

TALES OF THE NORTHEAST

THE GIRL WHO WEAVES SILK AT NIGHT [Mahasarakham]

Nang Yai village is on the edge of the town of Mahasarakham. A canal flows through the village, and in one place there is a pool in the canal. The pool is also named Nang Yai. The people in the village tell this story of how their village and the pool got their names.

Many years ago before there was a village, two families lived on the edge of the canal. Both families were very small. In the first family there were only a mother and her son named Jum. In the second family there were only a father and his daughter named Yai. The two families were rice farmers. They worked together because they were good neighbors. When they were old enough, Jum and Yai were married.

Jum and Yai were very happy together, and they built a new house on the canal between the houses of their parents. One day Jum had to go to Khonkaen on some business. Before he left, he told Yai, "I will be gone for several days. If you need help, my mother will be glad to help you."

Yai replied, "Thank you, Jum, but I do not think I will need any help."

But Jum was not sure, so he told his mother, "While I am gone, will you make sure Yai is all right? She is young, and she should not be alone." Then Jum said the same thing to Yai's father.

That night Jum's mother heard a noise coming from Jum's house. She looked out of her window and saw a light coming from Yai's room. The noise was coming from Yai's house too. Jum's mother wondered what Yai was doing, and the next morning she asked Yai, "What did you do last night, Yai?"

Yai replied , "I did not do anything." Jum's mother did not believe her but she could not say anything.

The next night and on every night that followed, Jum's mother saw the light and heard the noise coming from Jum's house. Every morning she asked the same question, "What did you do last night, Yai?" And every morning Yai gave the same reply, "I did not do anything."

Jum's mother did not know why Yai was lying to her. So the last night before Jum returned, she went over to Jum's house and looked through a hole in the wall into Yai's room. She saw Yai sitting in the middle of the room. There was a loom in the room, and Yai was weaving silk. She used her hand to pull the new silk thread from her mouth! Jum's mother was very surprised when she saw Yai pulling the thread from her mouth. She could not believe it, so she looked again. The silk was not ordinary, it was silver and gold! when Jum's mother saw that, she shouted, "Oh! Yai what are you doing?"

Suddenly, Yai's room was completely dark, and the noise had stopped. Jum's mother could not make Yai come out of her room, and so she returned to her home. She decided Yai must be a witch.

When Jum returned, his mother told him what she had seen: "Every night there was a light in Yai's room, but when I asked her why, she would not tell me. Last night I went to your house and I saw Yai weaving. She was weaving silk, but the thread did not come off a spool, it came out of her mouth and it was silver and gold. . . Jum, you must be very careful, Yai is a witch."

Jum did not know whether to believe his mother or not, so he quickly returned home. He looked under his house for the loom. It was not there, but that was where the loom had always been. He went into his house and looked into Yai's room. Yai was not there, but part of her loom was. Jum began to wonder, "Can it be that Yai is really a witch? How will I find out?"

When Yai returned home, Jum asked her, "Yai, what did you do each night?"

Yai would not answer Jum, she looked angrily him. Jum thought, "Now I believe my mother, Yai is a witch." So he said, "Yai, you cannot live in this house anymore. You will not answer my questions and you have lied to my mother. Leave, I never want to see you again."

Yai was very sad, but she did not cry. She walked out of the house slowly, and all day long she walked about the town. She would not talk to anyone, not even her father. That evening she went to the pool in the canal. She jumped into it and drowned.

When her father heard this he told Jum, "You have killed my daughter. You would not trust her, you believed your mother more than your wife. Yai was

faithful to you, but you were not faithful to her. And now she is dead." Then Yai's father left; no one ever saw him again.

Jum returned to his house, he was very sad. He looked for Yai's loom but it was entirely gone. He could not find it anywhere. He thought, "If Yai was weaving, there will be some cloth somewhere," but he could not find any. Jum was very lonely and worried. He did not know if Yai was a witch or not. He could not work anymore, he walked around the village all the time. Even at night he did not stop walking.

One moonlit night Jum walked by the pool where Yai had drowned. He looked into the water, and it looked as if Yai were weaving in the pool. Jum ran to get his neighbors, and when they looked into the pool, they saw the same thing.

Nobody knew what to believe. Every moonlit night, however, they could see Yai weaving in the pool; but at day, there was nothing in the pool but water and a few fish. Jum changed after that. Now he was happy and he did not worry anymore. He became a wealthy farmer, and many years later he told his children the sad story of his first wife.

So the pool was named after Yai, it is called Yai's Pool (or in Thai: Gud Nang Yai), and the village was named Yai too (or in Thai: Ban Nang Yai). Today if you go to the pool on a moonlit night, you can see Yai weaving too. Well, what do you think Yai really was? Jum knew, but he never told anyone, not even his children.

THE TEMPLE OF RESPECT

[Nakhorn Phanom]

The Temple of Tat Phanom is the Most Important Temple in the Northeast, and it is one of the most important temples in Thailand. Much of this story is only legend, so no one knows how old it really is.

A.

Hundreds of years ago, before there were any great countries, each city was its own nation. Sometimes, one city would have a powerful king, and it would rule over three or four other cities. Sometimes none of the cities would be able to rule over any other. Often groups of cities would work together. They would help protect each other from enemies, and they would sell things to each other. It is in this way that the Temple of Tat Phanom was first begun.

Once upon a time there were four kings. Their cities were near the Mekhong River. Sometimes one king would be more powerful than the others, sometime no one was more powerful than any other. The four kings came together for a meeting.

The King of Chenlaue Prommatat said, "My city needs rice, but we have many other products which we can trade for rice."

The King of Kam Dang replied, "I have rice, but how can I trust you? Many years ago your people tried to destroy my city. My people would be angry I agreed to sell rice to you.

The King of Nanta Sen agreed with the King of Kam Dang, "We must find a way of showing all of our people that we are friends, and that we want them to be friendly too, what can we do?"

"I have an idea," the King of Intarapart Nakorn said. "Let us build a temple. Each person will build one fourth of it. This will show our people that we can work together. If we can work together, then our people know that they can be friendly with each other."

So they agreed to make a temple showing their friendship. They looked for many months for a good place to build their new temple. And after a while they had a meeting again. The King of Intarapart Nakorn said, "I have found the exact place. It is on top of a small mountain. Let us all go and look at this place."

The four kings went with the King of Intarapart Nakorn to the Mountain Which Has No Parents, for that was the mountain's name (or in Thai: *Phu Kam Pra*), it was covered with forests. The four kings looked at the mountain and they saw that it was suitable for their temple; so they said, "It is agreed. We will build our temple here."

The King of Nanta Sen built the northern wall of the temple because his city was to the north. The King of Chenlaue Prommatat build the eastern wall because his city was to the east. The King of Intarapart Nakorn built the southern for the same reason, and the King of Kam Dang, who build the western wall, did so for the same reason.

Their temple looked like a cave. When it was finished each king brought many jewels and a lot of gold and money to put into their new temple. Everyone said, "Now we know we can work together, for we have build the temple together. Our gifts will show that we that we can trust each other

also." When all the gifts were brought, the temple door was closed and sealed. The kings were very happy and proud of their work.

B.

Buddhist scriptures tell us that when the Buddha died, the priests took pieces of his bones and carried them throughout Asia. Each piece of bone , called a "relic," was put in a temple. The relic was to remind people in that area of their faith in the teachings of the Buddha.

The Buddhist scriptures tell us that one of these priests (Pra Maha Katsapa) took the breast bone of the Buddha with him to Northeastern Thailand. He wanted to build a temple in this part of the world which would be a great center of Buddhism. As this priest wandered through the Northeast, he came to the Mountain Which Has No Parents. "This is the place where I will build my temple. These Kings are Buddhist, and if they will cooperate to build their own temple, I know that they will cooperate to build my temple."

So the priest went to each of the four kings. He showed them his relic and he said, "I have seen your temple on the Mountain Which Has No Parents. I want you to help build my temple there too." Each of the kings was very happy when he learned of the priest's plan, and they all agreed immediately.

They decided to build the temple to hold the relic on top of their temple of friendship. they built a tower on top of their cave-like temple, and in the middle of their tower they placed the relic of the Buddha.

C.

Very soon the temple became famous throughout all of their cities, and many people came to worship there. But the temple did not have a name, and most people thought it was not good to call it the Temple on the Mountain Which Has No Parents. That sounded strange.

After a while the people found a name for the temple. Because it was very holy, many people came to pay their respects there. When they came, they prayed in the Buddhist manner, and first they bowed their hands (or in Thai: *phanom*). Gradually, the temple received the name, The Temple of Respect, (or in Thai: *Pratat Phanom*), because many people prayed there. And it was that name until today. The town in which the temple is is called by the same name, and the province is called the City of Respect (or in Thai: *Nakorn Phanom*).

But all of this is only legend, for there is no history from the early times. Many years later people began to write down the history of the temple, and so for the building of the temple we have to believe the stories about it.

FOUR FOOTPRINTS OF FOUR BUDDHAS

[Sakol Nakorn]

In Sakol Nakorn there is a famous temple. It looks like the Temple of Respect in Tat Phanom, except that it is smaller. This temple is named the Temple of the Four Footprints (or in Thai: *Pratat Cheang Chum*). Here is the story telling why it was built and how it got its name.

One King of Intarapart Nakorn had helped build the Temple of Respect. People today believe that the city of Intarapart was in the province of Sakol

Nakorn. But they do not know where it was.

Another king of Intarapart Nakorn, named Sura Utaga, had two sons, named Suvana Pingka and Kum Daeng. One day Sura Utaga told his sons, "You are now old enough to leave my home. I would like both of you to build new cities.

Kum Daeng built his city where the town of Kumpawapee is today. And Suvana Pingka built his city near the shores of Harn Lake. He built his city on the Mountain Under Which Water Flows (or in Thai: Phu Nam Lod).

A.

The people of Suvana Pingka's town tell this story:

Once the Buddha came to the shores of the Harn Lake. He had been told that the lake was very beautiful and peaceful. The Buddha also wanted to teach the people in this town. So he decided to stop there. The Buddha came to Harn Lake and he saw the town. Then he stopped to teach Suvana Pingka.

One day the people found some footprints on the mountain. They were very surprised to find the footprints, because they were in stone, not sand. So they went to Suvana Pingka and told him what they had seen.

