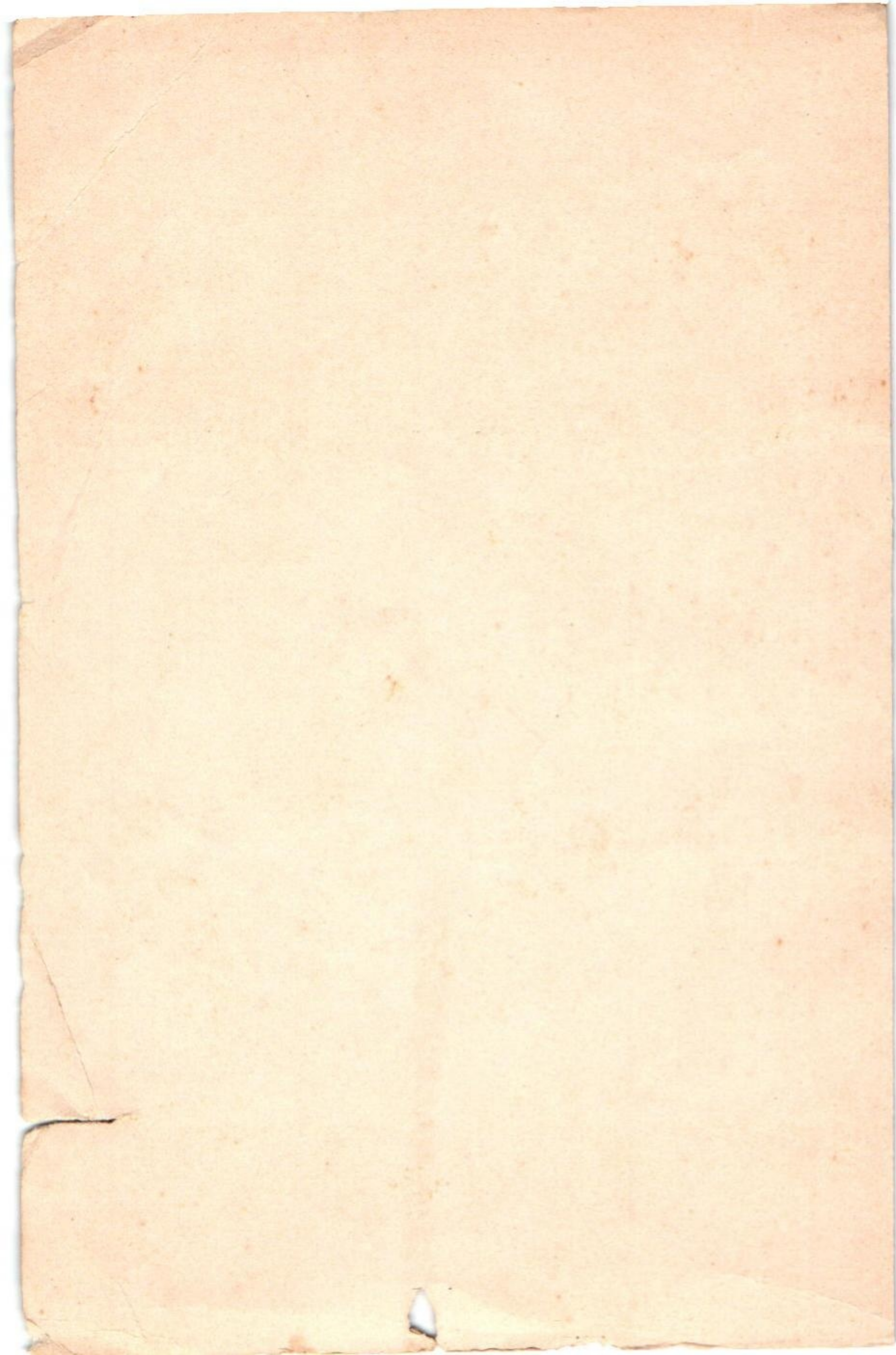


THE
PHRALAK - PHRALAM
OR THE
LAO VERSION OF THE RAMAYANA



by
VO THU THI

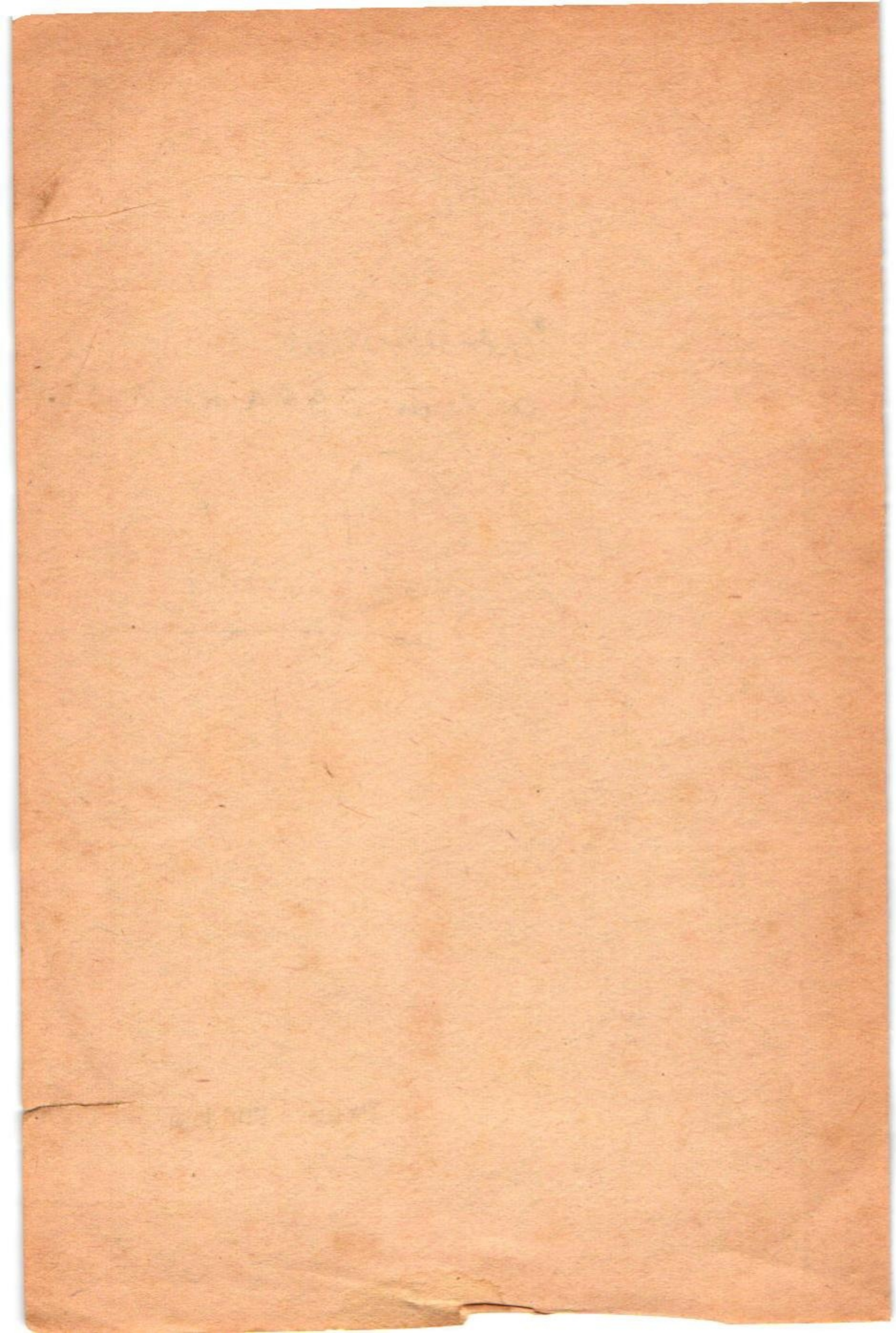


Cordialement

à M^{me} DARA KALANGA

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'D' followed by several loops and a long horizontal underline.

Price : 900 kip



PHRA LAK - PHRA LAM



The
PHRA LAK - PHRA LAM

(THE LAO VERSION OF THE RAMAYANA)

Abridged translation
of the manuscript of Vat Kang Tha
by
VO THU TINH

With the photographs of the mural
paintings of Vat Up Mung
by
Raymond GUERIN

CULTURAL SURVEY OF LAOS

1972

COVER :

“Inthapatha Maha Nakhone”

Picture n° 1 of the mural fresco
of Vat Up-Mung

by

Raymond GUERIN

Printed in Laos by Imprimerie Nationale, Vientiane

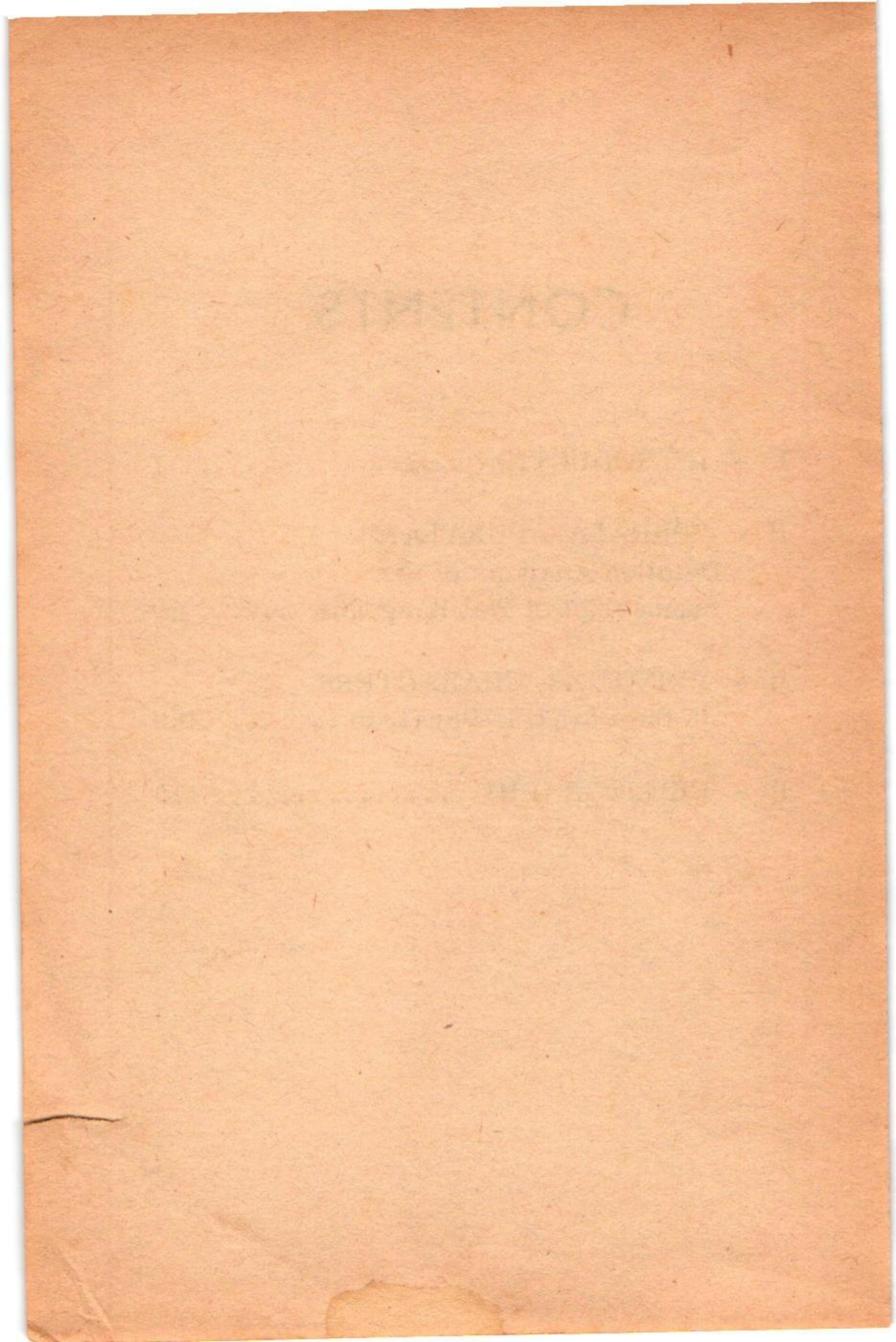
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ຫ້າມຈຳໜ່າຍ



INTRODUCTION

The PhraLak-PhraLam is a Lao version of the Indian Ramayana. Over the centuries, this Lao masterpiece has acquired great fame throughout the Kingdom. But foreigners are still unaware of it, for there have been almost no available documents printed in Western languages about the PhraLak PhraLam; only a short summary was published by P.B. Lafont in a roneotyped paper in 1957. Nevertheless, some attempts to study this Lao version have been related. And recently, while translating a manuscript of the Vat Kang Tha in Ban Kang, Tasseng Bo-O, Muong Say Fong, Khoueng Vientiane, I discovered from another document of Deydier's that a mural fresco illustrating the stories in this version can be seen at the Vat Up-Mung in Vientiane. I found this mural fresco still in the same state as Deydier recorded in his book, in 1952. (1)

The Vat Up-Mung is one of the oldest pagodas in the Capital. Its "sim" (temple) is in the "style of Vientiane" (2) measuring 11,20m long x 5,30m wide. Access to the "sim" is provided by a central door under a gable. In both the right and left walls, at regular intervals, from the main entrance to the other gable, there are three windows and a small door. Opposite the main entrance, against the "back wall" and on a masonry pedestal, a bronze statue of a seated Buddha is seen touching the Earth : in Bhumisparśamudra attitude (3). The interior walls of the "sim" are divided horizontally into four bands which I name from top to bottom 'bands A, B, C, D' to facilitate description. The lower-most band (D) and each of the three others are respectively 1.00m and 1.70m high. The topmost band (A) and the ceiling are decorated with floral motifs including images of Buddha which have no connection with Valmiki's epic poem.

The mural fresco illustrating the stories in the Lao version of the Ramayana covers entirely the two others bands (B, C). On band B from the extreme corner of the

side wall to the right of the main entrance these stories run around the "sim", then pass on to band C and end at the panel on the front wall to the left of the main entrance. Though some of these pictures are faded and the incidents are not painted in chronological order, the main themes of the story can be easily followed.

According to the Venerable Phra Achan Thong Kham Vichitathammo, the Chief of this pagoda, this mural fresco was painted by a Lao artist called Thit Panh. I have met this painter at his frame house, on the Mekhong bank, about 1 km North of the Vat Up-Mung . He was quite surprised that there was some one who paid attention to his work. "My parents were too poor to send me to high school, he said, and I had never learnt how to draw. But in 1938 when I was a monk in the Vat Up-Mung, Achan Si, the chief of the pagoda at that time, asked me to draw a mural fresco. I tried to do my best, and with the help of seven Ai Chua (novices) I managed to finish them in two weeks. We had not enough money, so we used house paint bought in Thai shops. One of these Ai Chua's daily jobs was to remind me of the

proper sequence of the episodes to be drawn. Their failure has involved some breaks in the chronological order of the incidents of the story (4). I told Achan Si about these mistakes, the old monk said philosophically that it was not important".

" When the whole mural fresco was finished, he was so glad that, taking a brush, he drew a butterfly at the top of one of the pictures (picture N° 17) but he told no-one the reasons for which he had put that design on the fresco. After the fashion of the Chief, one of these seven Ai Chua added an aeroplane at the top of the final panel, probably he thought that would give much more solemnity to PhraLam's troops on their way home."

Thit Panh is now a staff member of the Drawing Section of the Office of Public Works in Vientiane. In his spare time he is asked to decorate coffins with traditional Lao designs, and he has acquired a reputation throughout the city as a talented artist.

Another work of this painter can be found at the same Vat Up-Mung : a canvas

of 38.00m long on about 2.00m wide, illustrating the Vessantara Jataka, which I mean to present to our readers in one of my next works.

In the mean time, one of our collaborators, Mr. Raymond Guerin whom I had notified of the existence of this mural fresco, came to the Vat Oup-Moung, and took 34 photographs of the various episodes of this Lao version of the Ramayana.

Before presenting these photographs to illustrate a summary of the PhraLak-PhraLam in next chapter, it would be useful to give here an outline of this great epic poem whose tremendous influence had, through many a dark century, regulated the life of religion, art and literature even in countries outside India.

The original Sanskrit Ramayana was written by Valmiki in the 3rd century B.C. Kamban wrote a beautiful long poem putting this legend into Tamil (5) song, and Tulsida has similarly rendered the epic into Hindi (6). Both Kamban and Tulsida have made some variations in the legend but the

main story is as Valmiki related :

"The King of the Solar dynasty, Desaratha, ruled Ayodhya and was overlord of the India of his time. He is said to have lived and ruled for many thousands years. Having no issue, in his old age, he performed a special sacrifice, the result of which was that his wives bore him sons. The oldest queen Kausalya gave birth to Rama. His youngest wife Kaikeyi had a son, Bharata. Sumitra, the second of his three queens, bore twins named Lakshmana and Satrughna.

Rama and Lakshmana were taken out when very young by the great sage Visvamitra to his hermitage, where the rakshasas (demon tribes) were troubling the sages. Rama killed and drove away all the trespassers and helped the holy men to perform their sacrifices undisturbed. Visvamitra then took Rama to the court of Janaka in Mithila. The king of Mithila offered his daughter, Sita, in marriage to any one who could band and string the great bow of Siva which was left by the gods with his ancestors. Rama succeeded in doing this and obtained Sita in marriage. Desaratha, realizing that his

end was near, desired to install Rama as Yuvaraja (prince regent). But Kaikeyi insisted that Bharata should be crowned king and Rama be banished to the forest for fourteen years. Rama willingly left the palace to obey his father command. With him went his loving wife, Sita, and his brother Lakshmana. Their going upset Desaratha so much that he died of grief. Bharata, who was absent in his uncle's house in the distant country of Kekaya, was sent for. He found Ayodhya in desolation as a result of his mother's doing. He declined to be installed as Yuvaraja and went out to meet Rama in the forest to persuade him to return. Rama refused and preferred to carry out his father's sacred behest and asked Bharata to act as regent during his exile.

In the forest, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana led a very hard life, and fought many rakshasas.

Surpanakha, sister of the demon-king Ravana of Lanka, saw Lakshmana and liked him so much that she wanted him to marry her. Lakshmana was so angry that he cut off her nose. Ravana was mad with

rage at hearing this, and thought of a plan to take revenge. He sent his uncle, Mareecha, to Rama's hut, disguised as a golden deer. Sita was so charmed by the deer that she asked Rama to capture it for her. Rama went after the deer, telling Lakshmana to stay and guard Sita. Then by some magic, Lakshmana heard Rama calling for help. He did not know whether he should go to help his brother or stay and guard Sita as he had been ordered to do. At last, he went, Mareecha had tricked Lakshmana by imitating Rama's voice. This was the chance Ravana had been waiting for. He disguised himself as a sannyasi and came to Sita's hut. He seized her and carried her off to the island of Lanka.

Rama returned to the hut empty-handed, because there had been no real deer. When he found Sita gone, he was heart-broken. He set out at once in search of her. And as before, his devoted brother Lakshmana went with him. The two brothers were helped by Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, and his minister Hanuman, The army of monkeys hurled rocks and mountains into the sea to built a bridge so that Rama could cross over into Lanka.

There Rama fought Ravana and killed him. Sita was rescued. The fourteen years of Rama's banishment were now over. He returned to Ayodhya with Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman. Bharata had kept the throne for him during all the fourteen years. Rama was now crowned king. His reign was so just and good that people even to-day speak of Ramajya as the ideal of government".

