *Khlong Kamsuan Si Prat*, through their popularity, have been closely imitated by many famous later poets.

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

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

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

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

16. พุทธะกิจจานุกูล, พระบรมสมเด็จพระ. วามภิภิวัช. พระชนก : 춧ั่วทรักษ์, 2508, 4 เล่ม.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISNU PURANA (VP)</th>
<th>HARIVAMSA (H)</th>
<th>ANIRUT KHAM CHAN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Umi forecasts Usā that she will see her future husband in a dream during the month of Vaśiśkha.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP I.</td>
<td>Anurut hears of the forest and wants to go there.</td>
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<td>II. Usā sees Aniruddha in her dream.</td>
<td>Usā is violated by Aniruddha in her dream.</td>
<td>Pīra Saśi, the holy spirit of a banyan tree carries Anurut to Usā's chamber. In the morning he carries him back to his couch under the tree.</td>
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<td>III. Citralekhā, Usā's companion, paints the portraits of gods and all heroes including Aniruddha in order to help Usā identify her future husband.</td>
<td>This episode is similar to VP III.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP and H III.</td>
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<td>IV. Citralekhā, by her magic power, brings Aniruddha from Dvāravatī to Usā's chamber in Śrīmāta.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP IV.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP IV.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. When Aniruddha is discovered in Usā's palace, King Bāla sends his soldiers to arrest him. Finding that Aniruddha is not easily seized, Bāla arrests him by using his arrow of snakes.</td>
<td>This episode is similar to VP V.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP and H V.</td>
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<td>VI. Sage Nārada tells Kṛṣṇa of Aniruddha's fate.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP VI.</td>
<td>The episode is the same as VP and H VI.</td>
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<td>VII. Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and Pradyumna fight with Jvara, or Fever, created by Śiva. Fever seizes Baladeva with burning heat, but the latter is relieved by clinging to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa expels Fever from his own body by a fever which he himself has created. Brahma asks him to spare Fever's life.</td>
<td>Kṛṣṇa fights with the five Fire Gods. He kills Angira who is the leader. The other Fire Gods run away. The episode is similar to VP VIII.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP VIII, but is almost identical with H VII and follows H's order of episodes. Angkirot (Angira) is mentioned by name here too.</td>
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<td>VISNU PURANA</td>
<td>HARIVAMSA</td>
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<td>VIII</td>
<td>Krishna fights with the five Fire Gods and kills them. No names of the gods are mentioned.</td>
<td>The episode is similar to VP VII. But here fewer is spared due to injunction from heaven.</td>
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<td>IX</td>
<td>Krishna fights with Siva and Kartikeya. Siva succumbs to a magic arrow which causes incessant yawning and is unable to fight. Kartikeya runs away.</td>
<td>Krishna fights with Siva, Kartikeya and Nandi. Brahma intervenes. He reminds Siva that Siva and Krishna are the same. Siva then retires from the battle. Kotavi, the eighth part of Parvati, asks Krishna to spare Kartikeya's life.</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Krishna fights with Bāṇa on Nandi and cuts off all his arms even though the mystical goddess Kotavi appears naked and asks him not to do so. Siva asks him to spare Bāṇa's life.</td>
<td>Krishna fights with Bāṇa. Siva sends Nandi to help Bāṇa. Umā appears naked and begs Krishna not to kill Bāṇa. Krishna therefore cuts off all his arms except two.</td>
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<td>XI</td>
<td>The snakes that bind Aniruddha are destroyed by Garuda. Krishna installs Kumbhandha, Bāṇa's minister, upon the throne of Soṇitapura. Krishna marries Aniruddha to Usā in Soṇitapura.</td>
<td>The snakes flee away at the sight of Garuda. Krishna installs Kumbhandha, Bāṇa's minister, upon the throne of Soṇitapura. Krishna marries Aniruddha to Usā in Soṇitapura.</td>
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