Suvana Pingka went to see the footprints; he was amazed and he thought "This is very strange. I must ask my teacher about this." So Suvana Pingka went to the Buddha and said, "Today some people have found four footprints. They are in a stone. They do not know how they got there nor do I. But I wondered if they might be yours.

The Buddha looked at Suvana Pingka and replied, "Only one of the footprints is mine. The others belong to the three enlightened men (in English we say Buddha -- in Thai it is phu ta) who came before me. One footprint belongs to Kukusundho (the first enlightened man); another belongs to Konokamano (the second enlightened man); and another belongs to Kasapa (the third enlightened man). The fourth is mine because I am the fourth enlightened man in this world. They are to remind your people of the past history of the world, and also of the future of the world. For, before the fifth enlightened man, Sriaryamethai, can come, this world must be destroyed."

Suvana Pingka was impressed when he knew this. He wanted to tell everyone his knowledge. After the Buddha had left, he built a temple over the footprints. That is why it is called the Temple of the Four Footprints.

B.

Some people say that a serpent lives under the temple in the mountain. They say it lives in the water, and that sometimes it swims from its home in the mountain to Harn Lake. If you are lucky, you can see the serpent in the lake.

There is also a deep well near the temple. People say that if you drop a bucket into the well, you will not be able to get it out again. But, maybe, you will find it several days later floating in Harn Lake. This shows that the water from the mountain flows into the lake, and that the serpent, who protects the temple, could leave his home and go to the lake without coming up on land.

TWO ADVENTURES OF YAI

[Loey]

In the Province of Loey, the people tell stories about a great hunter named Yai. They say that Yai was born in the town of Nakorn Chumpasak in Laos, but that Yai moved to Thailand and lived in Loey most of his life. Yai was a great hero and he did many famous deeds. Once he saved a village from spirits, and once he discovered a beautiful and strange mountain.

YAI AND THE SPIRITS

When Yai moved to Loey he wanted to find a place to be his home. Finally, he came to a small village which is now called Na Pee Ton. Yai gave the village that name, this is why he chose that name.

One day some of the people in his village came running to Yai. "Help us, help us!," they cried, "our rice crops have been destroyed."

Yai asked them what was wrong, and they said, "Yesterday when we worked in the fields, our rice was all growing. Today, when we returned to work again, we saw that the best rice had been destroyed. It looked like someone pulled the rice out of the ground. What can we do?"

Yai was very surprised when he heard this story. He did not know what to say. He thought for several minutes, and then he said, "I do not know what to do, but if someone is destroying the rice, we must find out who that person is. Someone will have to stay in the rice fields all of the time."

When he sees the person who comes to destroy the rice, he can return to the village. Then all of us can go out and help catch the bad man."

Every night several men went out into the fields to watch. But they could not see anything because there was no moon. And every night more of their rice was destroyed. They were very upset, but Yai said, "You must be patient. Soon there will be a full moon, and then we can see who is doing this to your rice."

On the night of the full moon every man in the village went to the rice fields. Then they saw something very strange. The rice was being pulled out of the ground, but no one was pulling it. "What is happening," the people asked.

Yai said, "It must be evil spirits; wait for a minute, and then we will all shout together. Maybe that will frighten them away."

When Yai told them, they all shouted. Suddenly, the rice stopped being pulled out of the ground. It was very strange, but the spirits had gone away. They did not return. When he was sure the spirits would not return, Yai said, "Let's call our town, Where the Spirits Pulled Up The Rice," and that is the name of the town until today.

YAI DISCOVERS A MOUNTAIN

Yai was a hunter, not a farmer. He would spend many days in the forest hunting for food. One day he shot a deer. He was sure the deer would die, and he followed the wounded animal. But the deer did not die, it kept going on and on. Finally, it stopped on some flat ground. Yai was very tired.

He had been following the deer for many hours. He looked around him, now he was on the top of a mountain.

As he looked at the deer on the top of the mountain, Yai saw an amazing thing. There were many more deer near the one he had wounded. And the deer he had shot, now was not wounded at all. The deer were not afraid of Yai, they came around him. Yai thought, "This is very strange, these deer must be holy, I will not shoot them."

It was late in the afternoon, and Yai was tired. He thought, "I must get to the bottom of the mountain before night comes." He walked around and around, but he could not find the path down the mountain. He noticed that the top was flat and wide; "This is a very unusual mountain," he thought.

Yai was very worried now. "I cannot stay here all night. What will I do?" He tried to find the deer but they were all gone. Just as he was about to give up looking for them, he saw one coming down the side of the mountain. "That must be their path," he thought, and he followed the deer. The path took him down the side of the mountain.

When he got to the bottom of the mountain, he looked for the deer again, but they were gone and he never saw them again. He looked back at the mountain, "That mountain looks just like a bell," he said; and from that day the mountain has been called Bell Mountain.

ANOTHER STORY ABOUT BELL MOUNTAIN

Some people in Loey do not believe the story about

Yai; they tell a different story about Bell Mountain. Here is their story.

When the first people came to Loey, they noticed the big mountain. It looked like a bell. And on the Buddhist holy days it sounded like a giant bell was being rung on the top of the mountain. The people named the mountain, the Bell, because it looked and sounded like a bell.

Since then the bell has been lost. No one ever saw it, they only heard it; but now the bell cannot be heard either. Some people say that the bell grew with the mountain and that it was holy. They believe that someone climbed up the mountain to find the bell, and that the god destroyed the bell so that that person could not find it. So today, if you go to Loey you can see Bell Mountain but you cannot hear its bell ring.

TOUR TO
[Udorn]

Sometimes the same story is told in different ways. Here are two stories about how a valley and a waterfall in Nong Bualampoo district of Udorn province got their names. The stories are both about the same man, but they are different. One story is told by women, and the other story is told by men.

Once upon a time in the province of Udorn, there was a small village. The people there were rice farmers. When they did not have to work, they liked to walk to the mountains to see the beautiful scenery.

One day one of the old men in the village, Tour To, and some of the young women took a walk to the mountains. It was a beautiful day, and they were going on a picnic. Finally they came to a deep valley with a waterfall at one end of it. The women said to Tour To, "If you climb down to the bottom of the valley and bring us a small rock from the stream, we will marry you."

Tour To was very happy. Even though he was old, he knew that the young women were beautiful. His wife was dead, and he thought, "Now I will have many beautiful wives." So he agreed.

The women thought, "Now we will get rid of this foolish old man. He will surely die trying to climb down the steep cliffs of the valley." They watched Tour To go to the edge of the cliff. They saw him start to go down, and they heard him slip on the rocks and scream. They said, "Tour To has fallen, he is dying. We must go tell everyone." So they ran back to the village.

But Tour To was not dead. It is true that he had fallen, and that he had screamed; but before he had fallen to the bottom of the valley, he landed in the branches of a big bamboo tree. His lie was saved. He was frightened, but unhurt. He said, "I am still alive, I still have a chance to marry the women."

So he climbed out of the bamboo tree, and he went to get a little rock from the stream. Then he thought, "Even if I have the rock, they will not agree to marry me, they will say I did not go down to the bottom of the valley. They will say I picked it from the side of the cliff." So he cut a big branch of the bamboo tree which he had fallen

into, and he started to climb up the walls of the valley.

It was very hard to climb the wall of the valley because he was carrying a rock and a branch of the bamboo tree. At last, after several hours, he did it. When he got to the top, he saw many people there. they were all crying "Old Tour To is dead, he has fallen into the deep valley."

"I am not either dead!" he said. "I am alive, and I am going to marry the young women."

"But," they said, "you did not really go to the bottom of the valley."

"Yes I did, and I can prove it," he replied. Then he showed them the rock and the branch. "If you do not believe me, you can go down into the valley and see the tree which I cut the branch from." Then everyone believed him, and they made the young women marry Tour To. He was very happy the rest of his life. And from that day, the valley and the waterfall have been named for the lucky Tour To.

Many years ago there was a very small village on the edge of the forest. All of its people were hunters. They would go into the forest and the nearby mountains to find their food. Sometimes they would travel very far , and they would stay away from their village for several days. Sometimes, if they went far enough, they would come to a deep valley which had a beautiful waterfall. When they were thirsty they would drink from the

clear, cold water, and they would rest near the waterfall. It was quiet and peaceful there, and the hunters liked to go to the valley.

One day, one of the hunters named Tour To was in the forest alone. He saw a beautiful deer. He followed the deer for several hours. The deer ran toward the mountains, and then down into the valley. Finally, Tour To was close enough to the deer to shoot it. When he shot it, he thought, "Now the deer will die and I can take it back to my village. Everyone will be proud of me." But the deer did not die.

"It ran to the waterfall and died there. Tour To looked for his deer. He thought, "It must have died by this time, when I find it, I will take it back to my village." At last he found it dead by the waterfall. He started to carry it out of the valley. After he had taken three or four steps, he fell down for it was a very big and heavy deer.

"I cannot carry this deer," he thought, "it is too heavy. I will have to have some help." Tour To wondered how he could find someone to help him. He did not think that anyone would be in the valley. Very few people ever went there. So Tour To sat down on a big rock to think what he should do. He heard something, it sounded like someone singing. Tour To was very surprised. "The song is very beautiful," he thought, and he ran to the place where the singing was coming from.

There was a pool in the stream. In the pool a beautiful girl was swimming and as she swam she sang her song. When Tour To saw her, he fell in love. And he said, "Beautiful maiden, I have just met you, but I love you and want to marry you. If

you will help me carry a deer I have shot, I will take you to my village and marry you."

The young woman looked at Tour To. She saw he was very handsome and strong. She said, "If you want to marry me, and if you want me to help you, you must first jump in this pool and swim with me."

Tour To forgot he could not swim. All he thought of was this beautiful woman. So he jumped into the water. The water was very cold and very deep, and he drowned immediately. As soon as Tour To died, the beautiful girl turned into the deer Tour To had just shot and it ran into the forest again.

When the people of his village heard about Tour To's death, they were very sad. So they named the valley and the waterfall after the unlucky Tour To.

Now that you have read both stories, can you guess which story men like to tell, and which story women like to tell? Which story do you believe?

THE BROTHER RETURNS

[Korat]

In the Province of Korat there is a famous town named Pimai. The temple in Pimai is one of the most beautiful in Thailand. It was built by the Cambodians before they built Angkor Wat. The craftsmen who built Prasat Hinpimai, later built Angkor Wat. But this is not the story of how the temple was built, it is the story of how Pimai got its name.