No masterpiece has exerted such great influence on the domain of religion, art and literature in the South-East of Asia as did the Ramayana : "The cult of Valmiki, referred to a record of King Prakasadharmma of Champa, clearly indicates that the Great Epic was well known in the kingdom of Champa during the seventh century A.D." "The ancient Khmers were quite familiar with the Ramayana... According to a Cambodian epigraph, the Brahmana Somasarmman offered the texts of the Ramayana to a temple and made a provision for their daily and regular recitation in the seventh century A.D." In Java, galleries of reliefs illustrating the stories in the Ramayana can be found in the majestic monuments of the Prambanan group built by King Daka in the

early years of the tenth century A.D. And "although the first introduction of Ramayanic influence into Thailand can be traced back to a date as far as 13th century A.D., it is nevertheless not until the beginning of the Ratnakosindra Period (about 1781 A.D.). The Epic was dramatised by the King Rama II (1809 - 1824 A.D.) and began to be played as a mask.

As far as Laos is concerned, no one can state when and how the first influences of Valmiki's epic poem appeared in the kingdom. However, at present, three different Lao versions of the Ramayana can be found :

- The version of Muong Sing
- The version of Luang-Prabang
- The version of Vientiane.

1.- In 1957, a manuscript of the Vat Xieng Chay in Muong Sing (North Laos) entitled "Phommachack", (Ravana) was condensed by P.B. Lafont (roneotyped document op. cit.) and according to his statement, this version has a lesser degree of fame throughout Sipsongphanna; it is very likely that the "Phommachack" is just an adaptation of a foreign version for religious purposes;

which would justify the condensed feature and the shortage of developed details in this version (Ibid. Introduction, p. 1).

2.- Published recently by the National Library (ed. 1971, 142 pages) the version of Luang-Prabang, entitled "PhraLak-PhraLam" is a poem of 1823 verses. This version is a copy of the manuscript found at the vicinity of Luang-Prabang. From an identification with other summaries of the Ramakien, it may be said that this work is a condensed adaptation of the Thai version of the Ramayana. Unlike the Sanskrit Epic which begins with a question of Valmiki to Narada, the Ramakien and the Lao version of Luang-Prabang take up the foundation of Ayodhya as the starting point.

3.- The Vientiane version entitled "PhraLak-PhraLam" is composed of two manuscripts which can be found at Vat Phra-Keo, in the Capital, and another at the Vat Kang Tha as related above. The former was condensed by P.B. Lafont in 1957 (Ibid. pp. 6-17).

The manuscript of the later (of Vat Kang Tha) is one of 44 "phouk" (chapters) divided into 4 "mád" (sheaves), anonymous, copied by a man called Chansa Keung and offered to the Vat by Me Chanh Intha in 2476 B.E. (1933 A.D.). Unfortunately, some of these phouk have been lost so that from time to time I had to refer to Lafont's summary to present incidents in the right sequence.

As far as the plot is concerned, the Lao version of Vientiane coincides with the main story, the details nevertheless are so different from the original that we induce ourselves to think we are reading a quite different narration of Rama.

The peculiarity in the version of Vat Kang Tha is that, this manuscript presents an illuminative documentary on the beliefs and usages on the idioms and proverbs, on the sentimental and social life of the Ancient Kingdom of LanXang - that listeners while following the numerous marvellous incidents of the endless Epic, can enjoy from time to time, for a change, poetic lovers dialogues rendered into harmonious verses . . .

As it would be too pretentious to put a complete study of the peculiarities in the few lines of a preface, I therefore refrain from fully treating the subject here, which I mean to do in another article. The only object in view of this article is to furnish our readers with a clear narration of the Lao Ramayana and with a concrete display of one of the interesting works of the Lao Fine-Arts : the mural fresco of the Vat Up-Mung in Vientiane.

In conclusion, I must acknowledge that this article owes to the Venerable Achan Thongkham Vichitathammo for his kind permission to take photographs of the mural fresco in the Vat Up-Mung; the Venerable Achan Boun Keung Huong for his benevolent authorization to translate the manuscript of the PhraLak-PhraLam at the Vat Kang Tha, Mr. Kykeo Oudom, Maha Choum Chittaphot, at Vientiane, Chankhou Praseut, Thit Noy at Bo-O, for their assistance to decipher some passages in the manuscript, Mr. Prachit Sourisak, Vice-Director of the National Li-

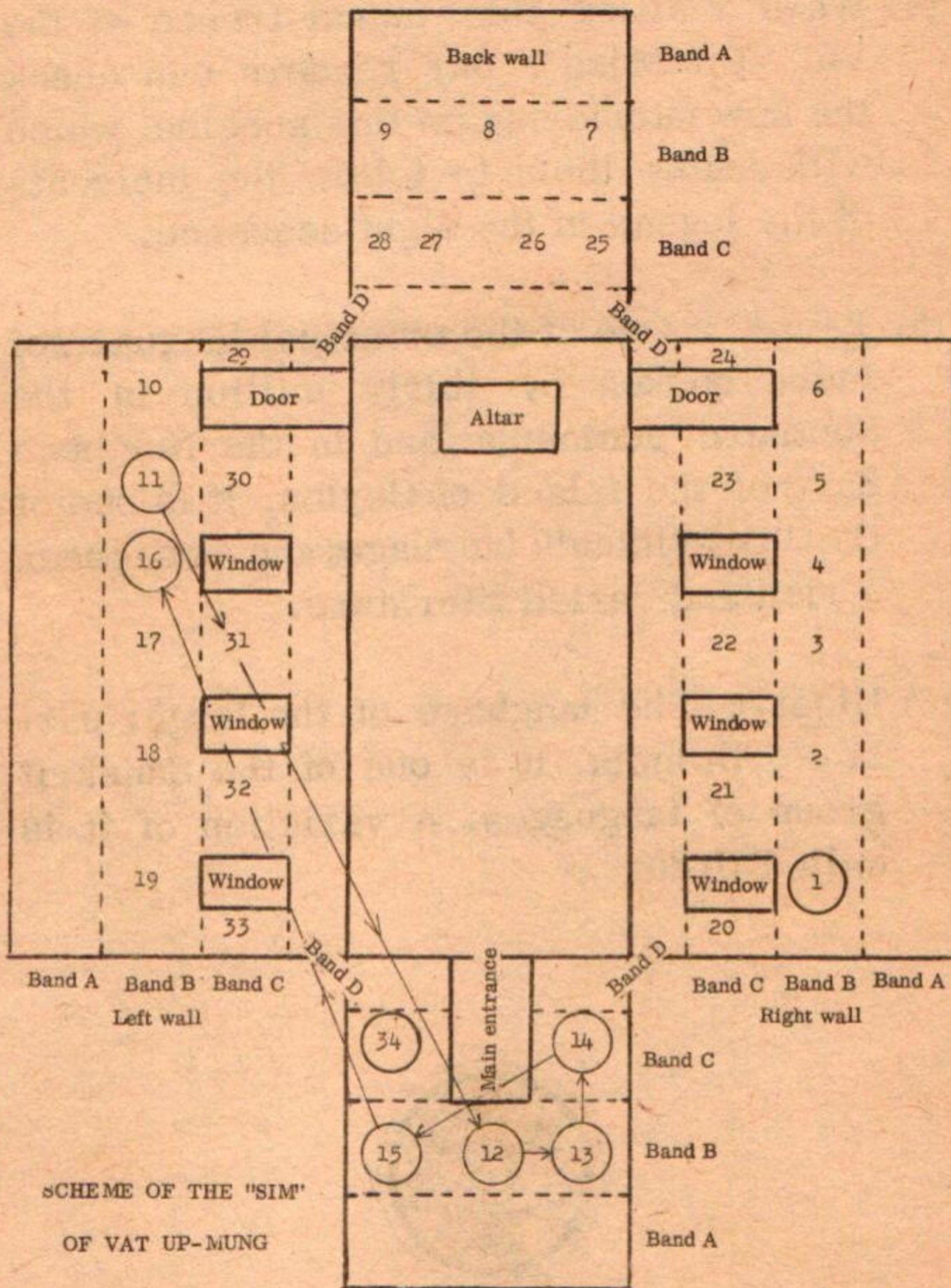
brary, the Doctor Sachchidananda Sahai, visiting Professor of S. E. Civilization at 'Ecole Supérieure de Pédagogie' of Dongdok, Vientiane, for their valuable suggestions and informations.

NOTES

- (1) See "Introduction à la Connaissance du Laos" by Henri Deydier, Saïgon, 1952, p. 100.
- (2) See "L'Art Lao" by Pierre Marie Gagneux, Roneotyped publication of the "Mission d'Enseignement et de Coopération, Ambassade de France, Vientiane" 1969, p. 8.
- (3) Bhumisparsa-mudra :
When Gautama took his seat on the vajrasana, determined not to leave it until he was perfectly enlightened, Mara, the Evil One, tried his best to thwart his purpose and attacked him with a mighty army. But Gautama remained immoved on his seat and invoked the Earth to bear witness to his right to the vajrasana.

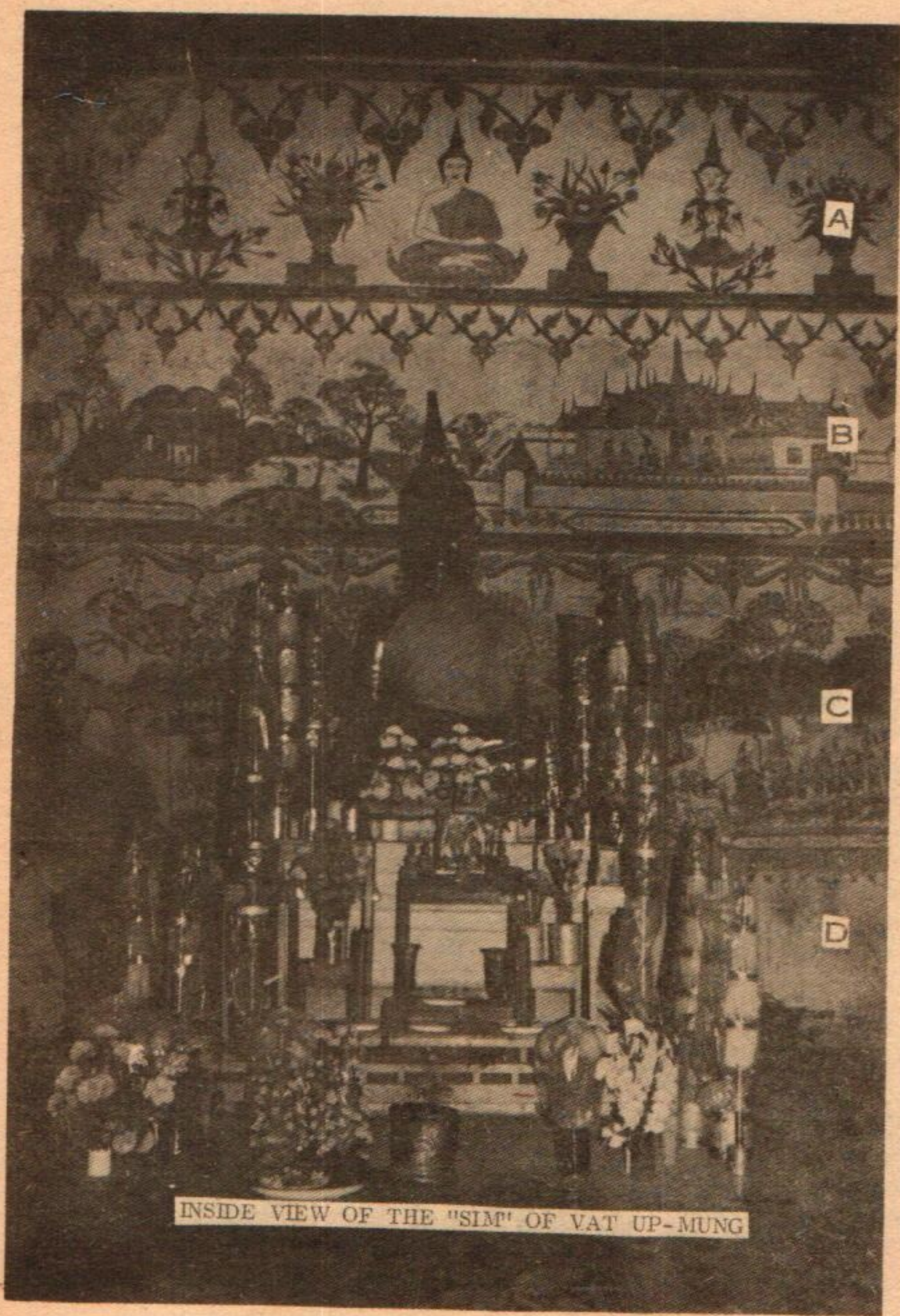
- (4) When visiting this mural fresco at the Vat Up-Mung , our readers can check the new numbering on this scheme, which will enable them to follow the incidents of the legend in the right sequence.
- (5) Tamil : One of the principal languages of India spoken by thirty million in the Southern peninsula and in the Northern part of the island of Ceylon. It is one of the "Dravidian" languages and possesses a rich and varied literature.
- (6) Hindi : The language of the larger part of North India. It is one of the Sanskrit group of languages. A variation of it is called Urdu.



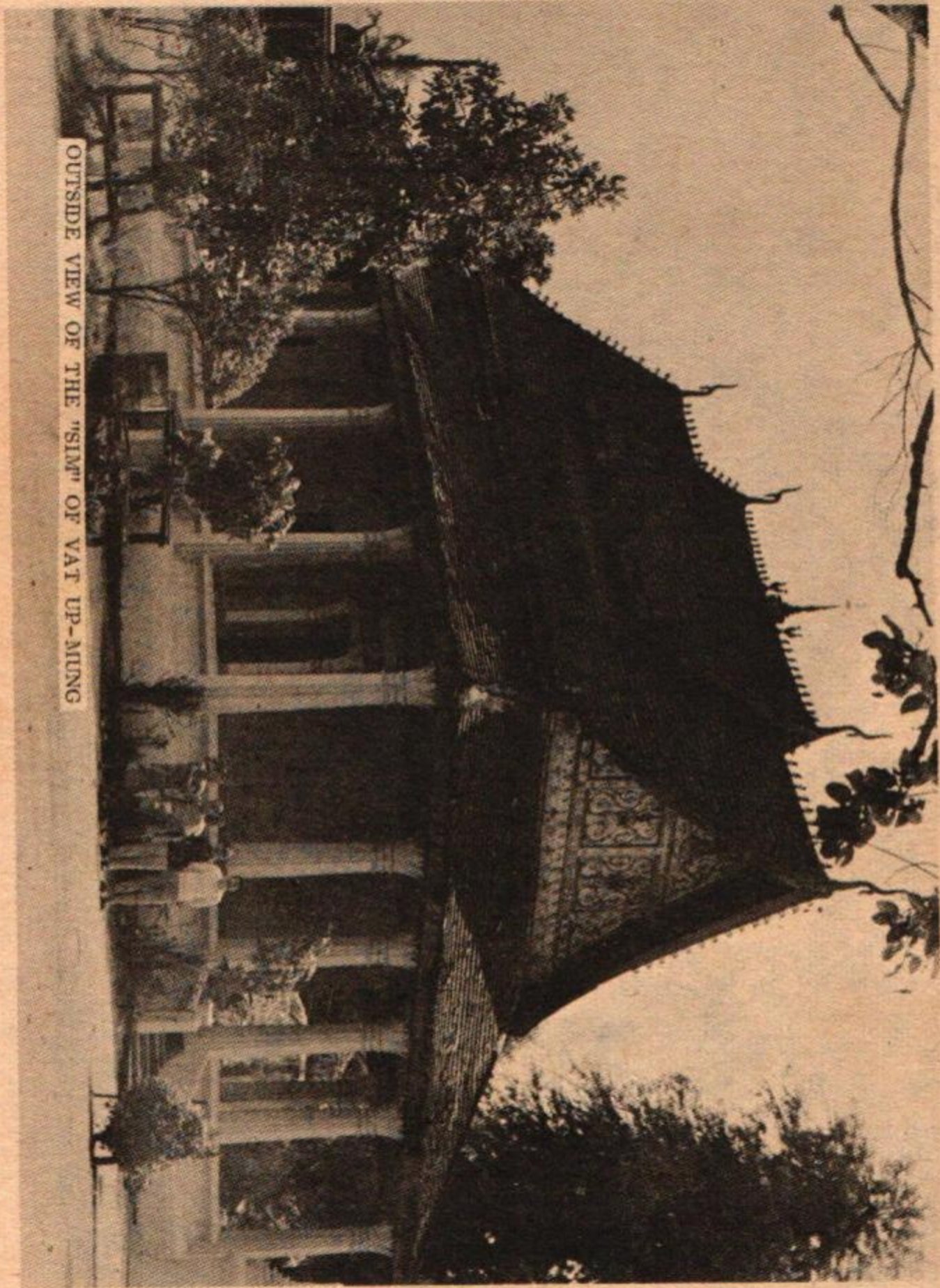


SCHEME OF THE "SIM"

OF VAT UP-MUNG



INSIDE VIEW OF THE "SIM" OF VAT UP-MUNG



OUTSIDE VIEW OF THE "SIM" OF VAT UP-MUNG

The

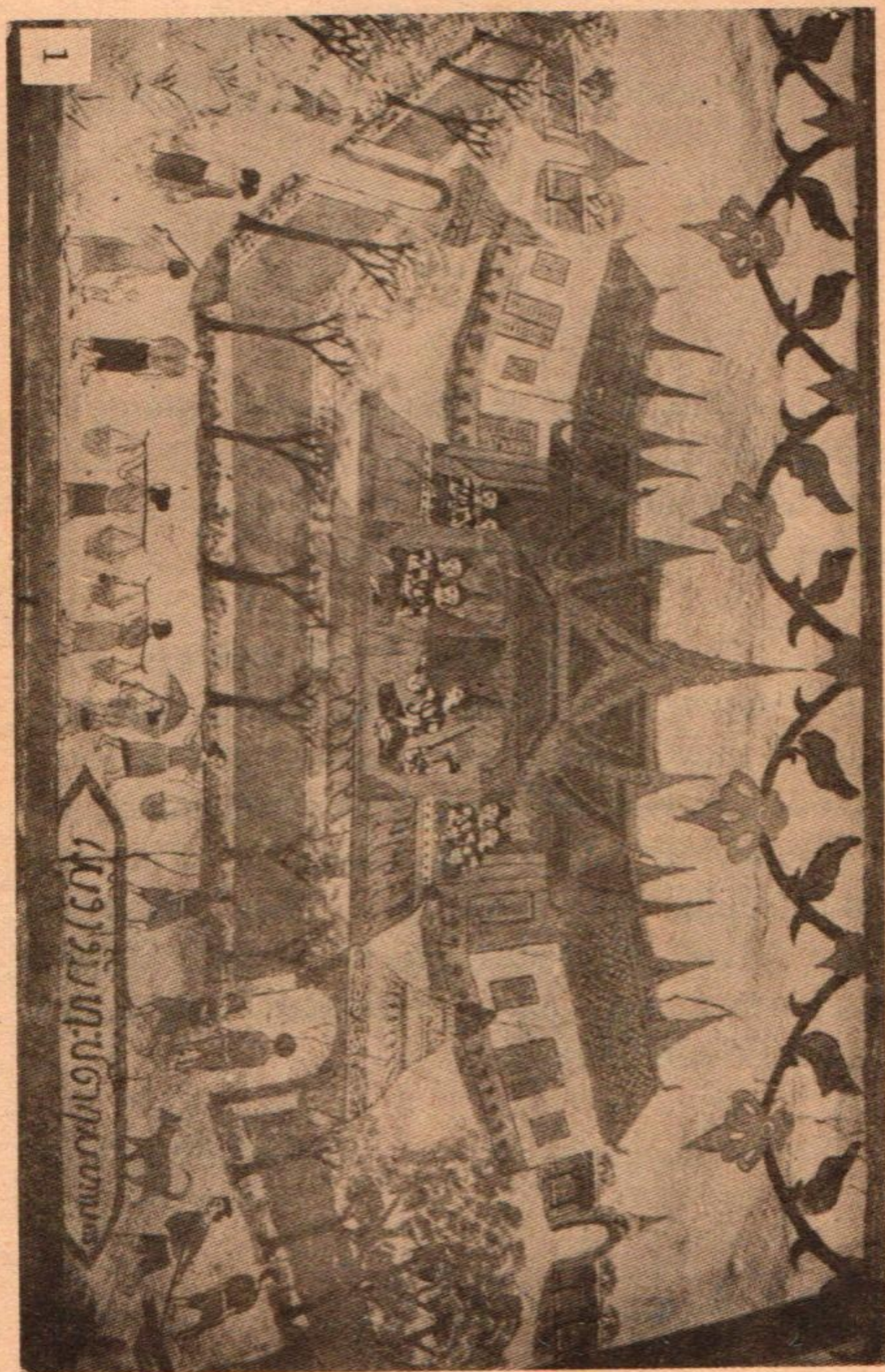
PHRA LAK - PHRA LAM

(Abridged translation of the manuscript
of Vat Kang Tha, Vientiane)

A PREVIOUS LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

One day, to his devoted disciples gathered at the Vat Savathi, the Buddha narrated one of his previous existences, the story of "PhraLak-PhraLam" :

Once a Brahma (God) and his wife came down from Heaven to Earth, and because they tasted the flavour of the soil through curiosity, they lost their supernatural powers and were unable to return to their celestial dwelling. They resigned themselves to a stay on Earth and built a kingdom named Muong Inthapatha Maha Nakhone. (see photo 1)



They had a son, named Thaporamasouane. After the death of his father, the Brahma, Thaporamasouane was crowned king. But he shortly ceded the throne to his second son, Thao Vilounha. This disappointed his elder son, Thao Thataradtha, so much that he left the country, went to the north, and settled at Phan Phao, a place on the right bank of the Mekong, where he built a city called Maha Thani Si Phan Phao.