A.

One of the Kings of Cambodia was Suryavarman II. His kingdom was very big, and it included much of northeastern Thailand. King Suryavarman had a son named Tao Prajet. He was a handsome young man, and he wanted to find a wife.

One day Tao Prajet said to his father, "I am old enough to be married. I want to travel throughout the kingdom to find my wife." His father agreed with him, and Tao Prajet left the palace in the capital of Angkor Thom. He travelled for many months.

Tao Prajet was very tired of traveling, but he had not yet found his wife. Finally he came to the part of his father's kingdom which is now Thailand. At a small village, called Sumrit, he saw an old woman. Tao Prajet saw that the woman was going to have a baby. He thought, "She is old, and she will need help. Perhaps I can become her servant."

Tao Prajet asked, "What is your name?"

"I am called Grandmother Bua," the old woman replied.

Tao Prajet did not want to tell anyone who he was, and so he said, "I am a poor traveller, I do not have any money, but I am strong. If you need someone to cut wood or to take care of the rice plants for you, I can do it."

"Well, I could use a servant," Bua answered. So Tao Prajet agreed to be her servant. He did not tell anyone who he was. Every one thought he was a very poor man.

B.

When Bua's baby was born, it was a girl. She was named Orapin. Tao Prejet helped Bua look after the baby. He stayed for many years as Bua's servant. He was like a brother to Orapin. And because no one knew his name, they called him Pi, or brother.

When Orapin became a young lady, she was very beautiful. All of the young men wanted to marry her. Tao Prajet also fell in love with Orapin. He wanted to marry her, but he had to have his father's approval first. So Tao Prajet left Bua's house one day. He did not tell anyone where he was going or why he was going.

King Suryavarman was very glad to see his son again after many years. He thought that his son was dead. Tao Prajet told his father how he had travelled to many places in his kingdom without finding a wife. He told his father how he had been a servant to Grandmother Bua for many years. He told his father of Bua's daughter, Orapin. And then he said, "Orapin is very beautiful. I want to marry her."

The King did not know what to do. He had never seen Orapin. She was not the daughter of a prince or a princess. But Tao Prajet said he loved only Orapin. Finally, the King agreed, and he said, "If you want to marry Orapin, we must take some presents to her. We will all go to visit her in the town of Sumrit." So the king, the queen, Tao Prajet, and many relatives set out for Bua's house.

C.

When Tao Prajet left Bua's house, Orapin and Bua were very sad. They both loved him very much. Bua said, "Pi would have been a good husband for you, Orapin, but he is gone. We will have to find

another man to be your husband."

One day a man named Prommatud came to Bua's house. He was a rich and powerful man. He said to Bua, "You are very poor, and I am very rich. I love Orapin, and I would like to marry her."

Orapin did not love Prommatud, but she agreed to marry him because he was rich and powerful. She was not happy because she loved only Tao Prajet. Sometimes she was so sad she would cry all night.

D.

Tao Prajet and his family travelled for several days. At last they came to Ban Kong Road. They stopped and asked some people, "How far is it to Bua's house?"

"It is not very far," they answered, and then they said, "why are you carrying all of those packages?"

"I want to marry Orapin," Tao Prajet answered.

"Don't you know that Orapin is already married to Prommatud? He is a rich man," the people said.

Tao Prajet was very sad, and his parents were very angry. There was a small river near the road, and they threw all their gifts into the river. Then Tao Prajet said to his parents, "Please return to your palace. I want to go to the village of Sumrit alone."

E.

When he came to the village, he asked where Prommatud's house was. The people told him. They wondered who this handsome man was. That night he went to the house. It was very dark, and he

entered the house quietly. No one knew that he was there. He came to the bedroom where Prommatud and Orapin were sleeping. Very carefully, he opened the door, and went to their bed. Then he took out his knife and stabbed Prommatud.

Before Prommatud died, he shouted, "I am dying, help me!"

This shout awakened Orapin. She looked up and saw Tao Prajet. She said excitedly, "My brother has come back for me (or in Thai, Pi ma lew.). How happy I am to see you here! I have never loved this man, I had to marry him because he was rich and powerful."

Tao Prajet believed Orapin. He said, "You do not know my real name. I am Tao Prajet, King Suryavarman's son. For many years I was your servant. When you became a young woman, I fell in love with you. So I returned to my father's palace to ask him if I could marry you. But it is a great distance from here to my father's palace, and so my journey took several months. When I returned, you were already married. I was very sad, and very angry. I wanted to kill you. When I asked some people where you lived, they said you were very unhappy with your husband. Then I believed that you loved me, and I love you."

Tao Prajet went to Grandmother Bua's house. She was very surprised to learn who Tao Prajet was. When she heard that Tao Pranchit wanted to marry Orapin, she asked Orapin, "Do you want to marry Tao Prajet? You can only marry him if you love him."

"He is the only man I have ever loved, Mother. I want to marry him very much," Orapin replied.

And so Tao Prajet married Orapin. They went to the city of Angkor Thom, the capital of King Suryavarman, and they lived happily ever after.

This story is remembered in two names. The river where Tao Prajet and his parents threw their gifts is called, Lampraimad, which means, the place where Tao Prajet was disappointed. And the town of Sumrit was named Pimalew. Today it has been shortened to Pimai, but it still means what Orapin said that night, "My brother has come back to me."

FOUR FOOLISH MEN

[Udorn]

When Cambodia ruled this part of Thailand, the town of Song Korn was very important. It was very powerful, and the Prince of Song Korn ruled many other towns too. One famous prince was named Worata. Worata tried to be a good Buddhist. He did not believe in fighting. He did not like armies. Armies killed people, and Worata knew that it was wrong to kill. He told his people, "The Buddha teaches us not to do evil. He teaches us not to follow the ways of most people in the world, but to make merit." Prince Worata decided that he did not need to have an army, and he told all of his assistants that in his part of the country there would be no armies.

Worata had a very beautiful daughter named Pen. When she was still a little girl, Worata taught her to be kind and generous. When she grew up everyone agreed that Pen was not only a beautiful woman, but a very good woman too. Many young men wanted to marry her, four men especially wanted to marry her. They were Worata's assistants: Bang, Wienchook,

Karn, and Bualampoo.

When the four assistants discovered that they all wanted to marry Pen, they became very angry, and they argued for many hours. Finally, Bang said, "There is only one way to solve our problems. We must all go to our towns. When we get there, each will raise an army from his town. Then we will march our armies to Song Korn. The man whose army defeats all the others will take Pen."

Wiengchook said, "But what if Worata does not agree? What if he does not like the man who wins?"

Bualampoo replied, "It does not matter. Worata does not have an army. If he disagrees, then you can use your army to take Pen."

And so the four men went to their towns to raise armies. When they had left, a man came to Worata and told him, "Oh, Prince, do you know what your assistants are doing? They are building armies, and they will return to Song Korn to fight. The winner will take Pen and marry her."

When Worata heard this he was sad and frightened. He did not have an army. He told Pen what was happening. She said, "Father, we must do something to show our faith. Then the Buddha will help us. Go to the temple and build a tower. It must be ten meters high and on one side there must be a door. There must be no windows and only one door to the tower. But you must build it quickly because it must be finished before the armies come."

Although he did not understand everything Pen had said, Korata thought this was a good idea. And he built the tower. When it was nearly finished,

Worata heard that the armies of his assistants were coming. Then he went to Pen and said, "The tower is nearly finished, and the armies are coming. Now what should I do?"

Pen replied, "Put me in the tower. I will stay there until I die."

When Worata heard this, he refused. "You are my only child," he said, "I cannot let you die."

"Father, I must die. When I was born I did not want to be a beautiful girl. I only wanted to be a good girl. But I was beautiful too, and my beauty has brought you many troubles. If I die, then perhaps your assistants will see how foolish they are, and they will not fight. Is it better for me to die, or to let them fight and kill many people?"

Worata was very sad, but he agreed because he knew it was the best thing to do. Before Pen went into the tower she put on a dress of red silk, and she said, "If you think of me, name this town, Nang Pen."

Soon the four men and their armies arrived at Song Korn. They were all eager to fight, but one, Karn, said, "Let's find Worata and Pen first, and tell them what our plans are." So they all went to find Worata and his daughter.

When they came to Worata's palace, they saw that he was very sad. "Why are you so sad?" they asked.

"I am sad because you want to fight, and now before you have begun to fight, one person is dead already. Come with me," Worata replied. He took them to the tower, and then he spoke again, "If you

open the door you will be sad too, Pen is in there. She is dead. She died because she thought that if you fought for her that would be very evil. She died so that you would not fight, and so that you would not do evil."

But the men did not believe Worata. They thought, "If pen is in the tower, she is still alive. She is only hiding." They made Worata open the door of the tower.

When the door was opened, they saw the beautiful Pen in her red dress lying dead on the floor. They were all very sad. Bang said, "Pen was right, we have been very foolish. Worata we are ashamed for what we have done to you. Can you forgive us?"

The four men became good friends again. They quickly left Worata. They took their armies back to their towns, and then they told all of their soldiers to return to their homes. They had learned their lesson.

Worata was very unhappy for many months. He loved Pen very much, but he knew she was right. She had saved Song Korn from four foolish men. If she had not died, there would have been a war, and everything would have been destroyed. So Worata decided to name Song Korn, Muang Pen.

Today the town of Pen is not as important as it was many years ago. It is a district of Udorn Province. But if you go to Amphur Pen you can still see the tower built for Pen. It is in the temple, and it is surrounded with water filled with lotuses. Every year in July, people from all over Udorn have a festival there to honor the brave and unselfish Pen.

THE WIDOW'S LUCK

[Sakol Nakorn and Roi-et]

Everyone likes to have good luck. But sometimes people feel that only people who are already lucky ever have good luck. Some people are lucky, and some people are unlucky. Unlucky people never have good luck. But here is a story that tells you just the opposite. Here is a story about a person who was very unlucky, but who had some very good luck one time.

A.

Once upon a time there was a powerful Cambodian prince who lived in a big city in Northeastern Thailand. His city was very beautiful, and thousands of people lived in it. There were fine buildings everywhere, beautiful temples and many stores. Even the houses were all very new and very large, except for one house.

In all of the city there was only one, small, old, ugly house. It belonged to a widow. The widow could not work because she was old and crippled. People used to give her food and money, but then one day the Prince said, "Old lady, we want you to move your house to another place. We want to build a temple here."

The old lady replied, "I cannot move my house because I have no money to move it, nor do I have any more land." So she refused to move her house. No one thought to give her money to move her house, or some more land to move it to.

They became very angry with her, and they would not give her any more food or help. They thought, "She

will soon die. Then we can tear down her ugly old house and build our fine temple on this land."

B.

The Prince had a very beautiful daughter. And everyone wondered who she would marry. Men from many provinces came to ask her father if they could marry her. The Prince said, "Only a very handsome young man can marry my daughter. I will choose him carefully. I am going to have a party to choose the Princess' husband. Everyone is invited."

Beneath the city in the ground was the kingdom of the serpents. The serpents knew about the beautiful city of people above them. They wondered what those people were like. So they often sent serpents up to the city. The serpents would become people and walk around in the streets. Then they returned into the ground and told the other serpents what they had seen.

One day a serpent came back and said to the king of the serpents, "The daughter of the Prince is very beautiful. The Prince wants her to have a husband. The most handsome man will be chosen to be her husband at a party to be given next week."

When the son of the king of the serpents heard this, he thought, "I will change myself into the most handsome young man in the world, and then I will marry the Princess."

C.

On the evening of the Prince's party, everyone prepared to come to the palace. Even those who were married came, they wanted to see who the prince would choose. Only one person did not come, and she was the crippled old widow. She could not

come because she could not walk and no one would help her.

Even the young serpent was coming. When he got near the city, he saw many young men going to the palace. He thought, "I must do something, or I will be the last person there, and the Prince will have chosen someone else." Then he changed himself into a handsome white squirrel. He knew that a squirrel could run faster than men could walk. He thought that if he changed himself into a squirrel, he would get to the palace first.

The Princess looked out of her window. She saw the white squirrel running along the wall of the palace. She said to her maid, "I want that squirrel. Tell a guard to shoot it with an arrow. Then bring it to me."

So the guard shot the squirrel, but before it died the serpent whispered a curse:

Whoever eats my meat tonight
Will die before the dawn's in sight;
And all the houses in his town
Will by that time have fallen down.

The guard brought the dead squirrel to the Princess. She said, "Yes, it is very beautiful. Take it to the cook and tell him to roast it. We will all eat it at the supper tonight."

D.

By this time many of the young men had come. Everyone was very excited. At last the Prince and his daughter entered the dining room. Before the meal began, the Princes said, "Tonight, one of the guards shot a white squirrel. We have cooked its

meat. Because the squirrel is very small, you must only eat a little bit. Then everyone will have a piece."

They began to eat the squirrel, but as a person took a piece of the meat, there was still more meat on the plate to be eaten. The squirrel was the most delicious thing they had ever tasted. No one ate anything but the squirrel that night, for the meat never ran out.

Meanwhile, outside it began to rain. It rained very hard for many hours while inside they were eating the squirrel's strange meat. Soon the water was pouring into the palace, and everyone drowned. It happened so quickly that no one could save himself. The water destroyed everything: the palace, houses, stores and even the temples. By dawn the entire city was under a lake of water, . . . except for one house. Because she had not eaten the squirrel's meat, the widow did not die. Her home was not ruined. The land around her home became an island in the middle of a huge lake.

E.

Many people still believe this story, and they can show you the lake to prove their story. Only, there is a problem: the story is told about two lakes in the Northeast. The people of Sakol Nakorn tell it about Harn Lake, and the people in Roi-et tell it about Palanchai Lake. Each of these lakes has a small island in it. And each of these provinces was ruled by the Cambodians for many years. But the story could only happen in one place. Which place do you think it was?

THE WOMAN WHO SAVED KORAT

[Korat]

If you go to Korat, you will see a statue of a woman in front of the old city wall. The statue is Tao Suranaree, and she is one of Thailand's greatest heroines. Here is the story of how she defeated the Laotian army and saved Korat.

About one hundred and fifty years ago the Thais were then enemies of the Laotians. The King of Laos, Anuwong, brought his army into northeastern Thailand. King Phanongkiao of Thailand was not ready to fight, and so the Laotians conquered most of the Northeast.

In Korat the people were very worried. Their governor had gone to Bangkok to see the king. There were no leaders to defend their town. The people asked each other, "What will we do? How can we fight the Laotians? We have no army."

When King Anuwong came to Korat, the people did not fight against him. They hoped he would be kind to them. The Laotians did not hurt the people of Korat because they wanted them to be captives. They wanted to take them to Laos. Laos needed people to work in the fields and in the towns. So King Anuwong decided he would not kill people, he would take them back to Laos.

The captives were very sad, they did not want to leave Korat and they did not want to go to Laos. They walked very slowly and they said, "We must stop. We are very tired. We are not used to walking." So the Laotian army did not go very far

the first day.

One of the captives, a woman named Mo, was very clever. She had an idea. She said to the general of the Laotian army, "It is evening now and everyone is hungry. We must soon stop for the night, let us stop here. They we can cook food for you. But we do not have any knives and we must have some to prepare the food."

The Laotian general was very hungry, so he told his soldiers to give their knives to the women. Then the captives began to prepare food. Mo had another idea, and she said to the women, "First, we must give the Laotian soldiers some liquor. It will make them drunk and sleepy. They we will feed them."

After they had eaten, the Laotian soldiers fell asleep. They Mo said to the women, "Take your knives and give some of them to the men. Now we can fight, and the Laotians cannot defeat us; they are drunk and asleep, and they do not have any weapons." So the women took their cooking knives, which the Laotians had given them, and they gave some of them to the men.

At midnight Mo. led the captives to the Laotian army. She said, "It is dark and they cannot see us. Now let us fight with them." The Thais quickly defeated the Laotian army, and they returned to Korat. The Laotians had to return to Laos without any captives.

When Mo and her army came to Korat everyone was surprised and happy: the captives told everyone of Mo's plan, and of her bravery. Soon even King Phanongkiao of Bangkok heard of Mo's bravery. He

was very impressed, and he gave her a new name, the Brave Woman (or in Thai: Tao Suranaree).

When the famous Tao Suranaree died, the people of Korat wanted to remember her. They decided to build a statue of her, and they also named a school after their greatest heroine.

THE RED HAND OF THE BUDDHA

[Kalasin]

Before people had paper to write on, they wrote on stones or bricks. Sometimes, if they wanted their writing to last, they would write on the walls of caves. And the writings and pictures found in caves today are often very old. In the country of France, there are some drawings of deer and other animals that are over four thousand years old.

A.

In Thailand, too, hundreds of years ago, people wrote on the walls of caves. They wrote religious stories. In Korat there is the Red Cattle Cave (or in Thai: Tam Ngua Dang). In this cave there are many pictures telling the story of the god, Esuan. In Buriram there is the Golden Duck Cave (or in Thai: Tam Phed Thong). The pictures and writings on the wall of this cave tell the story of the ancestors of the Cambodian kings.

One of the most famous caves in the Northeast is in Kalasin. This cave is called the Hand Writing Cave. On the ceiling of the cave there is a big red hand painted. This is a religious painting, it is supposed to be the hand of the Buddha.

B.

The villagers who live near the cave tell this

story of how the Hand came to be painted on the cave:

One time the Buddha passed through this part of the world. He came to this mountain late in the day, and he decided to rest there for the night. He looked for a place to sleep, and he found the cave. So the Buddha slept in the cave all night long. The next day he was very thankful for this place he had found to rest in. He decided to leave something in the cave.

Nearby he found some red soil which he made into red paint. And before he left the area, he painted a hand on the ceiling of the cave. The hand looked like the Buddha's hand, only it was many times bigger.

C.

Maybe you do not believe this story. Archeologists say the hand was painted about one thousand years ago. That means that the Cambodians must have painted it when they ruled this part of the country. But if you go to the Hand Writing Cave, and if you talk to a villager, he will disagree.

The villager would say, "How does the archeologist know? He has not lived here all his life? But everyone who has lived here knows that the Buddha painted the hand himself. Our parents told us. And our grandparents told our parents." The story has, therefore, become a legend, and even if it is not true, the people living near the Hand Writing Cave believe this story.

Today you can see the Hand Writing Cave if you go to Kalasin. It is a very holy place, and many people go to worship the Buddha there. And that is

why the Hand was put there in the first place -- for worship. So it does not matter who made the painting, but it does matter that the hand was painted to remind people of their belief in the Buddha and his teachings.

HOW THE MOON RIVER WAS MADE

The Moon River flows from Korat to Ubol and then into the Mekhong. It is the biggest river in the Northeast. Here is a story people all over Thailand tell about how this river was made.

Thousands of years ago, there were no men in this part of the world. In fact, most of Thailand was a big sea. Two serpents lived in this sea. They were so big that each one lived in one half of the sea. In the northern part lived the serpent named Pinta-yonak-wati. In the southern part lived the serpent Thana-Moon.

Because the serpents were so big, they were always hungry. They decided to work together to find food. When one of them found some food, he would give half to the other serpent.

One day a very big elephant fell into the southern part of the sea. It could not swim, and so soon it died. Thana Moon found the elephant and he took it to Pinta-yonak-wati. "Here is an elephant I have just caught. It is very big so we will have lots of food to eat today. We will not be hungry."

The next day a porcupine was drinking water, and it fell into the sea and died. Pinta-yonak-wati found the porcupine. According to their agreement, he gave half of the animal to Thana-moon. But the porcupine is a small animal and it has many quills.

The quills cannot be eaten, so before he took the porcupine to Thana-moon, Pinta-yonak-wati took the quills off the porcupine.

When Thana-moon had eaten his part of the little porcupine, he was still very hungry. He saw the quills and thought, "Pinta-yonak-wati has not given me half. He is keeping some more for himself." Then Thana-Moon became very angry and he began to fight with Pinta-yonak-wati.

Soon many fish and animals could not sleep, nor could they drink the water from the sea. The two serpents were fighting all the time. The fish and the other animals asked the god, Indra, to help them. They said, "Indra, you must make the serpents stop fighting. If they do not stop, we will all die."

Indra came to the sea. He said to the serpents, "You must stop fighting. You must leave this sea. Pinta-yonak-wati, you must go to the northwest. Thana-moon, you must go to the southeast."