A seven-headed Naga, the king of snakes, came and suggested that he move his city to the opposite bank of the river. "There," he said, "You and your descendants will enjoy a long and prosperous reign".

Thao Thataradtha did as the Naga recommanded. The new town was named Chanthabouri Si Sattanak or "the splendid city of the seven-headed Naga." (This was the city of Vientiane).

At that time, another Brahma was incarnated as the son of a peasant, Thao Loun Lou, in the kingdom of Inthapatha Maha Nakhone. But the limbs of this child were extraordinarily short and withered. (see photo 2)



One day, while Thao Loun Lou's father was ploughing his rice field, the king of the Gods, Phra In, came from his celestial palace on a marvellous horse, and asked him to explain several enigmas. "I'll kill you," he said, "if you can't solve them."

The poor farmer begged time to think the enigmas over. On coming home, he told his wife and son what had happened, and that he would die, for he wasn't clever enough to explain Phra In's enigmas.

"Don't be afraid, Daddy," Thao Loun Lou said. "I'll meet Phra In tomorrow, and I think I'll be able to give him the right answers."

The next day, Thao Loun Lou was taken to the rice field. Phra In came, on his horse, and asked the peasant "How many furrows do you plough each day?" (see photo 3)

Thao Loun Lou replied for his father :
"Please, tell me how many steps does your horse make every day?"



Phra In drew near to Thao Loun Lou and said "Well, if you really are a clever one, please tell me what is 'One without two?'"

Thao Loun Lou replied at once "This is the Buddha, for in the world we can't find a second one who is as wise and virtuous as Him."

- "And what are 'two without three?'"

"These are 'Houp patham' and 'Nam patham.'" (Houp patham means 'body corporate'; nam patham means 'name'. This is a double expression involving the totality of the corporal and psychic individuality in Buddhist doctrine.)

- "What are 'three without four?'"

Phra In asked.

"These are (1) soukha vethana, (2) thoukkha vethana, and (3) asoukha vethana." (First, the feeling of happiness, second, the feeling of pain, and third, the neutral feeling, the three principal kinds of psychic feeling in Buddhist philosophy.)

- "What are 'four without five' ?"

"These are thoukkha saccha (Existence is suffering), samoutha saccha (The origin of suffering is our endless of desire), nilotha saccha (The cessation of suffering by suppressing our desires), and makkha saccha (For this purpose, follow the Way shown by the Buddha, the 'Four Noble Truths' in Buddhist doctrine.)"

- "What are 'five without six' ?"

"These are the Sin Ha : pana, athina, kame, mousa, and soura." (Not to kill, to steal, to commit adultery, to lie, or to get drunk, the five commandments of Buddha which laymen have to observe.)

- "What are 'six without seven' ?"

Phra In asked.

Thao Loun Lou answered : "These are (1) chakkhinthinhang, (2) sithinthinhang, (3) khaninthinhang, (4) sieohinthinhang, (5) kanhinthinhang, and (6) maninthinhang." (Six ways to perceive things in Buddhist philosophy, through the eyes, ears, nose tongue, body, mind.)

- "What are 'seven without eight' ?"

"These are the 'Phosangkha chet'." (The seven constituent parts of the awakening to ascend to Nirvana or Buddhist paradise : (1) Sati or presence of mind, (2) dhammavicaya or investigation of things, (3) viriya or energy, (4) piti or joy, (5) passadhi or tranquillity, (6) samadhi or meditation, and (7) upeka or unperturbability.)

- "And now, what are 'eight without nine' ?" Phra In asked.

"These are the 'Sin pet'", Thao Loun Lou replied. (The eight commandments of the Buddha, the sin ha plus three others commandments, not to have food in the afternoon or evening, not to enjoy music, dancing, flowers perfumes, and not to sit in a high place. Monks must observe these eight commandments.)

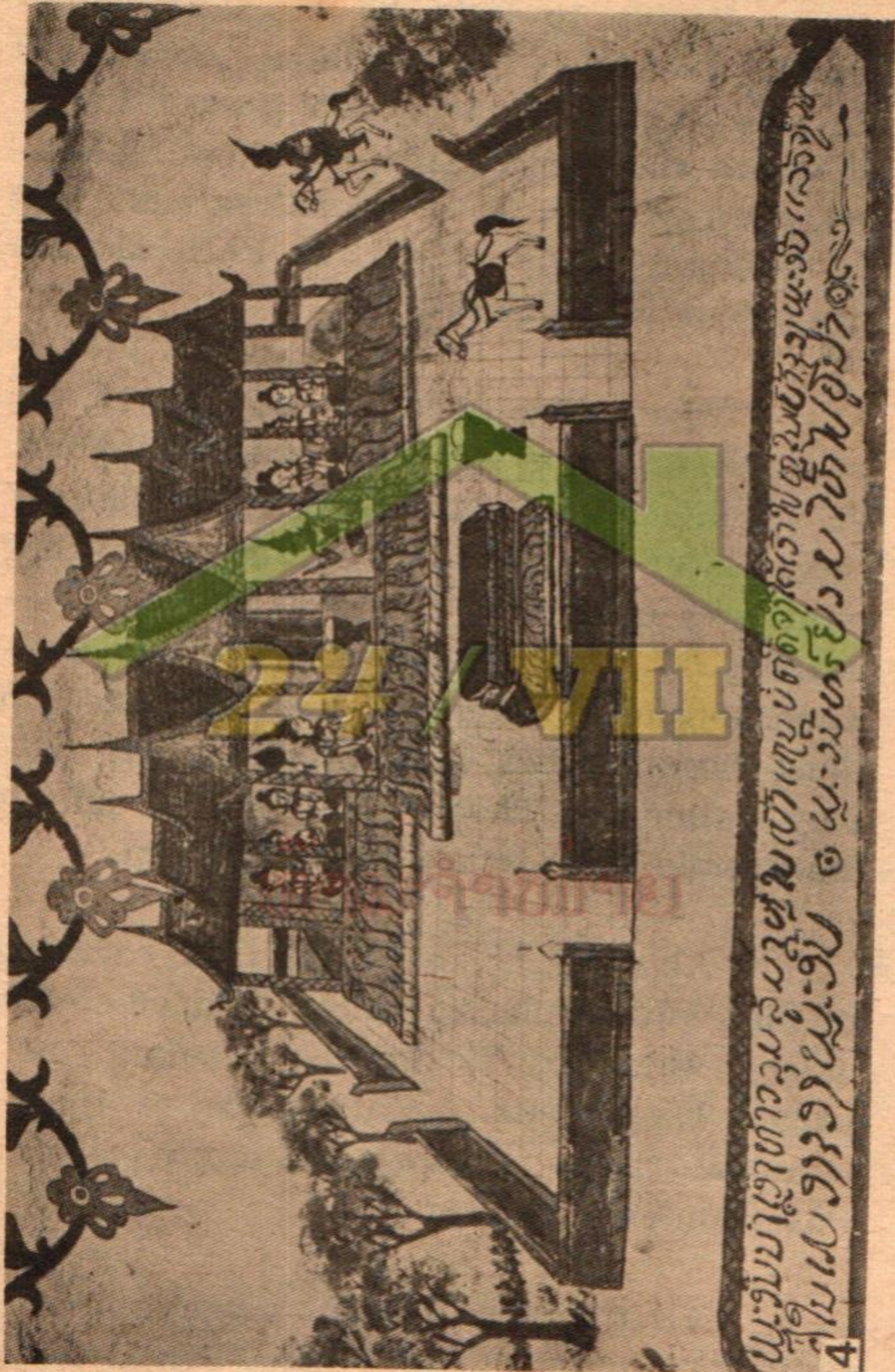
Thao Loun Lou's accurate answers amazed Phra In so much that he took him to Heaven and ordered the "Then" (Gods) to eliminate his infirmity.

The "Then" couldn't succeed in melting Thao Loun Lou in their bronze, silver and gold moulds. Phra In had to take him into his palace and only in a diamond mould he could have Thao Loun Lou changed into a handsome young man. Phra In predicated that no one would be able to vanquish Thao Loun Lou except the Buddhisattva. (see photo 4)

Following this transformation Phra In ordered Thao Loun Lou to be born as Hapkhanasouane, son of Thao VilounHa, King of Inthapatha Maha Nakhone.

When he was only three years old, Hapkhanasouane already had invincible powers and his indomitable courage and spirit brought him the implicit obedience of his subjects and soldiers alike.

One day, Hapkhanasouane heard of the beauty of Nang Chantha, his uncle's daughter. He rushed to Chanthabouri Si Sattanak, and after overcoming all resistance, carried off his charming cousin.



Unable to fight by himself against Hapkhanasouane, Thattaradtha requested Phra In to give him the aid of powerful descendants who would be able to defeat his daughter's ravisher. A Buddhisattva was sent to incarnate as PhraLam and PhraLak, the twins sons of Thattaradtha.

When they reached the age of one year, the father of the twins ordered them to go to Inthapatha Maha Nakhone to deliver their sister Nang Chantha. After overcoming numerous obstacles, they succeeded in penetrating into their cousin's capital. In Hap-Khanasouane's absence, they carried off Nang Chantha, but before leaving the city, they called on Thao VilounHa's to inform their uncle of their legitimate mission.

Alarmed by the news of the ravaging of his wife, Hapkhanasouane hurried to his palace which lay vacant and desolate, no longer happy with the presence of Nang Chantha. He immediately started to pursue PhraLam and PhraLak.

All the three cousins fought a brave fight but victory came to none. Finally, by

dint of his supernatural powers, PhraLam threw miraculous lotus filaments and succeeded in binding up Hapkhanasouane.

Nang Chantha requested her brothers not to kill her husband, who surrendered at once and promised to join them at Chanthabouri Si Sattanak in order to present his apology to Thattaradtha. As evidence of his gratitude to PhraLak, PhraLam, Hapkhanasouane offered them a marvellous boat of 120 "va" (218.40 meters) which could either sail on the water, or wheel on the earth, or fly in the air.

The journey of PhraLam, PhraLak and Nang Chantha from Inthapatha Maha Nakhone to Chanthabouri Si Sattanak, on this marvellous boat, was full of unexpected adventures : when they arrived at the Muong of Tatkasila, Phagna Sinphalika offered his young sister Nang Chantha Moukhi to PhraLam and his daughter Nang Ousourika to PhraLak. At Muong Thoay, they married Phagna Phommachack's daughters: PhraLam, Nang Phimmasone, Nang Thipha Adsamon; PhraLak, Nang Phonchaodi, Nang

Phiphalo Laognam. Then, at Muong Khom, a Muong of Hindu inhabitants, Phagna Chanthasene gave them his daughters : Nang Khamsao to PhraLam; Nang Ekkhay to PhraLak. And at the two last halting places of this long journey, PhraLam espoused Nang Khamkhao, one of Khoun Phiphak's daughters, and four Nang Thevada (angels) of the island Done Keut didn't hesitate to ask the two brothers to marry them.

After a seven-year expedition, PhraLam and PhraLak came back to their father's capital, with their charming sister Nang Chantha as a trophy. They had delivered her and taken her from Inthapatha Maha Nakhone . . . To reward their glorious exploit, Thattaradtha installed PhraLam and PhraLak respectively as King and viceroy of Chanthabouri Si Sattanak and appointed two beautiful girls of the home city, Nang Si Phimpha and Nang Kan Nha, as Great Queens of the Kingdom.

Meanwhile, Hapkhanasouane came to Chanthabouri Si Sattanak and humbly presented his apology to Thattaradtha who, forgiving the repented ravisher, allowed him to

celebrate a traditional wedding ceremony with Nang Chantha. From Inthapatha Maha Nakhone a large group of young people, led by Khoun Chong, went with Hapkhanasouane to the festival to attend. They were welcomed with great enthusiasm by those of Chanthabouri Si Sattanak. Flirtation kindled the flame of passion in their heart, so much so that most of the young guests wanted to settle for ever at Chanthabouri Si Sattanak and refused to go home. Naturally, neither PhraLam nor Khoun Chong could approve of this. So they eloped with their lovers and built new districts far from Chanthabouri Si Sattanak City. These marriages were the origin of the following toponomic legends :

One of Khoun Muong Kang's sons at Chanthabouri Si Sattanak was called Thao Xieng Khouang, for he was ex-monk (=Xieng) and used to lie accross (=Khouang) the road to tease passers-by. Unable to obtain permission to get married, Thao Xieng Khouang and his lover Nang Kham Phouane eloped to the North and settled in the Plain of jars. The new district they built was named Muong Xieng Khouang or Muong Phouane.

After the fashion of their friends,

Thao Say, son of Khoun Muong Khoua at Chanthabouri Si Sattanak, and his sweet-heart Nang Kham Mala, eloped to the South of the river Nam Hin Boun. The place was full of birds which ravaged their crops. So they put pebbles (=Hin) inside hollow wooden cylinders (=Heup) which produced big sounds when swung by the wind, to prevent birds from approaching their fields. The place where they settled was named Muong Hin Heup.

Another young man at Chanthabouri Si Sattanak was called Thao Long, which means "Falling in love temporarily", for he was a bastard. He loved a girl who had as her name Nang Bong Ling, because the day she was born, her father had just caught (=Bong) a monkey (=Ling). This young couple eloped to the South, halted on the bank of a junction of the Nam Hin Boun and swore that they would stay together until their death. So this river was named Nam Pakan or "Swearing River" and the district they built, Muong Bong Ling.

In the same way, other Muong of Middle Laos were called Muong Kham Keut, Muong Sikhotaboun, Muong Salavan, Muong Adtapu . . . respectively from the name of

Nang Kham Sin combined with Thao Kham Keut's, the name of Thao Sikhota with Nang Boun Thanh's, the name of Nang Kham Lod Sa with Thao Van Veun's, the name of Nang Adta with Thao Pu Lu's . . .

On the other hand, numerous young couples, instead of eloping absolutely, would go away to hide on an island not far from Chanthabouri Si Sattanak city in order to enjoy life more freely; so this island was named Done Suong Sou or Done Xieng Sou, which means "Hidden Lovers' Island".

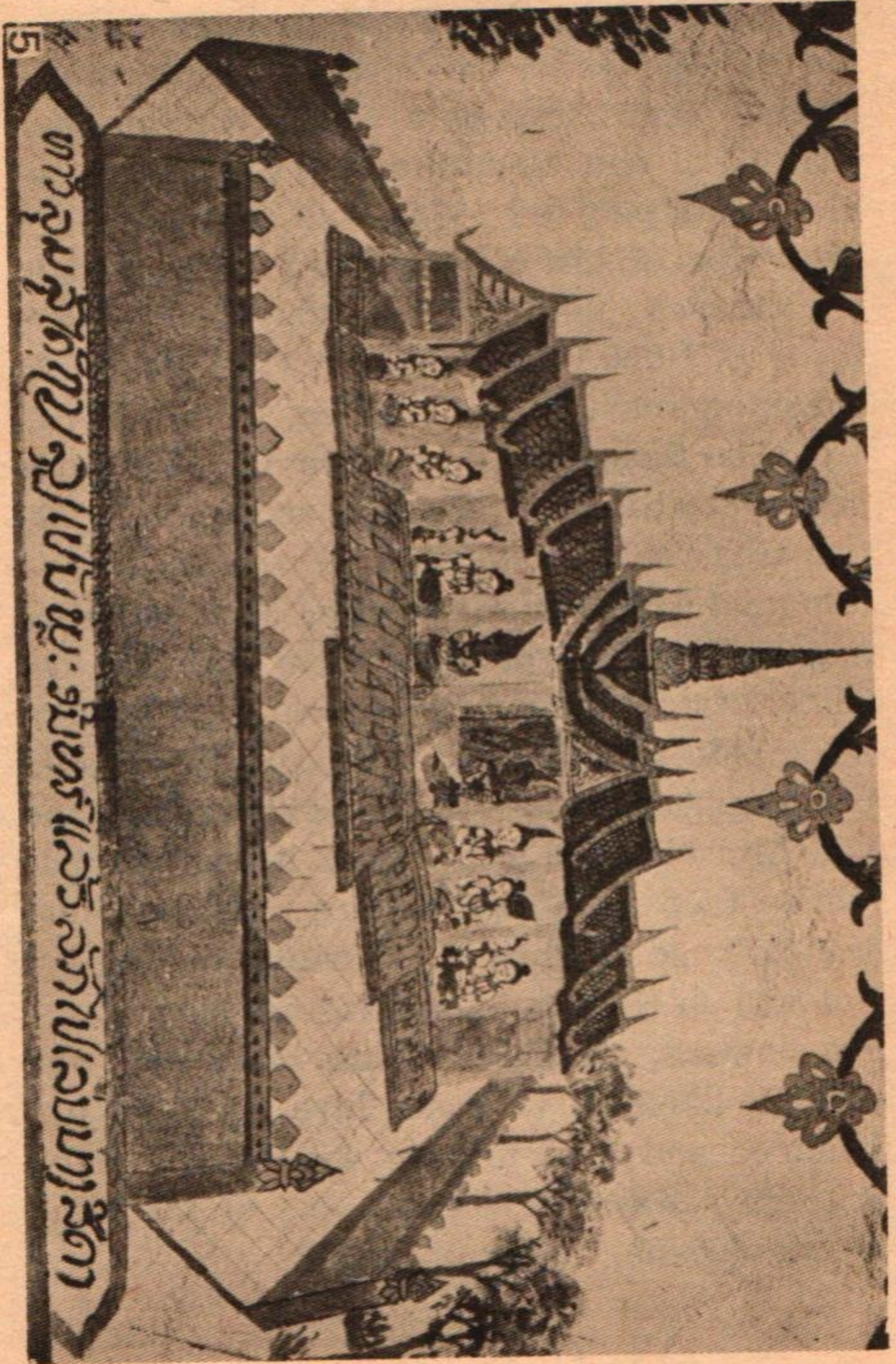
Mention may here be made of a great festival lasting for days at a place to the South of the river Se Bang Hieng, where young people from Inthapatha Maha Nakhone and those from Chanthabouri Si Sattanak could enjoy themselves without any restraint and where they were so excessively happy, so ecstatically delighted, that they named the place "Savan Nakhone" or "Savannakhet", which means "Paradise".