When Pinta-yonak-wati left the sea, his great body left a mark on the earth. That mark became the Ping River. When Thana-moon left the sea his body left another mark on the earth. His mark became the Moon River. Even today these rivers are named after the serpents. If you go to northern Thailand, you will see the Ping River. If you go to northeastern Thailand, you will see the Moon River.

THE TEMPLE OF THE TWO LOVES

[The Temple of Peace]

[Loey]

Over three hundred years ago Thailand and Laos were enemies. The Thai king, Jukaphat (or in Thai; Pramahajuckaphat), was unhappy. He knew that when the armies fought, many people suffered. He knew that the Thai people did not want war. He decided to make peace with the King of Laos.

One day Jukaphat wrote to Chaiyachetta, the King of Laos. He said, "My people and your people are tired of war. They have suffered for a long time. Now we should agree to be friendly and to help our own people. If you agree, let us build two chedis to show our agreement.

Chaiyachetta was also tired of fighting, and when he received Jukaphat's letter, he was very happy. He answered, "I will be glad to be your friend."

Then King Jukaphat told his people, "We must build two chedis on the border of Thailand and Laos. The chedis will show that our countries are good friends. One chedi will be for Laos, and the other chedi will stand for Thailand."

The people asked where they would build the Chedis, and after much discussion they decided to build them in the Dansai district of Loey. So today, if you go to Dansai, you can see the two old chedis. They are in the Temple of the Two Loves (or in Thai: Wat Srisongrak). They are very old, but they tell everyone that Thailand and Laos are friends, and that they want to help each other.

THE LOST PRINCE

[Srisaket]

Long, long ago, but after the Thai people had left southern China, there was a Thai prince in

Srisaket. He was very strong and brave. The people in his town said, "Prince Bantud is the greatest hunter in the whole country. Every day he goes into the forest to hunt animals, and every day he kills many fierce and terrible beasts."

Because he was such a good hunter, he soon knew every part in the forest. He could not get lost. If he wanted a tiger, he knew just where to find one in the forest. If he wanted a deer, Prince Bantud knew where all the deer lived.

Prince Bantud got tired of hunting in the forest he knew so well. He was proud of his skill as a hunter, and he said, "When you know the forest, then you do not need any skill to catch animals." He was very sad, and he would not hunt.

The people were worried, they loved their prince. One day a man came to the town and said, "I know of a forest Prince Bantud has never seen. It has lots of animals."

Prince Bantud was very happy and decided to go to this new forest. He took his soldiers with him, and they went to the forest which was on a mountain. They had just come to the darkest part of the forest when Prince Bantud saw a deer. It was eating grass, and everyone agreed that it was the most beautiful deer they had ever seen. Prince Bantud thought, "I would like to have this deer for myself." He said to his soldiers, "I want to kill the deer. You will all take the path to the left. I will go to the right and chase the deer until it comes to you. Then we can kill it easily."

Prince Bantud was very excited. He ran after the deer. He thought, "When I return with this deer, everyone in the country will know of my fame." But

the deer saw the prince and it ran farther and farther into the forest away from the soldiers of Prince Bantud. Soon the prince was lost and could not find his way out of the forest. He had forgotten that he did not know the paths in this forest. He sat down, he was lost, and he had not killed the deer.

Meanwhile, Prince Bantud's soldiers were waiting for him. One said, "Almost four hours have gone by, where is our Prince? Is he lost? Has some wild animal killed him?" No one knew the answers, so they decided to look for Prince Bantud. Soon night came and they had not seen him, even though they had been all through the forest.

So the soldiers returned to the palace. They said to the people, "The Prince is lost, we have tried to find him, but we do not know our way in the forest. Tomorrow everyone must come with us to help find the Prince." Because everyone loved Prince Bantud, they agreed. For many days after that everyone looked for the lost prince, but he was never seen again.

The people were very sad and, they loved their prince very much. They decided to name the forest Bantud Forest, and the mountain, Mount Bantud. You can see the forest and the mountain in Srisaket province. Their names have not been changed since Prince Bantud disappeared many centuries ago. And until today, no one has ever seen Prince Bantud again. Don't you wonder what happened to him, and why he disappeared?

YAMA AND THE POOR MAN

[Roi-et]

Once upon a time in the Province of Roi-et, there was a man named Yama. He was the mayor of his town. Yama had a beautiful wife named Nuan-chan, but he was even more proud of his beautiful daughter, Chantra. Many young men wanted to marry her, but Yama would not let her marry them. He wanted her to marry a very good young man.

At this time the land near Yama's town was covered with grass. The people raised horses in the fields. Yama raised some horses too. One day he went to the city of Roi-et, and saw the horse races in Roi-et. Yama thought, "Horse races are very exciting. I think the people in my town would like to have a race track."

So Yama returned to his town and built the race track. Many people came to watch the races there. If Yama liked to watch horse races, he liked to win them even more. Yama had the best horse in the town. He called it Loi-lom. It was a very fast horse, and no other horse could defeat it in the races.

Soon everyone in the province had heard of Yama's horse, Loi-lom. And mayors from many other towns brought their horses to race against Loi-lom. But Loi-lom always won the races; and all of the people were discouraged. They liked to win too, but they always lost. Finally, no one would bring their horses to race against Loi-lom.

Now Yama was very sad. He would not speak to his friends. He was cruel to his wife and daughter. One day, Nuan-chan asked him, "Yama, what is the matter? Why are you so angry?"

"No one will race against Loi-lom," he replied.

Nuan-chan did not know what to do. Several days later, Chantra came to her mother and said, "None of the young men will ask to marry me, they are all afraid of Father." Nuan-chan had an idea. She went to find Yama.

She said, "Yama, everyone is afraid of you. No one comes to visit us anymore. Chantra and I are lonely. I have an idea how you can race Loi-lom and be happy." So she told him her idea.

The next day Yama sent letters to all parts of the province. The letters said: "Yama will race his horse against any man's horse. If Yama's horse is defeated, he will give his daughter to the winner. The men who want to race against Loi-lom may be rich or poor, young or old, but they must be bachelors." Yama thought, "Only rich men will have enough money to own good horses, and only young men will want to race to win Chantra, so I will find a fine husband for Chantra."

The god, Indra, had been thinking for a long time. "Yama is a very foolish and proud man. I must teach him a lesson." So Indra changed himself into a man. He became a very poor man, and he found an old tired horse. Then he went to Yama's town and told everyone, "I have come to race against Loi-lom. I want to marry Chantra."

Yama thought this man must be crazy. He said, "Your horse is very old, it cannot run anymore, I will not race Loi-lom because your horse is not a good one."

But the people said, "Yama, you must race Loi-lom. You made a promise against any bachelor and his

horse." So Yama agreed to race his horse the next Saturday.

Everybody knew that there was was going to be a race. And thousands of people came to the race track. They all expected to see Loi-lom win, even though they did not like Yama. No one thought that the poor man and his horse could win.

When the race began, Loi-lom had run around half of the track before the old horse had even begun. But then something strange happened. Loi-lom stopped running: He ate some grass, and slowly walked toward the finish line. Meanwhile the old horse walked as fast as he could. Ten meters from the finish line, the old horse passed Loi-lom and won the race. Yama was furious!

Yama said to himself, "He is a poor man. He is not suitable to marry my daughter." So Yama broke his promise and said that the poor man could not have Chantra.

Indra was very angry. Suddenly, the poor man was changed into the god, Indra, again. Indra said,

"Open pit, deep and wide,
Let proud Yama fall inside."

At that moment the ground beneath Yama opened into a great pit. Yama fell into the pit. It was so deep that no one could see to the bottom of it. All of the other people ran away because they were afraid. And Indra returned to the heavens.

When Nuan-chan and Chantra heard about this, they went to see the great pit. It was so big and so deep that they could not see Yama anywhere. They

sat on the edge of the pit and began to cry. Their tears fell into the pit, and gradually it was filled with them. The pit had become a lake, the water was Nuan-chan's and Chantra's tears.

The people named the new lake, Yama Lake, and that is its name until today. They also named their town, Yama, after the foolish mayor. Yama Lake is still very important. The Government has improved it, and now the farmers in that area use its water for irrigation. It is a very beautiful lake, and many people go there for picnics and to play games. Maybe some day you will go to Yama Lake. When you are there, will you remember Yama's race against the poor man?

WHEN THERE IS NO RAIN

Farmers need lots of rain to grow their rice. But sometimes the rain does not come. Then the farmers have a drought. If they cannot get rain, their crops will die. In the Northeast there are many different traditions for making the rain come. Here are four of them.

A.

The Bong Fai Festival is held every year, in most parts of the Northeast. It is a Cambodian festival; and the people have celebrated it ever since they were ruled by the Cambodian kings. People in central Thailand do not have this festival.

When the rainy season has begun, on a certain day people from several villages will come to one wat for their festival. This festival is held in honor of the rain god, Tan. Everyone wears bright costumes. The women put on traditional Thai and

Northeastern dances. They men are busy with their bong fai, or bamboo rockets.

Every village will have at least one rocket. And the rocket will be build by the people of the village. You cannot go to a store to buy a rocket, you must make it. First, some men go into the forest to find a big bamboo tree. After it is cut they will dry it in the sun. The bamboo must be very strong, and it must have a thick stalk. Second, while the bamboo is drying, the men will make the rocket powder. This powder is like the powder used in guns. It gives the energy to the rocket which pushes it up into the sky. Third, when the bamboo is dry, the men will decorate it with bright, colored paper. Sometimes their rockets look like dragons, or even jet planes. Fourth, the powder is put carefully into the rocket, and the men carry the rocket to the wat. It takes many men to carry the rocket because the rockets are often over four meters long.

At the wat the people meet to look at the rockets. They try to guess which rocket will be the best. Before the rockets are shot into the sky, there is a ceremony at the wat. The rockets are carried around the wat three times. Some people carry the priests, some people beat on the drums, others dance, and others carry the rockets.

Then the rockets are shot into the air. If they go very high, the rain god, Tan, will be pleased; but if they do not go very high, Tan will be angry and there will be no rain that year.

B.

The second tradition is one thing people do when there is no rain. Some people believe that the

droughts are caused by the King Cobra. This snake only hatches its eggs in dry weather. When it does not rain, people believe that the Cobra has made the rains stop so that its eggs will hatch. The snake must be killed before the rains will begin.

To kill the snake, many men must work together. One man gets a fast horse. He rides through the fields looking for the snake and its eggs. When he finds the eggs, he takes one of them from the snake's nest. At the same time, other men are building a big fire. In the middle of their fire is a big pot of boiling water. When the man on the horse has stolen the egg, he rides his horse to the fire. The Cobra follows him because it wants to get its egg back. This man rides his horse by the fire and throws the snake's egg into the pot. When the snake sees this, it jumps into the fire to get its egg, and it is killed. Then the rains will begin.

C.

The third tradition comes from the Province of Kalasin, but other people in other provinces have similar traditions.

In Kalasin there is a very holy statue of the Buddha. It is in Wat Klang Muang. This Buddha is named Ong Dam, because it is black. Once, many years ago, there was no rain; the people did not know what to do. They went to a priest and he told them, "If you will carry Ong Dam around the streets of the city, the rain will come."

So today, when there is no rain, many people come to Wat Klang Muang. They talk with the priests, and they ask them for advice. Then they carry Ong Dm around the city of Kalasin. They people believe

that when Ong Dam is carried around the city, the rains will begin.

D.

The fourth tradition comes from the province of Chaiyaphum. Many years ago in a small village there lived a young man named Siang Bua. He was very sad because there was no rain, and he knew that the rice would soon die. But Siang Bua was clever, and he asked himself, "What must we do to make the rain begin?"

He could not answer this question, so he asked many people in his village. But they did not know the answer either, because they were poor and they were not clever. So Siang Bua said, "I must find the answer myself." One day he went to the village headman's house. Siang Bua said, "We need rain, but none has come. We must pray to the god. We must ask him for rain."

The village headman believed Siang Bua. He called all of the people together, and he told them, "We must pray to the god for rain. Siang Bua believes if we do not pray, all of our crops will die, and our families will starve." The men tried to see Siang Bua in the crowd, but he was not there. So they began to pray.

Suddenly, Siang Bua appeared. He was carrying a big basket. In his basket he had a fat cat. The people were amazed, they looked at Siang Bua. "What are doing?" they asked, "we are praying because you told us to, but you are playing with a cat."

Siang Bua was not worried, he said, "If you want rain, some of you must follow me, and the rest of

you must return to your homes. We will come to each house, when we come bring a cup of water out of the house and pour it on the cat."

Siang Bua and some of the men walked around to each house. One person from each house poured a cup of water on the cat. Soon the rains began.

Now when there is no rain during the rainy season, people in many villages repeat this tradition. They call it the Cat Parade (or in Thai: Hae Nang Mew).

You can see that all of these traditions use magic. When the drought comes, and there is no rain, the people believe that they have to use magic to make the rains come again. If they are successful, the rains will come, their crops will grow, and they will have enough to eat for another year.

THREE BUDDHAS FROM LAOS

[Nongkhai]

Long ago the King of Laos had three beautiful daughters. Each of his daughters loved her father very much, and they decided to make something for their father. Each daughter made a statue of the Buddha. The statues were very beautiful and for many years people from all over Laos came to Vientiene to see the statues.

Many years later the King of Laos became the enemy of the King of Thailand. A war was fought, and the Thai king won. When the Thai king went to Vientiene, he saw the three statues. They were so beautiful that he decided to take them with him to Thailand.

So he put the statues in ox carts and took them to the Mekong River. Then he put them in boats. As they were crossing the river, a rainstorm came and one boat was sunk. The statue in it was also lost. But the other two statues were not lost, they were taken to Nongkhai where they were kept for many years.

When Mongkut became the King of Thailand, he wanted to bring the two statues to Bangkok. So he sent his servants to Nongkhai to take the statues. Again, the statues were loaded in ox carts, and the long journey from Nongkhai to Bangkok began. They had not left the town of Nongkhai before one ox cart broke. Its statue fell to the ground. The people would not let anyone put the statue into the other cart; they said, "Prasai does not want to go to Bangkok; he had broken the ox cart by a miracle because he wants to stay in Nongkhai."

The king's servants did not know what to do. The king had told them to bring both statues to Bangkok, but they had only one. They decided to tell Mongkut the story. When he heard it, Mongkut decided to leave the statue named Prasai in Nongkhai. Mongkut agreed that Prasai did want to stay in Nongkhai.

So only one statue is in Bangkok now. It is named Praserm. The statue which fell into the Mekong River was named Prasuk; it is still in the river because no one could ever find it. And Prasai is still in Nongkhai. You can see this famous statue in the Temple of the Po True (or in Thai: Wat Po) in Nongkhai. Many people believe that Prasai has strange powers. They believe it can make the rain fall, or keep the rain from falling.

THE TEMPLE OF MANY ARCHITECTS

[Ubol]

Most temples are build by one architect. He makes a plan of what the temple will look like, and then the builders start to make it. But a temple in Ubol has two architects, and as a result it is very different from other temples in the country.

One of Thailand's most famous priests was named Promone. He knew that the Thai people wanted to show their belief in Buddhism. One way to do this was to build temples. In Promone's time, there was a great competition in building temples. The winner, the man who built the most beautiful temple, would receive a prize from the king.

One time Promone went to Ubol. When he was there, he had a dream. In his dream a priest said, "I know you want to build a temple in this town. The temple must be built on the banks of the Moon River." Then Promone woke up and his dream was over. The next morning he took a boat and went up and down the river until he found the land for his temple.

Promone wondered what would be the best design for the temple. He decided to build a temple in the Cambodian style because many centuries ago the Cambodians had ruled over this part of the county. The builders began to work, but when they were about half done, the architect died. The plan for the temple was gone.

No one knew what to do. They had to find a new architect. Their next architect was a German. He had his own idea of how temples should be built, and so the part of the temple he planned looks like

a German church. Finally, a Thai roof was added to the building. At last Promone's temple was finished, but it was very different from any other temple in Thailand. Still, it was very beautiful.

If you go to Ubol today you can see Promone's temple. It is named the Well Built temple (of in Thai: Wat Supatanaram) in honor of its architects.

THE FAMOUS TREE OF KHON KAEN

[Khon Kaen]

If you go to the Railway Station in Khonkaen, you will see a big log with the name of the city carved on it. This log shows you what the name means, but do you know how Khonkaen got its name?

A.

Over two hundred years ago when the Northeast was still ruled by the King of Laos, a man named Kunluang was the Prince of Suwannapum. His wife was Chantra. When they had been married for several years, they had a son, Piamuang. Piamuang was very handsome, and everyone thought he was a fine young man. When he was nearly an adult, many parents wanted him to marry their daughters. Piamuang did not know how to choose a wife, so he said to his parents, "Will you choose my wife? I am afraid I cannot choose wisely."

Kunluang and Chantra agreed to do this. They looked for a very fine young woman to be Piamuang's wife; one day the Prince said to his son, "We will be very pleased if you marry Oumaradee." Piamuang saw that she was very beautiful, and he gladly agreed. Piamuang and Ouamaradee lived in Suwannapum for several years. Finally, the Prince and Princess said, "Suwannapum is too small for all

the people living here. Why don't you begin a new city, Piamuang? You can take some people with you."

B.

So Piamuang and Oumaradee left Suwannapum to begin their new city, and about four hundred people went with them. They finally came to the little town of Kam. In the center of the town was a huge tamarind tree. It was nearly dead. Piamuang thought, "It is foolish to leave that dying tree there, its wood may be valuable." He said to a villager, "Why do you leave this log there?"

The villager replied, "Five years ago this big tamarind tree died. But a wise man told us it would become alive again. When it becomes alive again, our village will have some good luck. Just this year it has become alive again. Every week it has more and more leaves."

Piamuang was impressed, and he thought, "Perhaps this tree is holy. It should not be destroyed." Piamuang and his people built a chedi to protect the holy tree. When this was completed they decided that Kam was such a nice little town that they wanted to live in it. Some of the people said, "It has very fertile fields, we will all become rich here." so they built their homes in Kam.

C.

About this time King Taksin defeated the King of Laos and all of the Northeast became part of Thailand. Many of the princes of the Laotian king decided to send presents to the Thai king. In his village, Piamuang convinced the people that they must be loyal to their new king. They decided to

send presents to the Thai king too.

When Rama I became King of Thailand, he remembered the loyalty of Piamuang and the people of the village of Kam. The King said, "Because of your loyalty, Piamuang, I will make you a governor, and your little village will become the capital of a new province.

D.

For many years the famous Piamuang and the beautiful Oumaradee ruled the town of Kam. But one day a man came to them and said, "Governor, our tamarind tree is dying."

Piamuang was very sad. He thought, "My own life is now like that of the tamarind tree. When it dies, I think I will die too." Finally, the tree died; and very soon after that, Piamuang died too.

By this time Kam was a big town, the people decided it needed a new name. The most important thing about the town was its famous tree. The people said, "Our town's power is like the strength of a tree. It is very great." So they named their town Hard Log (or in Thai: Khon Kaen).

Today Khonkaen is a big city. It is no longer like the quiet village in which Piamuang lived. Trains, buses, and planes all come to Khonkaen because it is the capital of northeastern Thailand. The power of the city is now much greater than the strength of the tamarind tree.

THE THREE BUDDHAS OF KANTARAWICHAI

[Mahasarakham]

Have you ever been to Kantarawichai? It is a district of Mahasarakham Province. Kantarawichai is a beautiful little town on the road to Kalasin. It has some famous statues of the Buddha. The people of Kantarawichai tell this story about these holy statues.

A.

Hundreds of years ago, the Northeast was ruled by the Cambodian kings. This was before the Thai people came here. Kantarawichai was a very important town in those days. It had a ruling prince and princess. One of the princes was named Phranong Phratumman. He and his wife had a son named Tao Singh Toh.

Tao Singh Toh was a cruel young man. The prince and princess were afraid of their son. One day he ordered some soldiers to capture his father and put him in jail. The soldiers obeyed Tao Singh Toh because they were also afraid of him. The Prince of Kantarawichai was put in the jail.

Then Tao Singh Toh said, "Now, I am the Prince of Kantarawichai. The old Prince, my father, has been put in jail because he was very evil." But the people did not believe him, because they knew the Prince was good. Tao Singh Toh wanted his father to die, but he was afraid to kill him. So he said, "I will not give him any food, and then if he dies, it will not be my fault. I will not let anyone, except my mother, visit him, so no one can bring him food."