On his return to Inthapatha Maha Nakhone, Hapkhanasouane noticed that most of the young people he had previously taken

with him to Chanthabouri Si Sattanak had deserted. Suspecting that Khoun Chong had favoured these doings in connivance with Phra Lam, he vowed to kill him. Khoun Chong came to seek the protection of Thaphoramasouane and Thao VilounHa. Not satisfied with such a behaviour, both the grand-father and father of Hapkhanasouane left Inthapatha Maha Nakhone and started for Mount Nhou Khanh Thone, where, later, Thattaradtha came and stayed with them. Then, Phra In appeared, built a city for these ex-kings, taught them supernatural powers and changed the name of Thaphoramasouane into Aysouane. A short time later, Aysouane had two more children : Thao Viroupakkha and Thao Kouvera. He appointed his four sons : Thattaradtha, VilounHa, Viroupakkha, Kouvera, respectively, as Kings in the East, the South, the West and the North.

(The four sons of Aysouane have the same names as the 4 Buddhist Guardians of the 4 cardinal-points of the World : Dhataradha (Thattaradtha) Guardian of the East; Virulhaka (VilounHa) Guardian of the South; Virupakkha (Viroupakkha) Guardian of the West; Kubera (Kouvera) Guardian of the North).

In his palace, Hapkhanasouane growled in rage when the news of Thaphoramasouane and VilounHa's departure reached him. Who had favoured the elopements of his young people? Who had instigated the desertion of his old parents? Was it plain coincidence that Thattaradtha had joined them at Nhou Khanh Thone? This must be a sneaking trick of his cunning cousin Phra-Lam, he thought. So, looking for new hope and new alliances, Hapkhanasouane left Inthapatha Maha Nakhone and settled on the island of Lanka with his wife, Nang Chantha, and his young brothers, Thao Phik Phi and Thao Inthasi. Then, he went up to Heaven to seek help of Phra In. Once again, Phra In put Hapkhanasouane in his own mould and had him changed into a very handsome man whose face and stature were exactly similar to those of Phra In, himself. During his sojourn in Heaven improving his supernatural powers, Hapkhanasouane took advantage of this likeness to make love with the two hundred and four million wives of Phra In, including Nang Soudsada, one of the Four Great Queens. (see photo 5)



5

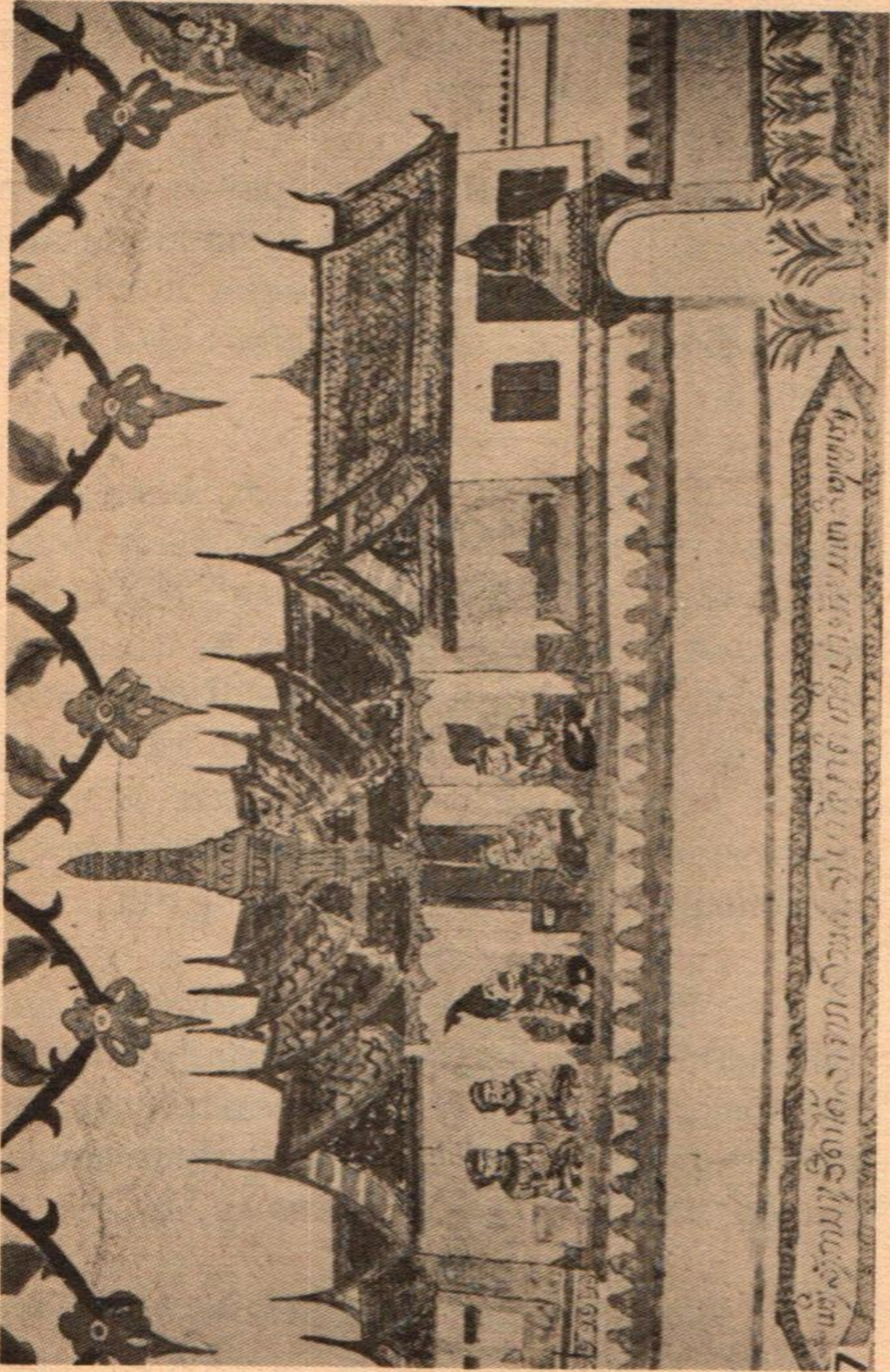
ຫາກສຸມສຸກໄດ້ຊົມໄປພູ: ຈົມທຣ໌ແລະ ລັກໄປລ່າມຫາສັດຕູ

Shortly after this, Nang Soudsada confessed to her husband that she was quite happily surprised that he had recently come to her much more often than before when he had been used to share his favours equitably between the 204 million other women. But the truth was that Phra In was more surprised than his wife. At any rate, owing to Nang Soudsada's confidence the faithless trick of Hapkhanasouane was revealed.

To take revenge upon this would-be "rake", Nang Soudsada requested Phra In to let her come down to Earth and incarnate as Hapkhanasouane's daughter and wait for a propitious opportunity to kill her enemy by herself. (see photo 6)

Her wish was soon granted. Accordingly, Nang Chantha conceived. A girl was duly born and named Nang Sida, who was really the incarnation of Nang Soudsada. (see photo 7)

As soon as the girl saw the first light, she got up and attempted to kill her



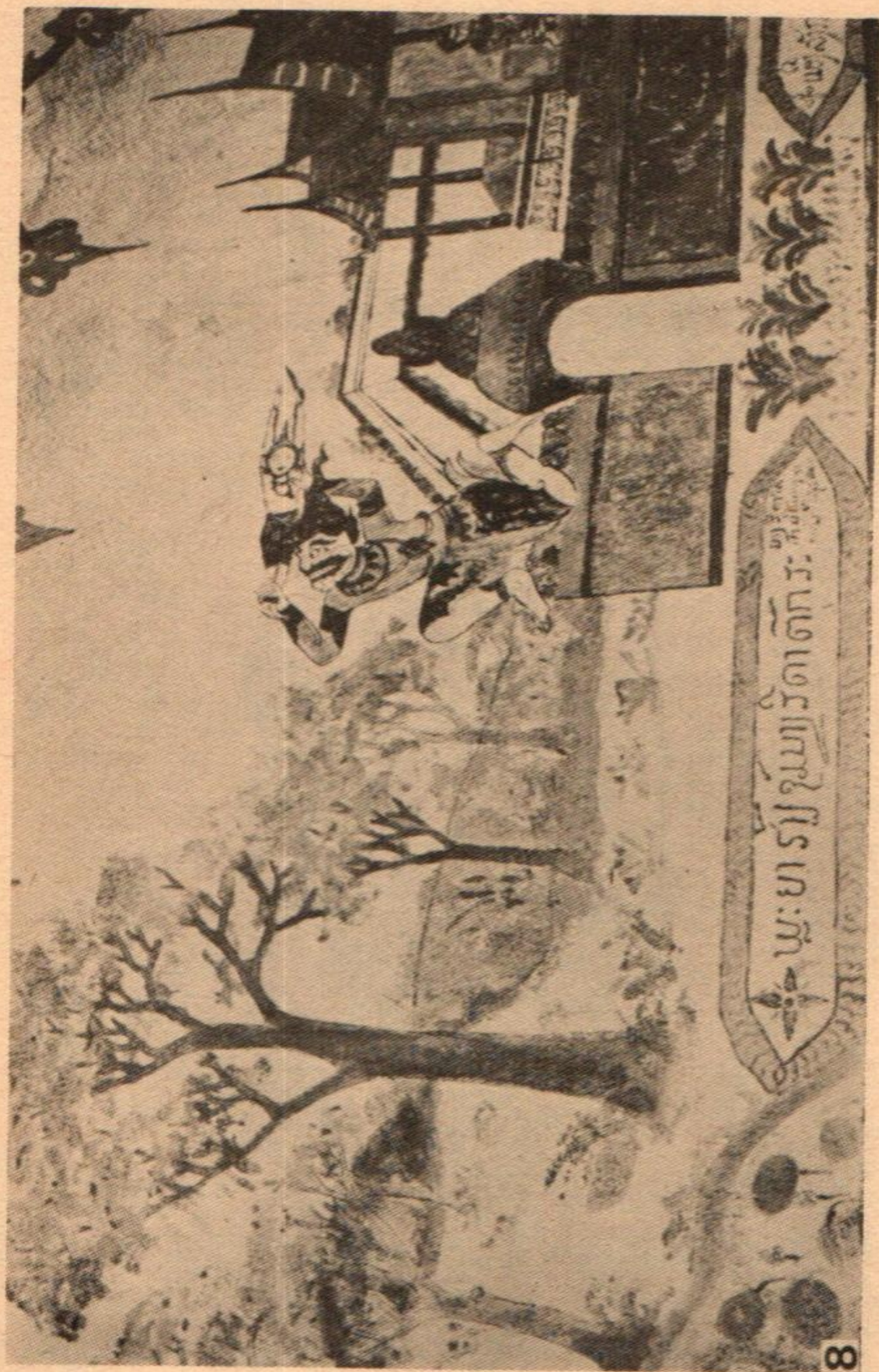
father with a knife. Furious, Hapkhanasouane had her put on a raft and thrown into the river. (see photo 8)

By dint of the divine power of Phra In, the raft was carried to a landing-stage near the dwelling of Chao Laksi, a "rishi". He harbored and adopted Nang Sida. (see photo 9)

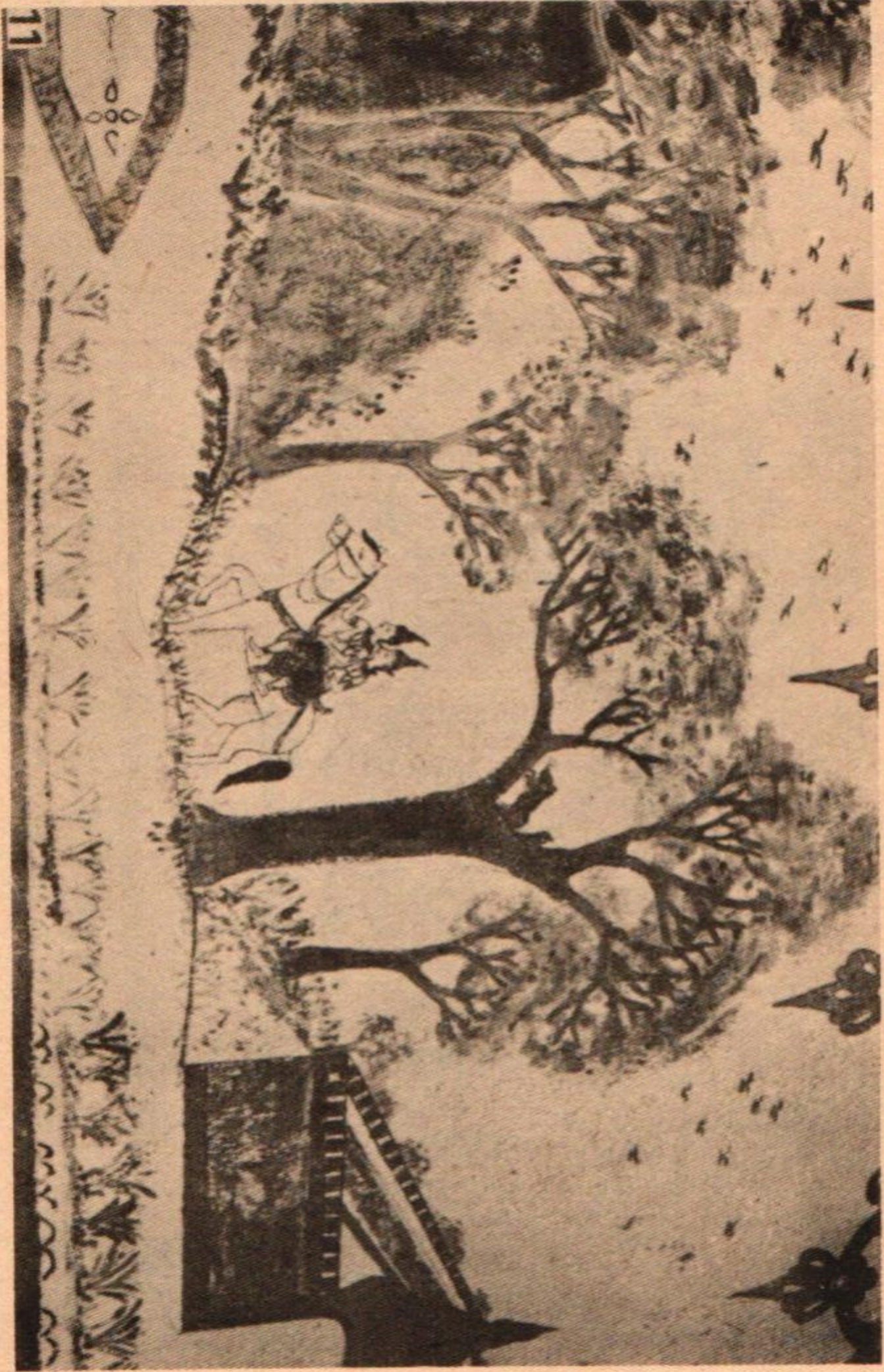
In no time, Nang Sida became a maiden of peerless beauty and the beloved of all the "one hundred and one" Muong far and wide. She was thought fit to be mated with none but a hero, who had sufficient prowess to offer her as a marriage gift. Chao Laksi declared to everybody that whoever could raise his magic bow and arrow, would be honoured with the hand of Nang Sida.

When this news reached PhraLak and PhraLam in the kingdom of Chanthabouri Si Sattanak, the two brothers started for the rishi's dwelling, on their marvellous horse, named Manikap. (see photos 10, 11)

Unaware that Nang Sida was his own daughter, Hapkhanasouane hurried to meet







Chao Laksi before PhraLak and PhraLam. He tried to raise an arrow weighing one "Kod" (12,384.90 kg) but he could not. Then he attempted through supernatural power, to force Chao Laksi to offer him Nang Sida; but the holy man proved more powerful and vanquished him.

Disappointed and shameful, Hapkhanasouane burst into tears so that the rishi, taking pity on him, changed a nagi (female naga) into a beautiful girl, named Nang Soudtho, who looked exactly like Nang Sida, then gave her to him.

"You had better take this one," Chao Laksi said. "She will give you lots of powerful children who will help you to make your kingdom prosperous. But you must not marry Nang Sida, at all, for she was destined to bring you destitution and death".

Hapkhanasouane was resigned to accept Nang Soudtho, but the unexpected and charming gift could not induce him to give up the ultimate desire to possess Nang Sida himself. So, on the way home, he asked

Khoun Sieo Ha, one of his generals, to take care of Nang Soudtho, and came back to Chao Laksi's dwelling, awaiting a propitious opportunity to carry off his lover. He met Nang Sida gathering lotus flowers near a pond in her garden. She had ten young girls with her, each of them so resembled her that Hapkhanasouane was not able to distinguish which one was his true idol. So, he decided that it would be most convenient for him to carry off all these beauties at the same time and he supernaturally enlarged his hands to do the task.

Alerted by the cries of the girls, Chao Laksi appeared. He bent his marvelous bow and the terrified ravisher ran away.

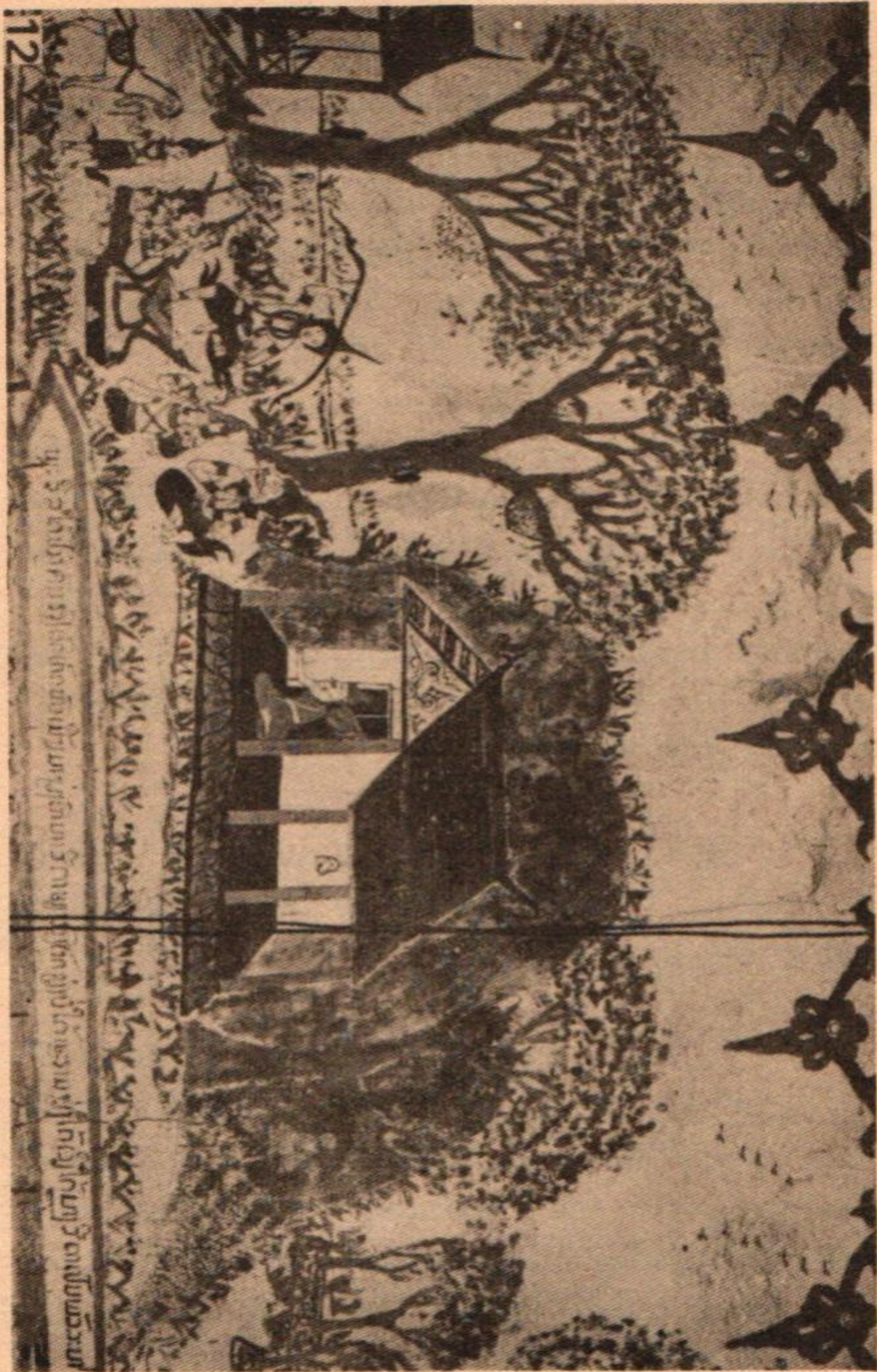
Hapkhanasouane spent ten months in reaching Lanka. During the journey, Nang Soudtho bore him nine sons, one per month, and these sons were incapable of being injured by guns, poisonous arrows or venomous snake bites. When wounded by these weapons, one of these sons would come and touch some part of his mother's body, and he would be healed immediately : the eldest

son would lick her right eye; the second son, her left eye; the third son, her right ear; the fourth son, her left ear; the fifth son, her right nostril; the sixth son, her left nostril; the seventh son, her mouth; the eighth son and the ninth son kiss, respectively, her right breast and her left breast.