When the Princess visited her husband in the jail, she brought him food. Tao Singh Toh learned that his mother was bringing food with her. So he said, "You cannot visit the Prince for thirty days."

The Prince knew that he would soon die because he had no food to eat. He called his son to him and said, "Soon, I will die, and you will be the Prince of Kantarawichai. But everything that you do will become evil." And three days later the Prince died.

B.

Tao Singh Toh was very happy. He was the Prince now. But he was still angry at his mother, so her ordered the soldiers to kill her. They had to obey him because he was the Prince.

Everything that Tao Sing Toh did turned turned to evil, just as his fatherhood had warned him. He tried very hard to do good things, but everything he did was ruined. The people in Kantarawichai laughed at the Prince. They said, "Our Prince may be powerful, but he is foolish. He cannot do anything right."

This made Tao Singh Toh ashamed of himself. He was very sorry that he had been so cruel to his parents. He wondered what he could do that would be good.

Finally, he sent for an astrologer. The astrologer told Tao Singh Toh, "You have been very evil, and you are being punished. You must build two statues of the Buddha. One will be for your father, and the other will be for you mother. The two statues should be very beautiful, and they should be built in different places. When you build these statues, you will show that you love your parents, and your evil will go away."

Tao Singh Toh believed the astrologer, and he built the two statues very carefully. He wanted to be

sure that they were very beautiful. The statue Tao Singh Toh built for his father is in the center of the town, and the statue he built for his mother is on the edge of the town.

Still Tao Singh Toh was not happy, for he knew that he had been very evil. He told his people that when he died, they should bury him in the forest, which is far from the town. Over his grave he asked them to build another statue of the Buddha. When he died, the people buried him in the forest, and they built a statue of a reclining Buddha over his grave. Today the forest is call Don Pra Non, which means the Forest of the Reclining Buddha.

C.

This story happened many years ago, and if you go to Kantarawichai today, you can still see the two standing Buddhas. One is in the center of the town, and it is under a little pavilion. It is very holy, and many people worship it every year. The other Buddha is on the edge of the town. You might not see it because a big tree is growing up around the statue.

But the statue of the reclining Buddha in the forest is lost. Some people say it is made of gold. But no one will try to find it, because the people believe it has a curse on it. The people believe that the spirit of Tao Singh Toh still lives in the grave. The spirit is very evil, just like the Prince was so many years ago. If anyone sees the statue in the forest, they will die in the same day because of the evil spirit.

So the statue is lost; sometimes people try to find it. Only a few years ago three or four men from Bangkok went into the forest to find the statue.

That evening they returned, and they said, "We have found the statue of the reclining Buddha. It is made of gold. We will take you to see it tomorrow." But before they could take anyone there, they all died.

THE LAND OF THE ELEPHANTS

[Surin]

The Province of Surin is famous for its elephants, but for hundreds of years there were many elephants in Thailand. Today there are only a few, and most of them are in Surin.

A.

Many years ago, elephants were very common in Thailand. The elephants were used in wars, and they were used to carry logs from the forests to the towns. The flag of Thailand used to have a white elephant on it.

But today machines can do the work of elephants, and so in Thailand there are not many elephants. Sometimes they still carry logs from the forests, but they do not fight in wars anymore, and there is no elephant on the Thai flag. Only in one place are there many elephants today, that is in the province of Surin.

B.

In Surin there is a group of people called Suay. These people came from the Cambodian people who lived in Surin hundreds of years ago. In the villages of Krapo and Jompra the Suay people still use their elephants to earn their living. The elephants carry logs, and they also plow the fields like water buffalo.

Today the government protects elephants. They cannot be killed or caught. The government is trying to preserve the elephants so that they will not all die. Every year in Surin the Suay people have an elephant festival. This festival is to show other people how wild elephants used to be caught, how they were trained, and what they could do. Many people from all over Thailand, and from many countries as well, come to see the elephant festival in Surin.

C.

In Surin there is a strange mountain. Some people say that it looks like Erawan, the three-headed mythical elephant. They say it reminds people how important elephants are to Surin. But other people disagree; here is their story of why this mountain is here.

Many hundreds of years ago in the forest near Surin there lived a man with his wife. The man thought his wife must be a witch because she quarreled with him every day. She was always telling him, "Now, you do this," or "Now, you do that." And she always said he was the laziest man alive.

The poor man thought, "Unless I get rid of my wife, I shall go mad." But no matter how hard he tried, he could not find a way to get rid of his wife. Finally, he decided that he would marry again, and he told his wife, "I am tired of you telling me what to do. I am tired of listening to your voice, so I am going to marry another woman. She will be kind and beautiful, and she will not always say that I am lazy."

His wife did not believe him. She thought, "He is

so lazy that he will never leave his home."

But one day the man did leave his his home, and he went to find a new wife. He thought, "My old wife will follow me, she will never let me marry again. Perhaps I can trick her, and she will not find me. Then I can marry. When I am married I will return to my house and my old wife will not be there. She will still be looking for me. Then I will have peace."

But his wife did not leave the house. She thought, "He will return" and she was right, for after three months the man and his second wife returned to the house. His second wife was very beautiful and kind.

At first the man was happy, his new wife was very kind to him. But his new wife saw the old wife. She saw how the old wife shouted at the man, and after a few weeks, the new wife was shouting at her husband just like the old wife.

If the man was unhappy with one wife, he was now even more unhappy with two wives. Not only did his two wives quarrel with him, and tell him, "Now, you do this," or "Now, you do that;" but when one wife said, "Now, you do this," the other wife said, "Now, you do that." They both said, "You are the laziest man alive." and what was even worse, the two wives fought with each other.

The poor man did not know what to do. He did not have any peace, and he spent day after day thinking how he could solve his problem. He did not talk to anyone, he only spoke to himself. "All I want is a little peace!" But there was no way to solve his problem, and soon he died worrying about his

problem.

After he was dead, the two wives stopped fighting with each other. If they had not been kind to their husband while he was alive; now that he was dead, they were very sad. They did not know what to do. Both wives realized that they really did love their husband, and they said, "Without our husband we cannot live, we love him too much." So they went to the body of the dead man, and as they leaned over the dead man's head, both of the wives died.

When the god, Indra, knew this he decided to help people to remember this story. He built a mountain that has three peaks leaning toward each other. It looks like the two wives leaning over the head of their dead husband. Indra thought, "Now people will not forget the story of this foolish man and his two wives."

But many people did forget the story. They say the mountain looks like Erawan. And so today only some people remember the story of the man, and they think the mountain looks like three people. If you go to Surin, you will have to decide for yourself what the mountain looks like. It is called Mango Mountain, and that is because still other people think the mountain looks like a mango. So you can see how difficult it is to choose a name for a mountain, especially in Surin.

THE TWO FRIENDS

[Buriram, Korat]

Do you remember the story in which Prajet married Orapin? This story takes place only a few years

later.

Prajeta was very happy in his father's palace, but one day King Suryavarman said, "My son, I want you to become the ruling prince of a city. You know this city very well, it is Orapin's village which is called Pimai now. I want you to help me do some building in that town." Prajeta was surprised when he heard this, but he was also happy. He knew that one of his best friends was the Prince of Nangrong. His name was Prayen. Prajeta was happy when he moved to Pimai.

But he had a big problem. When he came to Pimai, he learned that the general of the army there wanted to be the next prince. The general was very angry when Prajeta was chosen. When Prajeta came to his new home he said to the general, "I know you wanted to be the prince, but let's be friends. When I go I'll ask my father to make you the prince." The general agreed but did not trust Prajeta.

One day Prajeta went to visit his friend, Prayen, in Nangrong, which is Buriram today. They talked about many things, and about how happy they were. Suddenly, a servant came into Prayen's room and said, "Master, the army of Pimai has surrounded the city." Prayen was surprised and angry, he thought that Prajeta had come to kill him and seize his city. Prayen said, "So are you really my friend, Prajeta? Friends don't need to bring armies."

Prajeta knew what had happened. The general did not trust him, and the general was afraid that Prajeta would take the army from Nangrong to destroy the army of Pimai. He said, "No, you do not understand. I did not bring the army. It is not

you the army wants, it is I. The general is afraid of me. He fears that I will borrow your army to destroy him. So if we do nothing, he will not do anything. He cannot hurt me, I am the King's son."

Prayen was not sure, but he trusted Prajet because they were friends. Then Prajet said, "I have come here on some business. My father wants to build a temple in Pimai. He wants to test his workmen because soon he will have them build a much larger temple in Angkor Thom. But I do not think it is a good idea just to build a temple. I need a reason for building a temple." "Your are my friend. I trust and I love you. Will you build a temple in Nangrong while I build mine in Pimai? Our temples will show our friendship and trust for each other. I will send workmen to help you."

Prayen quickly agreed. "Yes, it is a good idea. I will build a temple, too." When the princes parted, the general did not believe what Prajet told him. But he believed the prince when he saw the two temples being built.

You can see both temples today. One is called the Temple of Pimai (or in Thai: Prasat Hin Pimai), it is in Korat Province. The other is called the Temple of Mount Pranumrung (or in Thai: Prasat Hin Khao Pranumrung) because it is built in a mountain. It is in Buriram Province. The temples are very beautiful and they remind us of a strong friendship between two princes many years ago.

THE BAI SEE CEREMONY

The Bai See ceremony comes from Laos. People in Bangkok do not know about it. In Thailand people

in the Northeast practice it because at one time the Northeast was part of the kingdom of Laos.

The Bai See brings good-luck and merit: It is a religious celebration, but it is not performed by priests. When someone is about to go on a trip, or to get married, he feels this is a very important event in his life. He wants it to turn out well; one way of making things turn out well is to have a Bai See ceremony.

First, he will ask one of the old men in his village to say the prayers in the ceremony. Then he will invite all of his friends and relatives to come to his house, where the ceremony is usually held. His friends and relatives all want to come because they know that this is an important time.

For this ceremony you must have a vase of beautiful flowers, some joss sticks and a candle. You also need lots of string. And then you must have some sticky rice, an egg, and a bottle of whiskey.

The joss sticks and the candle are put into the vase with the flowers, they are lit at the beginning of the ceremony. The person who is having the ceremony and his closest friends and relatives sit in a circle around the flowers. Everyone in the circle holds on to one string which shows they are working together. They all listen while the old man prays.