Very soon, after Hapkhanasouane's departure, Phra Lam with his brother Phra Lak reached the dwelling of Chao Laksi. He had to stand the test of power before he could claim the hand of Nang Sida; so he was brought to the magic arrow which he took up and fitted to string.

"It's as light as a toad", he said to the rishi. "Well, where do you want me to shoot this arrow?"

"That's enough," Chao Laksi replied, "you need not shoot it, for it will burn everything, even the rocks of a mountain! Now you may become the coveted husband of my foster-daughter. A moment! I will bring the "Nam A Mon" (holy water) for your wedding ceremony". (see photo 12)



When the rishi had gone, PhraLam and PhraLak entered his dwelling and met eleven beautiful girls who resembled one another than ever peas were like peas. They could not distinguish who was Nang Sida. PhraLam asked their lady chaperone for help and she said :

"Point your forefinger at their eyes. She who closes hers, is Nang Sida".

PhraLam did as he was recomman-
ded and thus found Nang Sida among these girls.. In no time the rishi came back : he watered PhraLam and Nang Sida with the "Nam A Mon" and predicated : "Alas! in the future, you will be separated for a long time. This is your destiny".

No sooner that PhraLam, PhraLak and Nang Sida said good-bye to Chao Laksi than the dwelling, the ten girls, the lady chaperone and the holy man himself disappeared mysteriously.

As for Hapkhanasouane, what prevailed in his mind was how to get Nang Sida back. By strategy, he ordered a demon to

take the form of a golden deer and enticed PhraLam, PhraLak to stay away from Nang Sida. The deer began to graze gracefully in front of Nang Sida. The sight of this lovely animal roused her desire to make it her pet. So, she requested her husband to catch it. PhraLam asked PhraLak to take care of his wife and went after the deer. (see picture 13)

The demon imitated the voice of PhraLam and cried : "Help! PhraLak, help!"

This cry made Nang Sida think that PhraLam must be in some fatal danger. She urged PhraLak to go at once to his brother's aid.

As PhraLak hesitated, suspecting that this was some trick of the demon, Nang Sida said : "You want to let my husband die in order to marry me, don't you?"

Consequently, PhraLak invoked the help of Nang Tholani, the Goddess of the Earth, to protect Nang Sida and went away in search of PhraLam.



13

พระลักษมณ์ พระราม งามยิ่งนัก

Taking advantage of their absence Hapkhanasouane plotted to come and carry off Nang Sida, but he could not, for the Goddess of the Earth held Nang Sida's legs firmly. Meanwhile, PhraLam was surprised to see PhraLak leaving his wife, to join him; as his brother told him that he had asked Nang Tholani to take care of Nang Sida, PhraLam said: "I can't trust her vigilance".

As PhraLam pronounced these words, the Goddess of the Earth became angry and released Nang Sida's legs, so that Hapkhanasouane could take her off and fly away. (see photo 14 - Right side)

On his way home, Hapkhanasouane met Phagna Khout, the king of fabulous birds, and PhraLam's friend, summoned him to return Nang Sida at once. Hapkhanasouane refused and attacked Phagna Khout furiously. (see photo 14 - Left side) All the weapons, lethal as they were, however failed to produce any effect on the huge, fabulous bird who boasted that nothing in the World except the ring on the finger of Nang Sida could vanquish him. Hearing this, Hapkhanasouane took the ring off her finger and



พราหมณ์ได้รู้มเหสีนาง
 สิตาจากนายราม
 พยาธิตัดหัวมเหสีนาง

14

threw it at Phagna Khout who fell down, his wings broken. Now Hapkhanasouane reached Lanka. As the body of Nang Sida was terribly hot, Hapkhanasouane could not make her his wife. He had to keep her in his garden and wait.

When PhraLam and PhraLak returned to the place where Nang Sida had been, they could not find her. Afflicted with grief, PhraLam ran across the forest in search of his wife, followed by his faithful PhraLak, and very soon, came to find Phagna Khout. The wounded, fabulous bird gave him Nang Sida's ring and told him of Hapkhanasouane who had carried her off; PhraLam healed the broken wings of Phagna Khout then renewed his search of Nang Sida according to the directions of his friend. One day, PhraLam happened to eat a fruit borne on a horizontal branch of the Manikhod tree and was changed into a monkey. (This marvellous tree had two kinds of fruit : those borne on horizontal branches which would change into monkey whomever might have eaten them; and those on vertical branches which would give him back a human form). Therefore, monkey-PhraLam took shelter in a forest

where he met Nang Phengsi, who had eaten the same fruit of the Manikhod tree and had been transformed into a she-monkey. (see photo 15)

Accordingly, he-monkey PhraLam married she-monkey Nang Phengsi, who soon bore him a young monkey called Houla-man (Hanuman). The origin of this simian lady requires some elucidation :

Nang Phengsi was the girl of a hermit, Chao Laksi, who had quit his monotonous retreat and by magical powers had changed his own excrement into a beautiful maiden named Nang Khaysi (body dirt), then made her his wife. In due time, she gave birth to a daughter. The father named her Nang Phengsi. When Chao Laksi was gone out to fetch fruit in the forest, Phra Athit, the God of the Sun, came into his cavern and committed adultery with Nang Khaysi. In course of time, she gave birth to two twin sons named Thao SangKhip and Thao Phalichanh. (see photo 16)

Chao Laksi, ignorant of their origin, took them for his own children and taught them supernatural powers, but in no time he



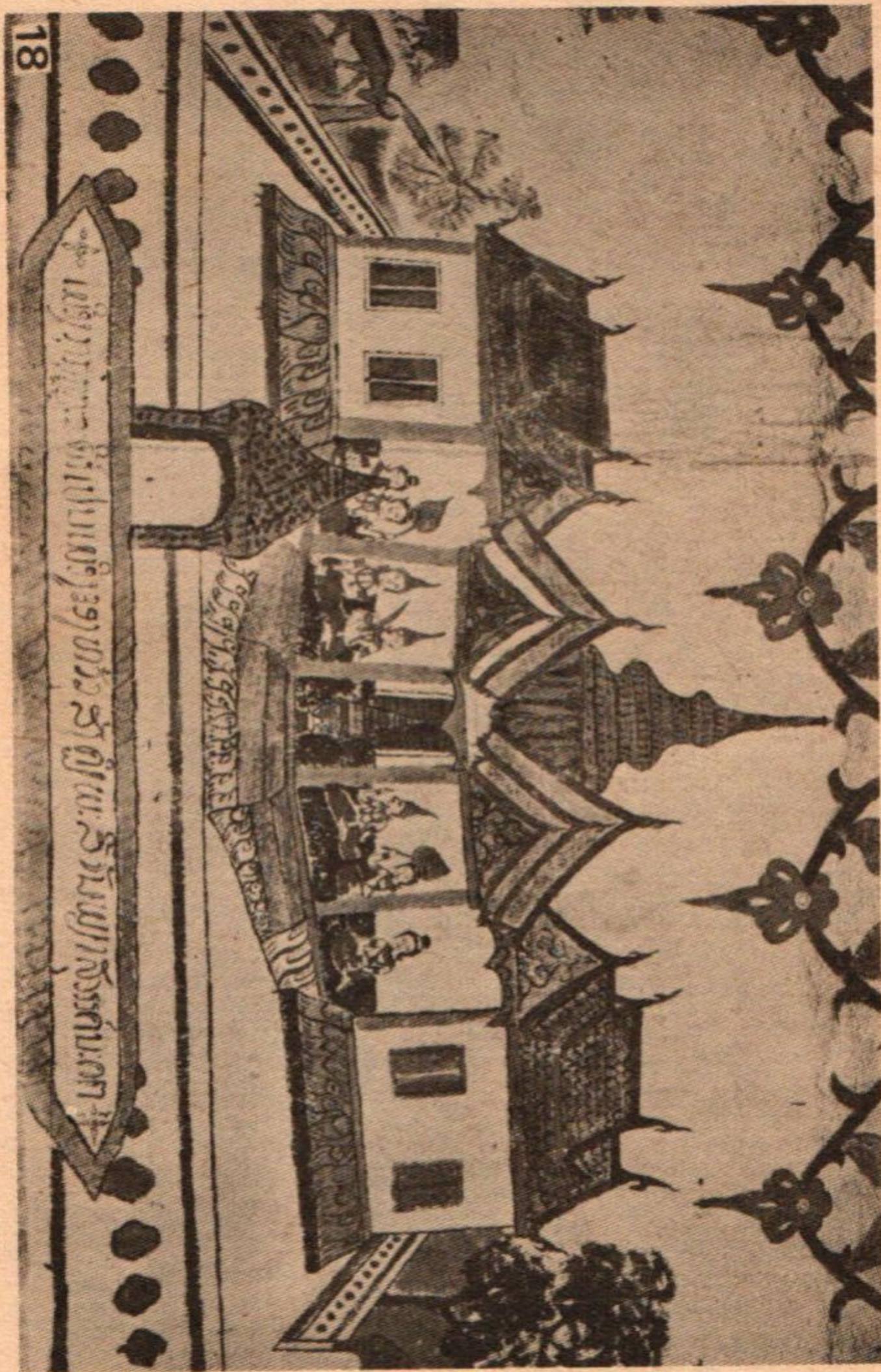
noticed that these boys proved much more gifted than himself in occult science, so that he was brought to suspect the probable faithlessness of his beloved wife. To be certain, he took all the children to the river side and threw them into the water with the prayer that whoever was his own child would swim to him and the children of others would be carried away by the stream. (see photo 17)

His prayer came true, and accordingly Nang Phengsi joined him and Thao Sangkhip, Thao Phalichanh were carried along by the stream and landed on a fertile plain where they built a new kingdom named Muong Kasi. (see photo 18)

Nang Khaysi suspected that her daughter, Nang Phengsi, had disclosed her secret to Chao Laksi, so she threw her in a ravine and, as related above, Nang Phengsi after eating the fruit of the Manikhod tree, assumed a simian form and took shelter in the forest where she met he-monkey Phra-Lam.

Meanwhile, PhraLak built a "prasat" (palace) near them, expecting the day on





which the "Kam ven" (the misfortune one must endure because of the sins he has committed in his anterior existence) of Phra-Lam would end, and he would be able to take back his human form.

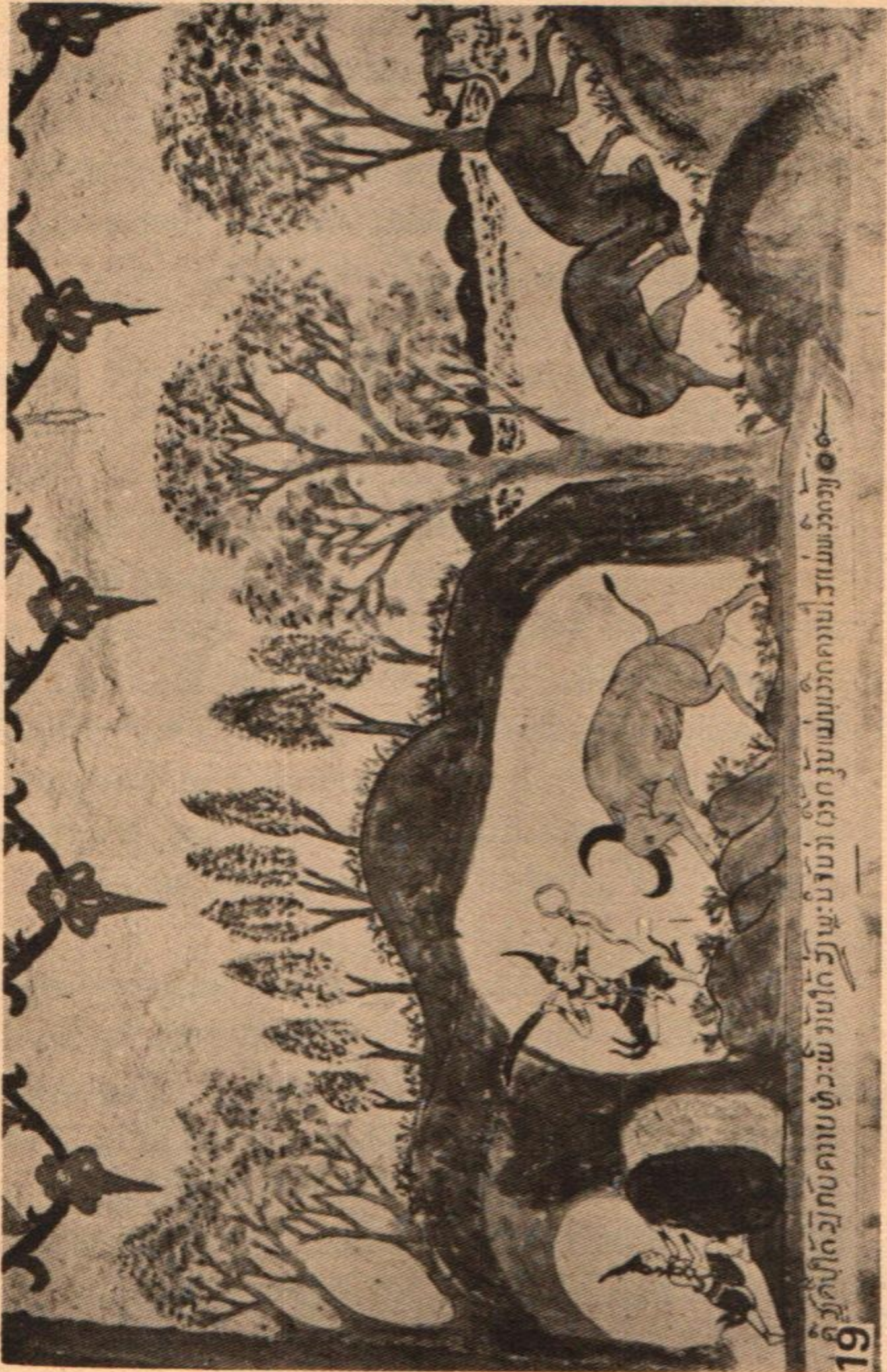
As for Thao SangKhip and Thao Phalichanh, the following story will relate how these two brothers came to a sudden disruption :

At that time, there was a buffalo, leader of a great herd of cows and possessed of unparalleled strength. In order to get rid of male competitor, whenever a bull-calf was born, he would kill him at once. Nevertheless, a certain cow, when she showed signs of bearing another calf, went into a cave, so that she might protect her young one from being crushed to death by his own father. The calf was duly born and named Thoraphi. When he came to his youth, he went out and killed his father. Victorious in his first fight, Thoraphi's pride now knew no bounds. He went to Muong Kasi, challenged everybody to fight and injured the Queen, Nang Kottarat. To avenge the insult to his wife, Thao SangKhip asked him to resume the fight in a cavern. Thoraphi agreed. But

before starting for the cavern, Thao SangKhip told his brother Thao Phalichanh to remain waiting at the mouth of the cavern and observe the flowing blood. If the blood was of dark colour, it meant Thoraphi's death. If it was light, it would signify SangKhip's end; in which case, Phalichanh should block the mouth of the cave so that the buffalo would not be able to get out of the cavern. Soon Thao SangKhip succeeded in killing Thoraphi but as chance would have it, it was raining and the water made the buffalo's dark blood appear light. So Phalichanh mistook it for his brother's blood, therefore, according to the instruction, he blocked the mouth of the cavern and went away. (see photo 19)

But SangKhip succeeded in getting out of the cavern and returned to his palace. He thought that Phalichanh was trying to deprive him of the throne, so he banished his brother for the crime which he had never committed.

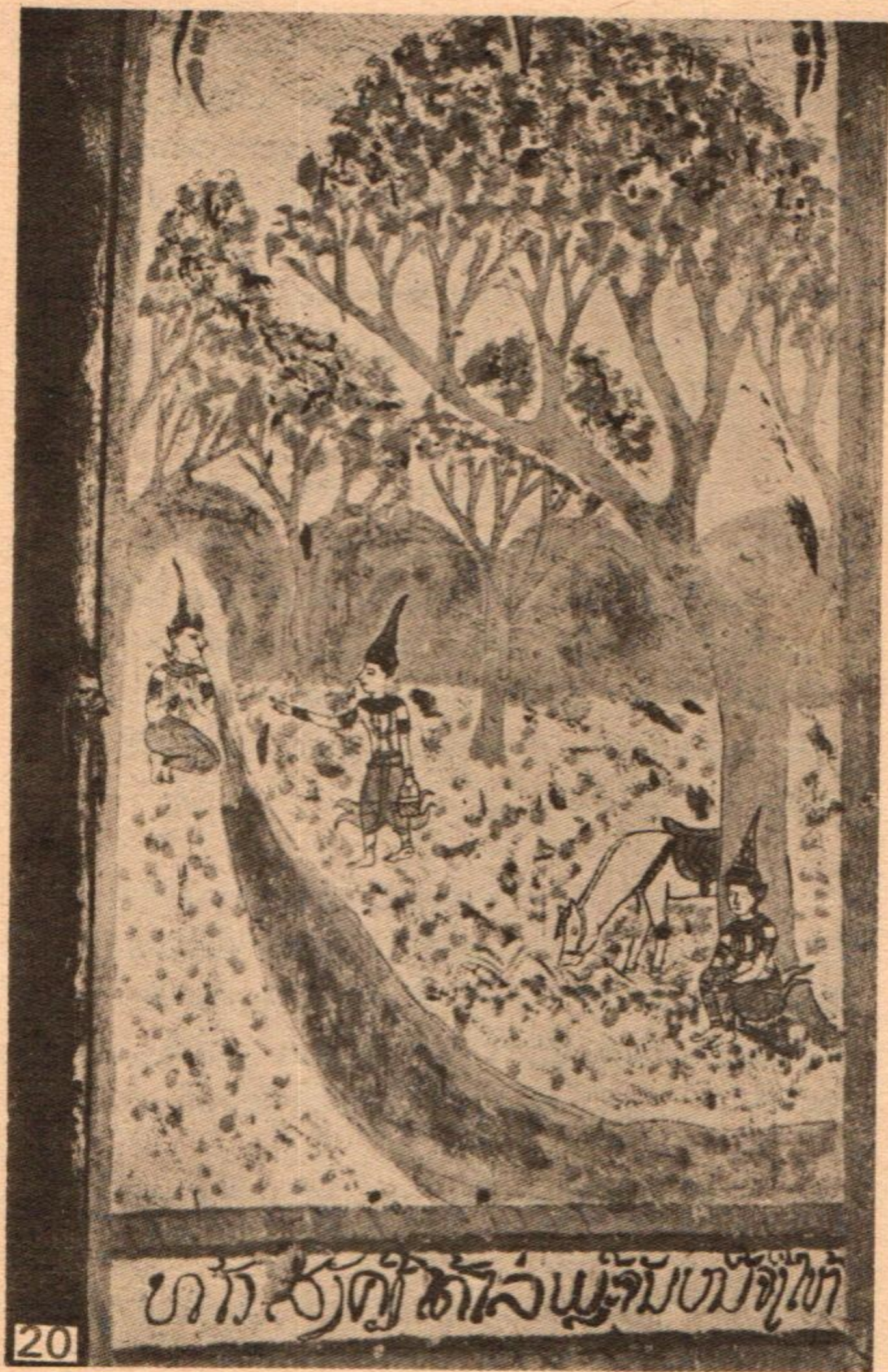
Exiled from Muong Kasi, Phalichanh wandered in the forest, crying ceaselessly day and night.



As his "Kam ven" ended, PhraLam climbed up a Manikhod tree, ate a fruit borne on a vertical branch and took back his human form. He did not remember anything which had happened during his simian life. PhraLak told him that Nang Phengsi and Houlaman were his wife and son.

Unable to take such monkeys along with him in his risky expedition, PhraLam ordered Houlaman to take care of Nang Phengsi and stay with her in the "Prasat" (palace) built by PhraLak, expecting his return from Lanka. PhraLam then renewed the search for Nang Sida with his faithful brother, PhraLak. They met Thao Phalichanh on the bank of a brook, the waters of which were nothing else but the tears of Phalichanh himself. (see photo 20)

Phalichanh related his unhappy story to PhraLam and PhraLak who grieved for him. They came to a mutual agreement that PhraLam and PhraLak would help Phalichanh in his fight against SangKhip, and Phalichanh would help them to recover Nang Sida and vanquish Hapkhanasouane.



ហាវ សុត្តន្ត ភាស័យ ទំហំ ខ្ពស់

Phalichanh soon came into SangKhip's capital and the two brothers fought a great battle in the air. Nang Kottarat joined her husband to attack Phalichanh, who succeeded in putting her eyes out. She fell out of the sky and then lost her way in the forest. SangKhip gave up the fight to go in search of his wife, but it was unsuccessful.

With this respite, Phalichanh spoke to PhraLam who promised that he would shoot SangKhip in the course of the fighting. Phalichanh then went to his brother and again challenged him to a single combat. SangKhip accepted the challenge and the duel began in the air.

The two brothers were nimble in their movements and it was difficult for PhraLam to pick out his victim. So he commanded Phalichanh to tie a white shawl round his head as a mark of recognition.

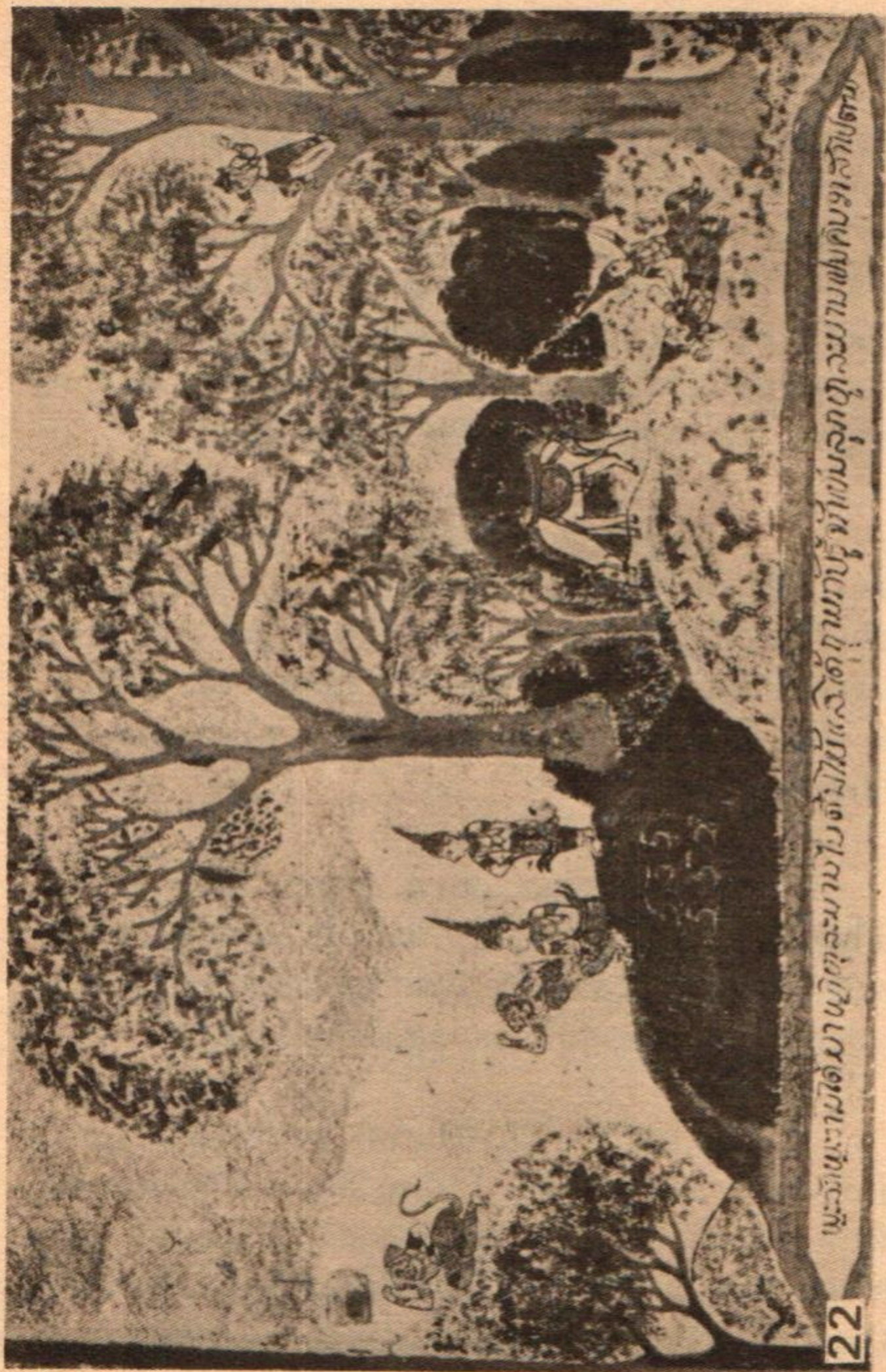
SangKhip, noticing this strange garb, put on the same raiment, so that PhraLam could not distinguish whom he should shoot. The next day, when Phalichanh wore a red

shawl, SangKhip put on a rig of the same colour. PhraLam was still unable to pick him out.

Finally PhraLam painted Phali-chanh's soles with white lime, and because of this distinctive mark that SangKhip did not have time to imitate, he was able to kill SangKhip with one of his magic arrows. (see photo 21)

Meanwhile, in the forest, losing patience after a long wait, Nang PhengSi and Houlaman left their "prasat" in order to try to rejoin PhraLam and PhraLak. (see photo 22) The mother and child still preserved their simian appearance. The marvellous horse, Manikap, took flight to the forest where the Manikhod tree grew, to fetch the fruit borne on the vertical branches to enable Nang PhengSi and Houlaman to resume form.

The fruit benefited only the mother, who once again became a young woman of great beauty. Houlaman remained a monkey as before, his "Kam ven" not having yet reached its end.



พระวิมลพระนามได้มาพบฤๅษะมานในต้นไม้และได้ฤๅษะมาบิรูที่ในมรุกฤๅษะมานพบคณภริยาสามีของตน

22

At that time, in Muong Nhou Khanh Thone of Aysouane, there was a demon who had the power to kill any person at whom he pointed his index-finger. He caused much grief to the population. As no one was able to kill him, a young girl named Nang Thip Pasod tried to set a trap for him. She invited him to dance and made him point his index-finger at his own skull, which suddenly burst. He was killed there and then.

This same Nang Thip Pasod saved the life of Nang Kottarat whom PhraLam sheltered and cured her eyes. As a sign of gratitude, Nang Kottarat offered herself as a wife for PhraLam even for a short period of time.

A son was born from this union, Thao Khouan Thau Fa, who lived without ever seeing his father, who earlier had left to prepare an expedition against Lanka.

In fact, PhraLam received great military assistance from Thao Phalichanh, who succeeded to the throne of Muong Kasi after the death of Thao SangKhip, his brother. Phalichanh offered this assistance in

gratitude for the service rendered to him during his fight against Thao SangKhip.

PhraLam considered that he still needed more troops. He then led his army towards Inthapatha Maha Nakhone, where he received considerable reinforcement in men and material from the king of that country.

After having given formal orders to the troops to respect the life and property of the population of the regions that they would have to cross, with a death penalty if this was disobeyed, PhraLam asked Phalichanh to recruit from among the population someone who could fly like a bird to Lanka, in order to bring him news of Nang Sida.

Phalichanh, hovering in the air, beat a drum and made the proclamation of PhraLam. He was questioned several times by young girls, who asked him why the king had not sent him to Lanka, he who could fly in the air as easily as a bird; and why the king took so much trouble and sacrificed so many men to rescue a woman like Nang Sida.

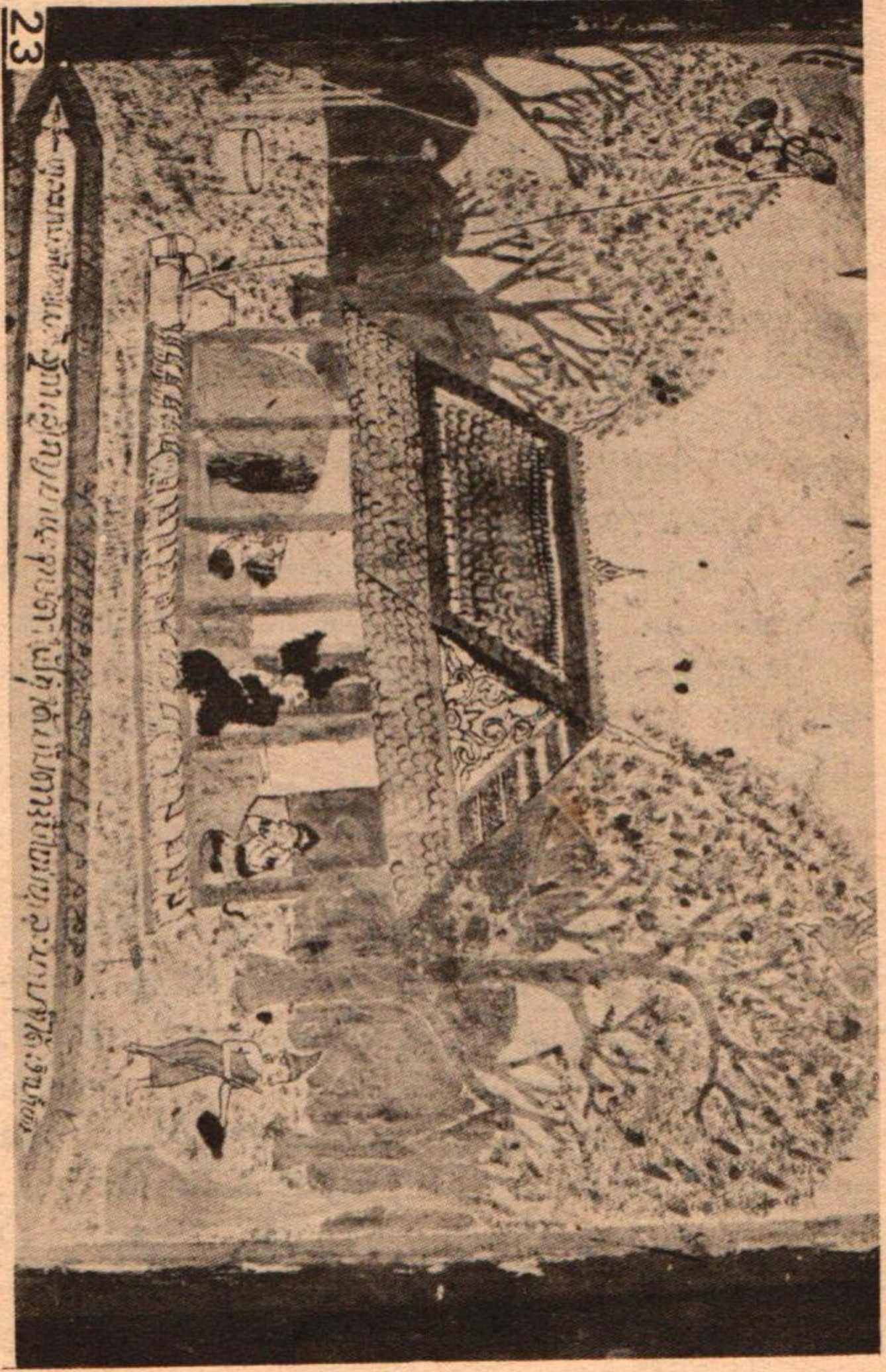
These girls considered themselves beautiful and charming enough to replace Nang Sida for the pleasure of the king and together they offered themselves for enrolment in the harem. Phalichanh could not reply, nor could he accept an offer so strange and so unexpected.

A young man emerged from the crowd and presented himself to Phalichanh as volunteer for the royal mission. It was Thao Khouan Thau Fa, son of PhraLam and Nang Kottarat. The latter also found her first two sons : Thao Sataphagna and Thao Phanh Lahaphagna, whom she bore with Thao SangKhip, and the three brothers put themselves at the service of PhraLam.

Accompanied by Houlaman, Thao Khouan Thau Fa was sent to Lanka to inform Nang Sida of the forthcoming rescue. He would return to her the ring that Hap-khanasouane had taken from her to cut the wings of Phagna Khout. He would also tell her that PhraLam had recovered it after having cured Phagna Khout.

Houlaman and Thao Khouan Thau Fa flew like birds in the air. When they arrived in Lanka, they presented themselves at the abode of a hermit named Ta Fay ("Eyes of Fire") to ask him for advice and information on the island. They came when the holy man was meditating behind closed doors in his abode. Being impatient to see him, they rang noisily, and when Ta Fay opened his eyes to see who they were, flames shot forth from his pupils to burn the visitors. There remained only two small hearts when he went out to welcome them. He then spat on these pieces of human flesh and suddenly the two brothers were resuscitated. (see photo 23)

Once again delivered from the terror, Houlaman and Thao Khouan Thau Fa were warmly welcomed. Among other warnings, Ta Fay expressly advised them not to go near the pool at the back of his abode. The two brothers promised to obey him, but secretly they were excited by this warning. They took risks in the vicinity of the pool and were caught in the forehead by two enormous leeches.



Fortunately, Ta Fay came in time to tell them to spit their own saliva on these beasts which, suddenly, let go off their victims. The two brothers were saved, but their magical powers were reduced. (It is because of this that, since then, when one is caught by a leech, he always spits on the creature in order to make it fall).

Houlaman and Thao Khouan Thau Fa left the pool as soon as they could in order to devote themselves to the mission entrusted to them by their father.

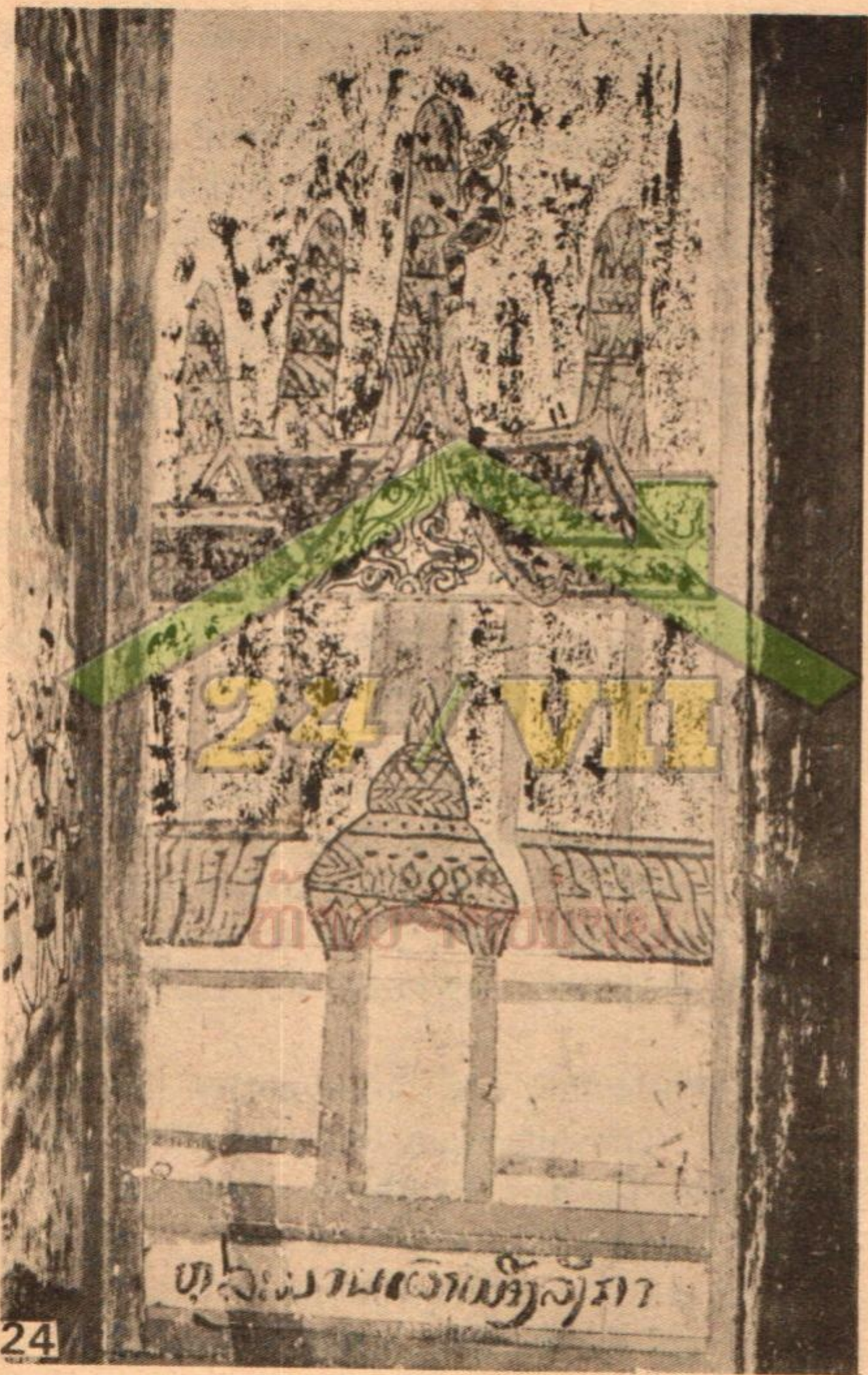
It must be remembered that Houlaman, in the guise of a young man, presented himself to Nang Sida to return to her the ring and the message of PhraLam. Later, using their magical powers, the two brothers put the people in the palace to sleep, including Hapkhanasouane and Nang Chantha, and they tied the hair of one to the other's.

Before leaving them, they left in Nang Chantha's hands a small word advising her, once awake, to slap three times on the head of her husband in order to untie her

hair. This was a mean to weaken the magical powers of Hapkhanasouane, before giving him the final blow which would kill him easily.

Leaving the palace, Thao Khouan Thau Fa transformed himself into a monkey like Houlaman, and following their plan, the two brothers allowed themselves to be arrested by the soldiers. At the moment when they were about to be executed they said to their executors that they would be able to be killed only if they were burned in fabric soaked with oil. The soldiers did as they were told. With their magical powers, Houlaman and Thao Khouan Thau Fa were not burnt, but jumped from the fire as live torches, and landing on the roofs of the houses, they ended up by setting on fire the entire city of Lanka. (see photo 24)

Resuming their flight by air, Houlaman and Thao Khouan Thau Fa immediately returned to report on the success of their mission to PhraLam. A remnant of fire still burnt their faces and tails when they appeared before their father, and they requested his magical powers to extinguish it.