While the people in the circle are praying, many other friends and relatives are calling the soul of the person who is having the ceremony. They want his soul to come and bring the good luck with him. So they will call until they believe the soul has come. The rice and the egg are for the soul. This

part of the tradition goes back many centuries. Whenever a guest came, it was polite to give him food; so, even today, the rice and eggs are food for the soul. The whiskey is also for the soul, but after the ceremony it will be given to the man who said the prayers as a gift.

After the prayers have ended, each friend will take a piece of string and tie it around the person's wrist. While they are tying the string, he holds the rice and egg showing his hospitality. As they tie the strings around his wrists, they say some words of good luck. When all of the friends have done this, the ceremony is over. The strings tied around his wrists remind him of everyone's wishes for good luck in the future.

THE LITTLE STICKY RICE BASKET

[Ubol]

If you go to the village of Tard Tong near Ubol, you will see a strange chedi in the middle of a field. On the top of the chedi is a sticky rice basket. That is a very strange thing to see on the top of a chedi. Here is why it is there.

In Tard Tong most of the people are rice farmers. They grow sticky rice. Every morning the people go to their fields to plow the ground, and to plant the rice. They stay in their fields until they are through working with the rice for that day. Sometimes it takes many hours.

Some people have to stay at home. They have to watch the children, and they have to make food for those in the fields.

In Tard Tong there were many families; but one was very small, it had only two persons, a mother and her son. The son was about 17 years old and he was strong. So every day he went out to his mother's fields to take care of the rice. One morning he left very early. He took his water buffalo with him, and he went to plow the fields. It was the time of the year to plant rice. He worked for many hours until he was tired. The sun was hot and there were no clouds in the sky. Finally, he decided to rest under a tree. He thought, "Where is my mother? She should have brought me my lunch by now. She is very late today, I wonder why?" Because he did not see his mother coming, he decided to start working again.

By this time he was very angry. It was past the time to eat. When his mother came, he looked at the rice basket and thought it was very small. So he was impolite to her. She said, "Son, I am late; but here is your lunch. Stop working, and come and eat under this tree."

Her son did not listen to her. He took a yoke from the buffalo, and ran to his mother. Because he was so angry, he hit his mother on the head with the yoke. Then he grabbed the sticky rice basket which she had brought and went to eat it on the other side of the tree.

Meanwhile, his mother was dying. She said, "Forgive me, son. I am sorry I am late. Although you may think there is only a little rice for you, I am sure it is enough."

The son ate for several minutes, and soon he was full. Then he remembered hearing his mother's last words. There was still lots of rice left in the

basket, and he was full! He looked around for his mother, and he saw her lying on the ground. She was dead! When he realized what he had done, he sat down and cried.

He did not know what to do, so his neighbors told him to go see a priest. The priest said, "Young man, you have been very evil. You must build a chedi at the place where you killed your mother. On top of the chedi you must put a sticky rice basket to show how silly your anger was." The young man obeyed the priest. He built the chedi. Every holy day he came to the chedi to pray to the Buddha. But his neighbors said he could never forget his evil.

Even today, if you go to Tard Tong, you can see the chedi. The people call it the Chedi of the Little Sticky Rice Basket of the Killed Mother.

THE HUNTER AND THE GOLDEN SWAN

[Chaiyaphum]

In the province of Chaiyaphum there is a beautiful little pond. It is near the mountains and it is filled with water all of the time. Near the pond there is a statue of a swan. This is the story of why the statue was built.

One time long ago there was a flock of golden swans. Every afternoon they would fly out of the sky and swim in this little pond. Not many people knew about this, but some people did and they liked to watch the swans swimming in the water. They thought they were very beautiful. Some people believed they were holy. The swans were really fairies from the Green Mountain which was nearby. Every day the fairies changed into the beautiful

swans as the sun rose. They flew from the mountain to the pond. But every day at sunset they changed back into fairies. No one knew that the swans were fairies, and they always wondered why the swans left just before the sun had set.

The people living near the pond loved the swans very much. They did not want to hurt them, and they told their friends not to hurt the beautiful swans. But sometimes people came to their village who did not know about the swans. This is what happened when a stranger visited the pond.

A hunter from another province came to the pond. He had never been there before, and he did not know that anyone lived nearby. He saw the swans and he wanted to have one for himself. The hunter thought for a moment. How could he catch a swan? He was surprised that the swans were not afraid of him, they were not afraid of anybody. So the hunter took out a long rope and he threw it around the neck of one swan. Suddenly, the other swans were frightened. They saw the hunter catch the swan, and they flew away.

The swan that the hunter had caught was very sad. She knew that she could not escape. If she could not escape, then she would become a fairy and everyone could see her. So she knew that she had to die before the sun set. The swan held her breath until she was dead.

When the people in the village saw all of the swans flying from the pond so early in the afternoon, they were surprised. Why were the swans leaving, they wondered; and they ran to the pond. They saw the hunter standing there with the dead swan.

"What have you done?" they shouted.

When the hunter told them what had happened, the people were very angry. They said, "Those beautiful swans did not hurt anybody. Everyone loved them, and they were not afraid of us because we were kind to them. But you were very greedy, you wanted a swan just for yourself. Now the swan is dead and the rest are gone. That will teach you what happens when you are selfish."

The hunter was very sorry for what he had done, but what could he do? He could make the dead swan alive. He thought, "Perhaps the swans will come back tomorrow, and I can help them in some way." But the swans never returned to the pond and no one has ever seen them since.

Several days later the hunter decided to build a statue of the beautiful swan by the pond. He spend many years making it. Near the statue he buried the dead swan. Finally the statue was finished. Everyone agreed that it was very beautiful and they forgave the hunter for his evil deed.

Today, if you go to Chaiyaphum, you can see the statue of the swan. It is by the pond called the Pond of the Golden Swans. Near the statue is a clear, deep well. Tradition says the well is where the swan was buried; today it is holy.

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Notes from From Kermit Kreuger: February 2016

Fifty or so years ago (1963-1965) Northeastern Thailand was the most remote and the poorest part of the kingdom and Mahasarakham, in the center of

that region, was the poorest province in Northeastern Thailand. The name, "Isaan," was not then publicly used. It is common today (2016) and I shall use it hereafter.

Our students at the Teachers Training College of Mahasarakham came from throughout Isaan, but largely from the provinces near Mahasarakham. Most had grown up in tiny villages. No roads led to many of them nor did many have public utilities such as electricity, water, etc.. They had attended village schools and provincial secondary schools. While English was officially part of the curriculum from about the fourth year, virtually no attempt was made in the primary and secondary schools to learn how to speak English.

The first PCV (Peace Corps Volunteer) at the college was immensely popular with teachers and students because he learned to speak Lao (the common language of Mahasarakham) as well as the Thai he learned in Peace Corps training. On my first morning the provost of the Teachers Training College, Ajaan Wisan Siwarat, said, "I want you to speak only English with our students and our teachers. We can teach alphabet, vocabulary, grammar and spelling but we cannot speak and that is what we must do. If both our students and our faculty do not learn how to speak English they will not progress in this life and world." Indeed, the head of the college English Department, Ajaan Suksan, had just received a full scholarship to the University of Iowa and was to leave several weeks later. As he was preparing to leave, I was assigned the three classes of first year students he had been teaching.

Each year the college admitted about 360 students

who were placed in eight classes based on their demonstrated academic ability. At the end of the second year 60 of the best students would be offered the opportunity to continue for two more years. English was central to the curriculum only in the first and third year. Ajaan Suksan had been teaching one of the better classes and the two weakest classes. At the end of the term the one better class easily completed term-end requirements with an English only teacher, but the two weakest classes were lost. The Thai English teachers would work with those two classes for the next two terms to enable them to meet the graduation requirements. I was assigned to the third year class where we worked on conversational English.

In addition there was a term requirement that the class read a novel (somewhat simplified version). I chose a novel that was then current and popular, *Lost Horizon* by James Hilton about Shangri-La, a fictional place in the mountains of Tibet. Reading the tale was not difficult for the students, but imagining the setting and the principles of the story proved beyond our very best students. In conversations with Ajaan Wisan he pointed out our students came from tiny villages and probably had never been out of them until they went to a provincial secondary school and then the teachers training college. None had ever been to Bangkok so Tibet was simply unimaginable for them.

Given the limitations of our students' world view, and the curriculum's requirement in the next term that each student write an essay in English, Ajaan Wisan suggested the essays be about the world they knew. I wasn't surprised when he added how their village got its name, or about a famous person or event that happened nearby. Even writing about a

world they knew was not an easy task. My students were skeptical at first but we persisted. (At the same time other students in the college hearing that the crazy American was interested in stories about their villages, would drop by my house ostensibly to practice English but even more to share stories.) By the end of the term their work was complete.

At that point I shared my students' stories with Ajaan Wisan and he suggested that since there was an English language typewriter in the college office (I admitted I could type, make mimeograph stencils and even run the college's old hand-crank machine) why not develop a reader for our first year students. In the process of typing the stories I determined that some of our students who struggled with English would find it difficult to consider a long story. Accordingly, I created the divisions so they could read a little or listen to a little and then with their teacher's guidance discuss the little. It might take those students several sessions to read and consider a story whereas the stronger ones could accomplish the task in one reading. Either way my goal was that our students learn that they could use English to express things of their tiny part of the world. And indeed they did! I can testify from walking past classrooms using the readers when first completed, that the response of the students, especially those who struggled with English, was overwhelming.

The ***Stories from the Northeast*** are just those I learned from my advanced students. As for the other stories, they were mine to treasure. Two weeks after the book was completed I was on my way back to the USA and grad school. The Teachers

Training College of Mahasarakham was closed in February 1968 and replaced by a new College of Education in the same site at the beginning of the then new school year. What happened to that mimeographed book I never knew. I presumed it had a brief life and helped some students realize they could talk about their tiny part of the world using a language that was used half way around the world. That it survived in any form as I learned a few months ago surprised me as much as a story in English about some village in some Isaan province stunned our students so long ago.

Should anyone ask, my copies of the student essays, about 150 stories that I had collected by the time I returned to the USA. and all of my notes, journals of stories, photos and other material from two years in Mahasarakham are now the possession of the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan where JFK [John F. Kennedy] in the middle of the night (1:30AM as I recall - but what does the hour matter in the world of all-nighters?) first proposed the Peace Corps in 1960.

Kermit Krueger