24 VII

พระลักษมณ์และพระราม

24

PhraLam advised them to return to Lanka where they would find a water to be used for that purpose. "Because", he said, "to extinguish the fire which burns in a country, one must use the water of that country". (This is a Lao proverb which is equivalent to the expression "You must wash your dirty clothes at your own house")

With water drawn from a well of the garden of Nang Sida, the two brothers were able to extinguish the fire. (Because of this, monkeys of our days have hair of their face and their tails scorched).

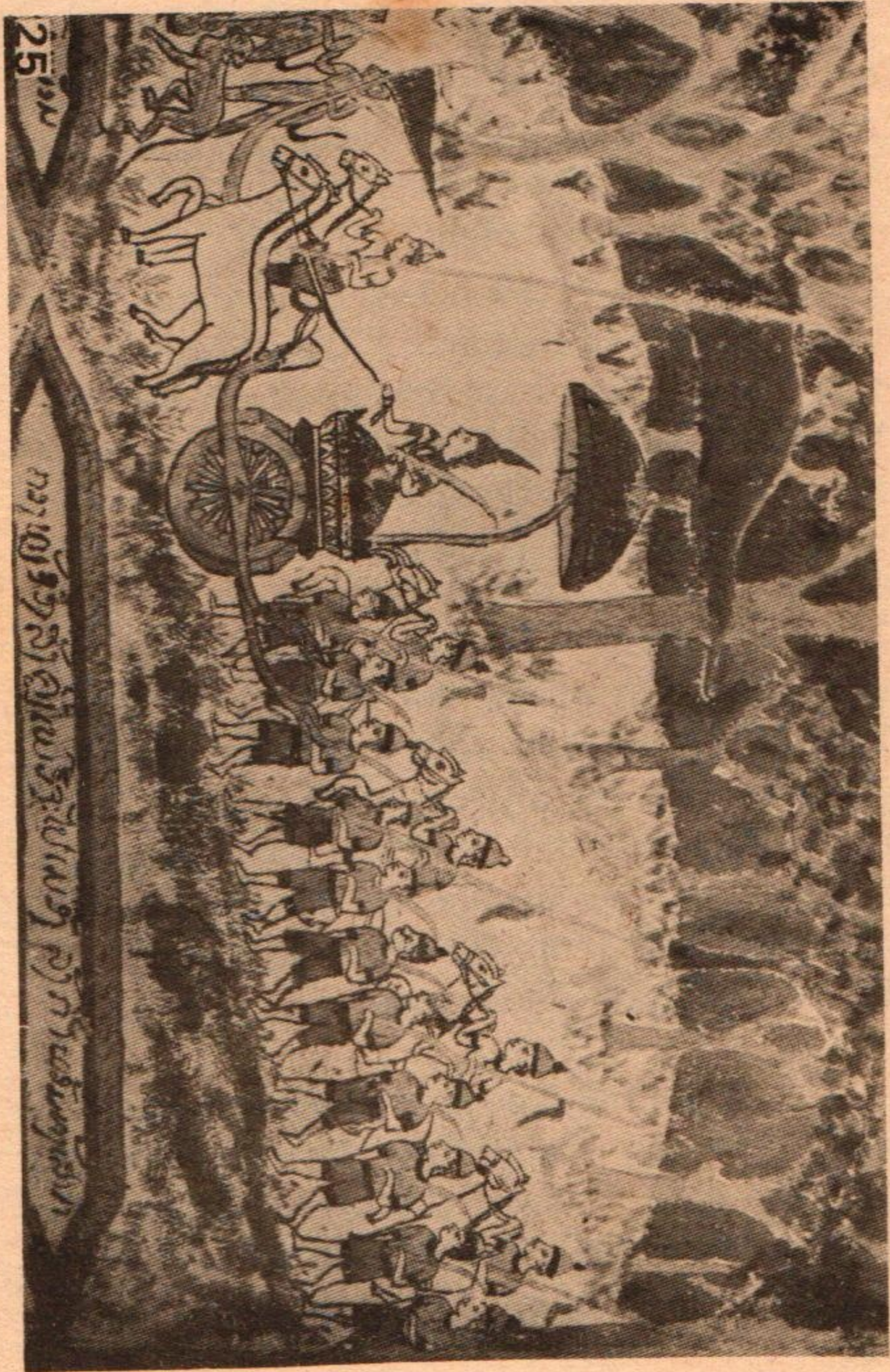
PhraLam later gave orders to Hou-laman and Thao Khouan Thau Fa to go to the waves in the sea, in order to find a shallow place where he could build a bridge to link the island of Lanka with the continent.

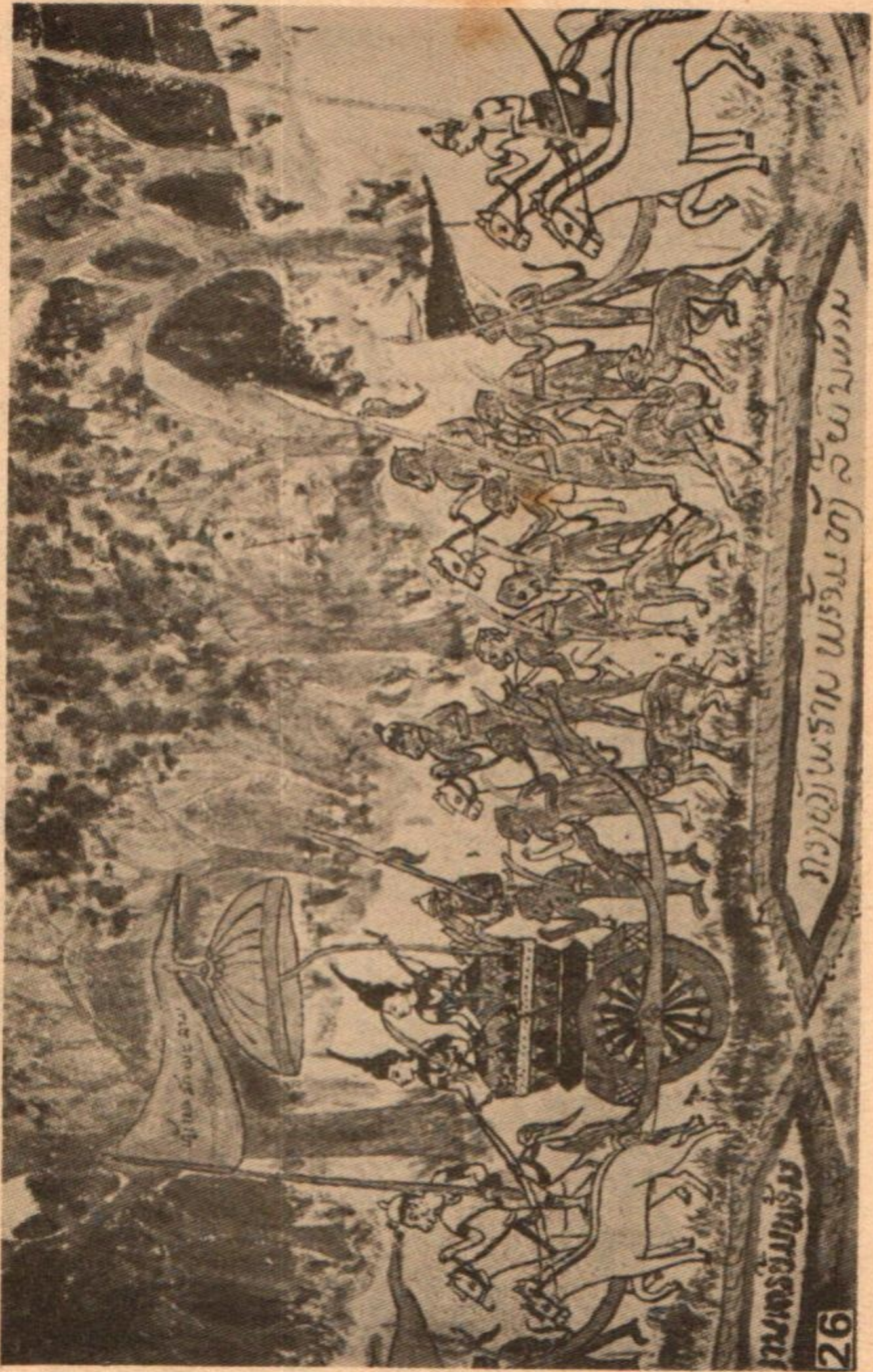
Following the information gathered from the Thevada (angels) and Chao Laksi (hermits), the two brothers came to discover in the abdomen of a "Pa Non" (a kind of giant shark), a sacred book in which were to be found all the necessary instructions.

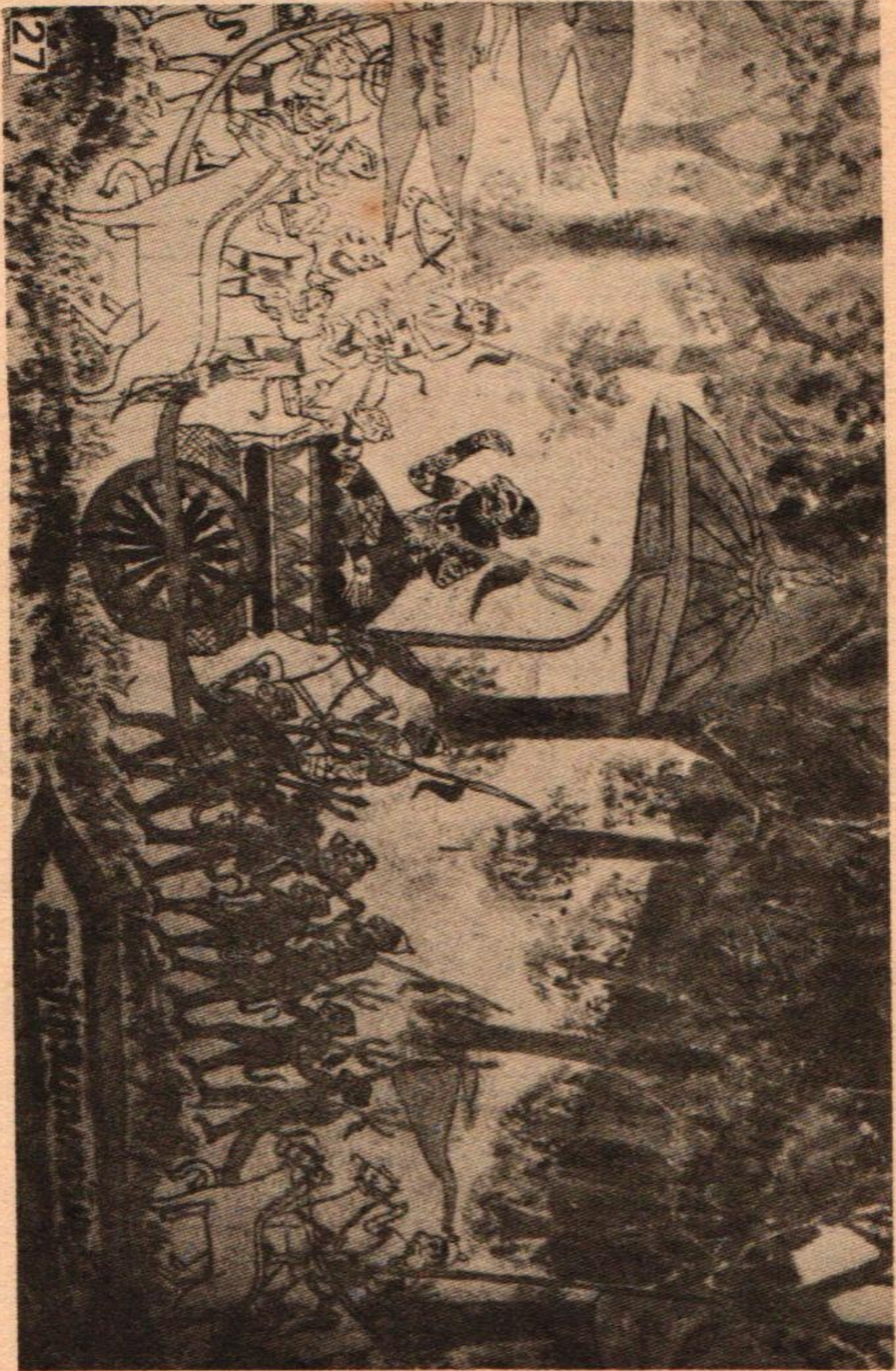
In possession of this book, PhraLam gave the order to his army to go to the sea. At the front marched Houlaman, Thao Khou-an Thau Fa, Thao Sataphagna, Thao Phanh Lahaphagna, the eight princes, (sons of PhraLam and of PhraLak, who came from Chanthabouri Si Sattanak) then PhraLak and Phalichanh, and bringing up the rear were PhraLam and Nang Phengsi and Nang Kottarat, all three on the back of the marvellous horse, Manikap. (see photos 25, 26, 27)

Arriving at the place where they would have to cross the arm of the sea to land on Lanka, the soldiers found, to their joyful surprise, a great bridge. They began to scramble into it. That was not a real bridge, but the tongue of Khoun Sieo Ha, stretched out from the shore to lure the army of PhraLam into a trap.

When the troops of PhraLam were on this "bridge", Khoun Sieo Ha retracted his tongue, and the soldiers were thrown into the sea, but Houlaman enlarged his hands to gather them up and to bring them to the shore.







In his anger, Houlaman cut off the tongue with a violent slash of the sword and Khoun Sieo Ha was destroyed. (see photo 28)

PhraLam did not want war. He wanted only to get back Nang Sida whom Hap-Khanasouane had brazenly snatched away from him, so he sent a message to ask Hap-khanasouane to return him his wife in order to avoid a fratricidal war.

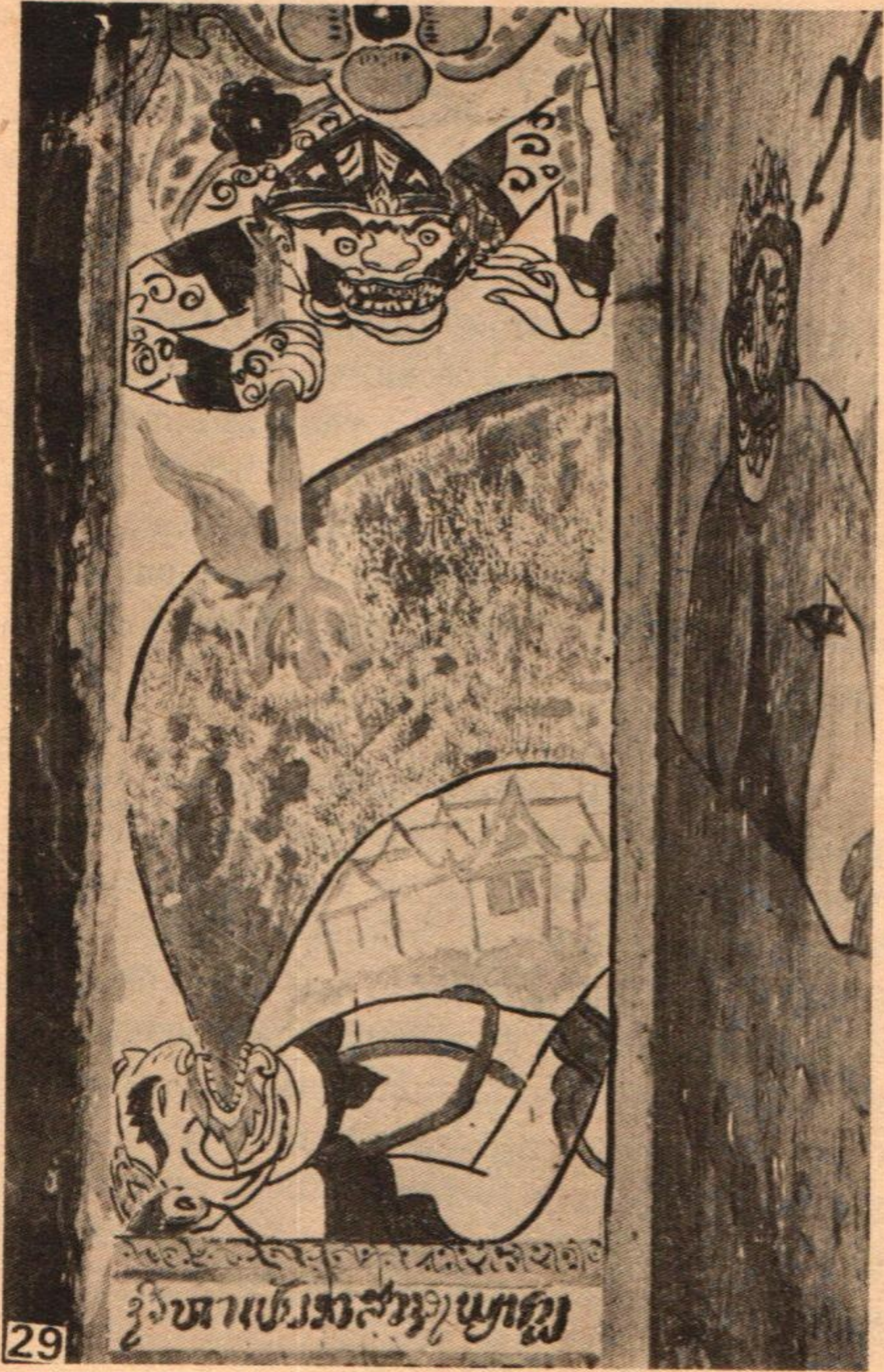
When this message became known in the Court of Lanka, opinions were divided. The "hawk party", which comprised the nine children of Hapkhanasouane and Nang Soudtho, resolved not to hand her over considering that such a restitution was like a token of weakness and a disgrace to the kingdom. The "dove party", represented by Thao Phik Phi and Thao Inthasi (younger brothers of Hapkhanasouane), and Thao Setta Kouman (son of Hapkhanasouane and Nang Chantha), was partial to accepting PhraLam's proposal in order to spare the population from a war which might be catastrophic.



PHI SEUA,

ONE OF HAPKHANASOUANE'S GENERALS

ຜີເສຸ້າ ແມ່ນ ທ່ານ ສາສາ ທ່ານ ທ່ານ ທ່ານ ທ່ານ



29

Hapkhanasouane found the latter defeatists. In his rage, he grasped them round the waist and casted the three of them into the air. (see photo 30)

The act was so violent that the three hopeless persons were thrown to the other side of the sea near the camp of PhraLam's troops, and fell deep in a vase which covered them up to the shoulders. PhraLam's soldiers were able to save them in time, and PhraLam, learning that they were unjustly victims of their wisdom, made them his advisers.

The war had, however, to be continued and, in the absence of a fleet, a bridge was needed at all cost to enable the troops to make the landing. Orders were given to Houlaman, Thao Khouan Thau Fa, Thao Sathaphagna, and Thao Phanh Lahaphagna to install piles following instructions in the sacred book, at locations where the sea was not too deep, and to brace them with stone blocks to make them pillars of a bridge linking the continent with the island of Lanka.



ພິເພດຍ້າວພູຮຽງ ເພື່ອຫາ ລູກໂຮມ ລູກສັດ ແກ່ຜູ້ ຮາມຮຽງ ລູກສັດ ກຳລັງໄປ

30

When hardly completed, the bridge was partially damaged by the four daughters of Phagna Padthaloum, king of the Naga, who lived at the bottom of the ocean. It was a stratagem by these four amorous water-sprites to lure the four young princes towards Phagna Padthaloum's palace in order to marry them.

The water-sprites were not disappointed : the young princes accepted their amours with grace, and soon after their departure, each of Phagna Padthaloum's daughter gave birth to a good-looking boy.

When the bridge was finally completed, PhraLam's troops charged towards Lanka. But approaching the city, they found, floating in the water, a corpse which perfectly resembled Nang Sida. They took her to be Nang Sida, because the inhabitants of the region spread a rumor that Nang Sida had been killed the day before by Hapkhansouane for having attempted to leave the palace to join PhraLam.

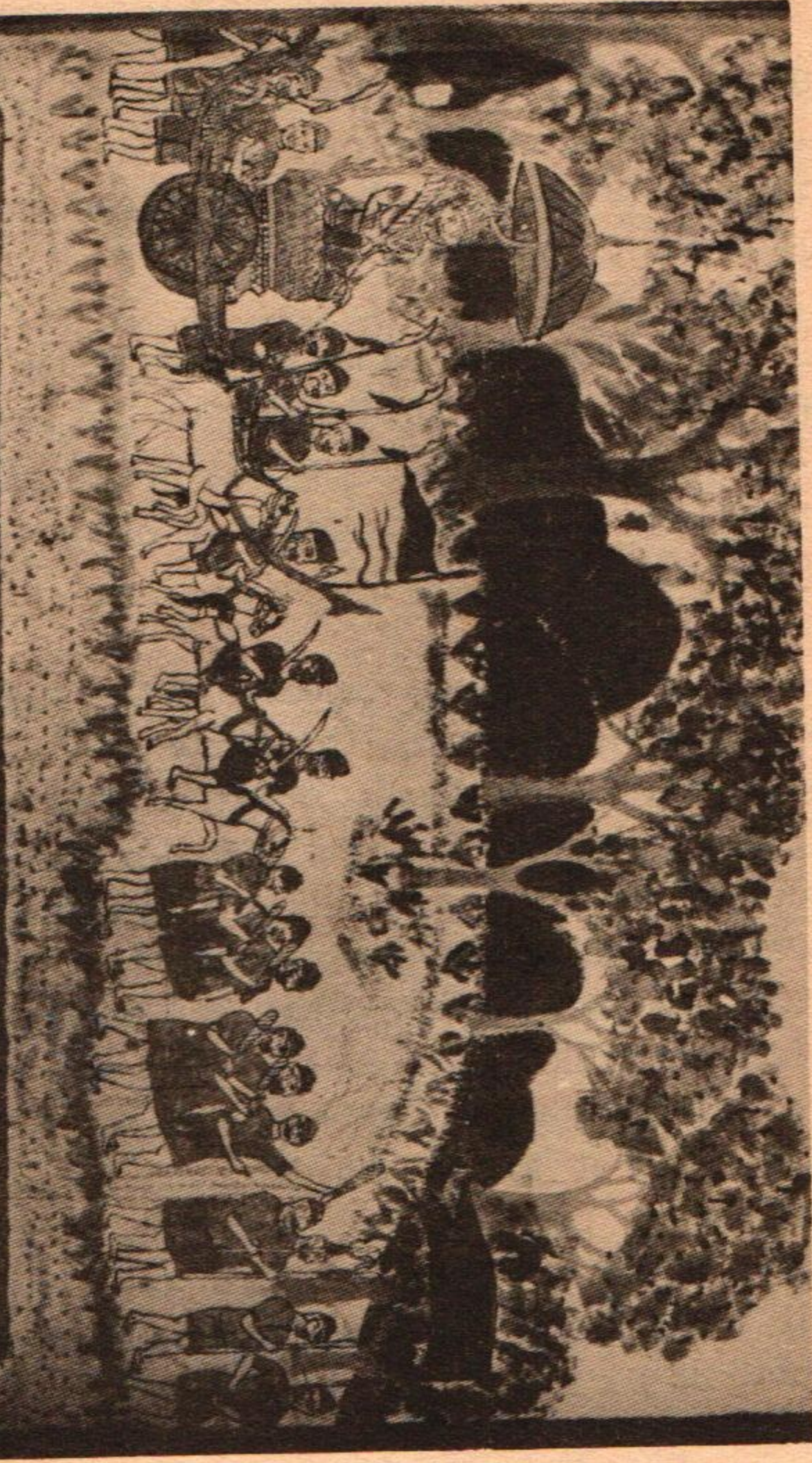
In reality, it was a banana trunk that Phagna Chanh, one of Hapkhanasouane's generals, had transformed into human form to deceive PhraLam, by giving it the richness of form of Nang Sida.

Seeing the assailants advance, Phagna Muong Say, commander of the army of Lanka, an army of "yak" (demons), rushed to meet them and engaged them in battle. (see photo 31)

This was an opportunity for Hapkhanasouane's generals to demonstrate their supernatural powers. Phagna Muong Say transformed the pebbles into fortifications to halt the enemies; Phagna Muong Khoua transformed herbs into snakes to kill them with venomous bites; Phagna Muong Chanh changed a banana trunk into Nang Sida, alive, running up towards PhraLam to touch him. But at grips with the more intelligent and more powerful adversaries, none of them could beat off PhraLam's troops and all were killed on the battle field. (see photo 32)

31

ກຸງລຳພູນຸນ ຈົນເຮົາ ກຸມພະສົມເຫຼືອ ພຣັມພະທ່າ ສຸ ດພະສິ ສຸ ວິນຍາຍຸດສອນ





The battle for Lanka was won, but that very night PhraLam had a bad dream. After consultation, Thao Phik Phi said to him : "It is the sign of imminent danger, but you can do nothing about it, for it will be your last "Kam ven".

An order was immediately issued to the princes and officers of all ranks to mount guard around PhraLam.

For some time Phagna Padthaloum, king of the Naga, who lived at the bottom of the ocean, had been annoyed by the coming-and-going and the commotion caused by the movements of PhraLam's troops above his kingdom. He blamed PhraLam for it and that night decided to seize him. He rose to the surface of the ocean, and using his magical powers, put to sleep all the guards and carried away PhraLam, whom he took to the bottom of the ocean and kept as prisoner in an iron cage.

PhraLam's disappearance was known to his entourage only at dawn. Upon consultation, Thao Phik Phi said : "It is Phagna

Padthaloum who carried away our king. But four of our men may easily rescue him."

These men : Houlaman, Thao Khouan Thau Fa, Thao Sataphagna and Thao Phanh Lahaphagna, were designated for this mission. Plunging into the sea, they penetrated the kingdom of the Naga, raised the iron cage and rescued PhraLam. But in their fight, they were pursued by four young men with whom they had to engage in combat.

The four men shot arrows, but when they touched the bodies of the fugitives, they became flowers of an exquisite perfume. The fugitives shot bullets, but on contact with the pursuers, they became appetizing cakes.

The fugitives realized that the young men were no other than the children that they had had with the four young daughters of Phagna Padthaloum, those who had come to damage the bridge that they had recently constructed to cross the sea.

Rescued from his last "Kam ven", PhraLam intended to lay hands on the palace of Hapkhanasouane who was still holding out.

First of all, PhraLam consulted Thao Phik Phi who told him that Hapkhanasouane possessed marvellous arrows which would kill anybody who might be touched by them, if in a period of one day no one gave him medicine prepared with a plant from Phanh Khamad mountain, the droppings of the Ousouphalad Ox and the pillow of the Naga.

Further, Thao Phik Phi confided, Hapkhanasouane was almost invulnerable, and that only the "Asilaphed arrow", kept at the bottom of the Ocean by a Yak, (demon), could kill him.

It came to pass that some time later, PhraLam was touched by Hapkhanasouane's arrow. To save his father, Houlanan hastened to go to find the medicine spoken of by Thao Phik Phi.

Houlaman first went to look for the plant, and when he arrived at the foot of the Phanh Khamad mountain, he called on the genie of that mountain to ask him where the marvellous plant could be found. The genie appeared at the summit of the mountain and said to him : "Come here and I will tell you about it".

When Houlaman climbed up to the summit, the genie appeared at the foot of the mountain to repeat the same words. This went on until, exasperated and tired by this game of hide-and-seeK, Houlaman deemed it more convenient to carry in his arms the entire mountain in order to give it to Setta Kouman, who was charged to find the plant. (see photo 33)

Houlaman later went to see the Ousouphalad Ox in order to ask him for his droppings. The bovine answered him that he was willing to comply with the request but that for the moment he could not, to his great regret, give them to him because he did not feel the need to relieve himself. Furious, Houlaman slit the animal's belly with



ພູ:ບຸລະນາມໂປ່ຫາຍາໄດ້ອັນພູເຈົ້າ

33

a violent slash of the sword and gathered his droppings from among the entrails of the half-opened beast.

What finally remained was the pillow of the king of the Naga. The sun was nearing the horizon and the day was going to end when Houlaman arrived at full gallop. Fearing that he would not be able to get the pillow before the end of the day, Houlaman jumped into the air and went to look for Phra Athit, the Sun God, to request him to stop his course. Phra Athit refused to comply with the request, so Houlaman grabbed him and hurled him so violently toward the East that he fell under the horizon.

However, Houlaman was successful in obtaining from the king of the Naga his precious pillow and hastened to return in order to save his father.

PhraLam was saved in time, but Phra Athit was angry with Houlaman and did not want to reappear any more. The world was then covered with darkness, and PhraLam had to ask the roosters to appeal to the

Sun God to resume his normal course by crowing lamentable supplications three consecutive times. Phra Athit reappeared and since then the sun rises whenever the roosters crow three times.

Finally, thanks to Houlaman, PhraLam obtained the Asilaphed Arrows guarded by a Yak (demon) at the bottom of the Ocean and was successful, during the assault on the palace, in killing Hapkhanasouane, who descended to hell to rid himself of the sins that he had committed.

PhraLam made his entry into the palace of Lanka where he was very happy to find his beloved wife finally. Thus, the goals for which he had fought for so long and so patiently, were attained. Among other rewards distributed to the great servants devoted to his cause, PhraLam appointed Thao Phik Phi as King of Lanka and gave him as wife his sister, Nang Chantha, widow of Hapkhanasouane.

He later sent Manikap, the marvelous horse, to gather the fruit of the Mani-

khod tree for his son Houlaman. After having eaten it, Houlaman became a very charming young man. His "Kam ven" reached its end.

And when everything was put into order, PhraLam and his wives, and his brother PhraLak, his children and the entire army, left Lanka to return with solemnity to Chanthabouri Si Sattanak where, in the peace finally recovered, and with a wife finally rescued, he went on living in well-earned happiness. (see photo 34)

An accident came about, however, to trouble the conjugal life of PhraLam. One day, upon the request of her ladies-in-waiting, who wanted to know what Hapkhana-souane, whose charm could not however captivate her, was like, Nang Sida drew his portrait from memory. She had hardly finished it when PhraLam suddenly entered her room. She hid the drawing quickly under the cushion of a chair, PhraLam sat down on it and with great amazement, he heard a voice under the cushion say : "I am, like you, a great king. Sit not upon my head".

34



PhraLam turned up the seat and found Hapkhanasouane's portrait. A great anger seized him and without listening to her explanation, he condemned Nang Sida to death, suspecting her of still having sympathy for the monster who had once snatched her from him and caused such tribulation. The execution was to be carried immediately and outside the palace. PhraLak was charged with the painful work, but taking pity on his sister-in-law, he conceived a plan to save her. He ordered Manikap, the marvellous horse, to take Nang Sida to her foster-father, Chao Laksi, then he returned to show to PhraLam a sword covered with blood of a dog.

Three months later, Nang Sida gave birth to a boy named Thao Phra Bout. In order that the latter had a companion and that his mother did not suffer much from his absence when he left her to go somewhere, Chao Laksi moulded a double of Thao Phra Bout, into whom he breathed life and gave the name of Thao Phra Houp.

When they grew up, the two brothers became good-looking boys and received from their grand-father teachings in the field of occult sciences.

One day, when Nang Sida made known to them that they were the sons of PhraLam, King of Chanthabouri Si Sattanak, Thao Phra Bout and Thao Phra Houp asked her to take them to see their father. All three then disguised themselves as merchants of "Mat Teng" (melons) and entered the capital of PhraLam. But at the palace gate, Houla-man's soldiers came to take their melons away without paying for them. A quarrel broke out in which Houlaman had to intervene to defend his men, but he was also beaten by Thao Phra Bout and Thao Phra Houp. At the end, seeing that things were going badly, PhraLam, in person, joined in the fight and was surprised to be at grips with these men, still very young, but full of force and talents. PhraLam asked them to tell their story, and when he found that they were his own sons, he embraced them and invited them to the palace. Thao Phra Bout and

Thao Phra Houp accepted the invitation, provided that their mother came with them; whereupon PhraLam rushed to Nang Sida and asked her, humbly, to forgive him. And having obtained from PhraLam the promise not to take decisions thoughtlessly in the future, Nang Sida, being tolerant and charitable like all the Lao women, agreed to return to the palace in order to resume a life in which nothing could make trouble again.

PhraLam ruled over Chanthabouri Si Sattanak for many years. Upon his death, Thao Phra Bout succeeded to the throne, while Thao Phra Houp became viceroy.

Thus end this great and long epic that is the PhraLak-PhraLam. And Buddha, after having finished it, concluded in these terms :

"As the incarnations repeat themselves indefinitely, every man must bear in this life the consequences of the sins that he has committed in his anterior existences.

The history that I have just narrated, is an eloquent illustration thereof. Formerly, Hapkhanasouane, strong through his supernatural powers, had caused PhraLam much griefs, but finally, he was vanquished by the latter and had to pay for his sins in hell. To day, Thevathad (Devadatta) seeks through thousands of means to do harm to Tathakhatta (Sidharta : Buddha himself), but you will see very soon that, Thevathad will fail in his criminal plots and will be severely punished, like Hapkhanasouane."

(For the readers not well-versed in the knowledge in Buddhism, I deem it useful to develop this information in Buddha :

"Devadatta (Thevathad) was one of the great disciples of Buddha. For a long time he had honorable behaviour, but old age bred jealousy in his heart and he sought to replace the Master at the head of the "Sangha" (Buddhist Community). Devadatta first tried to persuade Buddha to leave him the direction of the Community. His efforts having been in vain, he resolved to get rid of Him. Ajatasatru agreed to help Devadatta to

achieve this heinous crime and posted archers along the passage of Bhagavant with the mission of piercing Buddha with their arrows. When the moment came, the stately bearing of their intended victim disarmed them. Disappointed, Devadatta decided to do the deed by himself and, one day when the Master was walking along the slope of the Vulture Peak, he rolled a big rock toward Him. The rock was stopped miraculously in its course by two asperities which rose from the earth for that purpose. Only a splinter of this rock wounded Buddha in the foot.

On another occasion, he unleashed on his cousin (Buddha) a ferocious elephant which had previously been intoxicated, but the Master opposed it with the power of his benevolence; and the monster suddenly became calm and knelt down before Him ... Devadatta recruited partisans from among the monks and tried to foment a schism by asking Buddha to impose on all members of the "Sanga" some extremely rigorous rules of life. Upon the Master refusing his request, Devadatta took leave with his accolytes, proclaiming loudly that his cousin prea-

ched of a life of luxury and of abundance unworthy of the true monks. That caused grave troubles within the Community." (Quoted from André Barreau, *Les Disciples*, in *France-Asie*, Saïgon 1959, p. 358).

At this time, Buddha revealed which characters of the PhraLak-PhraLam epic were reincarnated among his disciples :

The hermit, father of Nang Phengsi, was reincarnated in Maha Silabout (Maha Sariputa); the marvellous horse Manikap, in Maha Mokhala (Maha Maudgaluana); Chao Laksi, foster-father of Nang Sida, in Maha Kasapa (Maha Kasyapa); Thao Sang-Khip, in Ang Khouliman (Anggulimana); Thao Phalichanh, in Maha Chourathath (Maha Cudarananthata); PhraLak, in Maha Anoun (Maha Ananda); Thao Phra Bout, in Thao La Houn (Rahula, son of Buddha) . . .

And, in conclusion, Buddha commanded again that all must memorize the famous history of PhraLam, Champion of the Just Cause, in order to be able to obtain merits in the present life as well in future existences.

in the PhraLak-PhraLam

- 1- PHRA IN : The king of the Gods.
- 2- THAO LOUN LOU : A short limbed child in Inthapatha Maha Nakhone.
- 3- NANG SOUDSADA : One of Phra In's Queens.
- 4- THAPHORAMESOUANE (Aysouane) : King of Inthapatha Maha Nakhone.
- 5- THATTARATHA : Son of Thaphoramesouane.
- 6- VILOUNHA : Son of Thaphoramesouane.
- 7- VIROUPAKHA : Son of Thaphoramesouane.
- 8- KOUVERA : Son of Thaphoramesouane.
- 9- PHRA LAM : Son of Thattaratha.
- 10- PHRA LAK : Son of Thattaratha.
- 11- NANG CHAN THA : Daughter of Thattaratha.
- 12- NANG SIDA : Daughter of Hapkhanasouane and Nang Chantha, incarnation of Nang Soudsada.
- 13- HAPKHANASOUANE : Son of Vilounha, incarnation of Thao Loun Lou.
- 14- Thao INTHASI : Son of Vilounha.
- 15- Thao PHIK PHI : Son of Vilounha.
- 16- CHAO LAKSI : Foster father of Nang Sida.
- 17- Phagna SINPHALIKA : Chaomuong of Takkasila, father-in-law of PhraLak, brother-in-law of PhraLam.
- 18- NANG CHANTHAMOUKKHI : Sister of Phagna Sinphalika, wife of PhraLam.
- 19- NANG OUSOURIKA : Daughter of Phagna Sinphalika, wife of PhraLak.
- 20- Phagna PHOMMACHACK : Chao Muong of Muong Thoay, father-in-law of PhraLam, PhraLak.

- 21- NANG PHIMMASONE, NANG THIPHA ADSAMON :
Daughters of Phagna Phommachack, wives of Phra-
Lam.
- 22- NANG PHON CHAODI, NANG PHIPHALO LAUGNAM
: Daughters of Phagna Phommachack, wives of
PhraLak.
- 23- Phagna CHANTHASENE : Chao Muong of Muong
Khom, father-in-law of PhraLam, PhraLak.
- 24- NANG EK KHAY : Daughter of Phagna Chanthasene;
wife of PhraLam.
- 25- NANG KHAM KAU : Daughter of Phagna Chanthase-
ne, wife of PhraLak.
- 26- KHOUN PHI PHAK : Father-in-law of PhraLam.
- 27- NANG KHAM KHAU : Daughter of Khoun Phi Phak,
wife of PhraLam.
- 28- NANG SI PHIM PHA : Queen of PhraLam.
- 29- NANG KAN NHA : Queen of PhraLak.
- 30- Four NANG THEVADA : Angels, wives of PhraLam
and PhraLak.
- 31- NANG SOUDTHO : Second wife of Hapkhanasouane.
- 32- CHAO LAKSI : Father of Nang Phengsi.
- 33- NANG KHAYSI : Wife of Chao Laksi, mother of
Nang Phengsi, SangKhip, Phalichanh.
- 34- PHRA ATHIT : The God of the Sun, father of Sang-
Khip and Phalichanh.
- 35- Thao SANGKHIP : Son of Nang Khaysi and Phra
Athit.
- 36- Thao PHALICHANH : Son of Nang Khaysi and Phra
Athit.
- 37- NANG KOTTARAT : Wife of SangKhip, - after the
death of SangKhip, wife of PhraLam.
- 38- NANG PHENGSI : Daughter of Chao Laksi and Nang
Khaysi, wife of PhraLam.

- 39- HOULAMAN (Hanuman) : Son of Nang Phengsi and PhraLam.
- 40- ONGKHOT and his 7 brothers, cousins : Sons of Phra Lam and PhraLak.
- 41- Thao KHOUAN THAU FA : Son of Nang Kottarat and PhraLam.
- 42- Thao PHRABOUT : Son of Nang Sida and PhraLam.
- 43- Thao PHRA HOUP : Young brother of Thao Phra Bout.
- 44- Thao SETA KOUMAN : Son of Hapkhanasouane and Nang Chantha.
- 45- Thao SETAPHAGNA : Son of SangKhip and Nang Kottarat.
- 46- Thao PHANHLAHAPHAGNA : Son of SangKhip and Nang Kottarat.
- 47- Nine princes of Lanka : Sons of Nang Soudtho and Hapkhanasouane.
- 48- PHAGNA KHOUT : King of fabulous birds.
- 49- PHAGNA PADTHALOUM : King of Nagas.
- 50- MANIKAP : The marvellous horse of PhraLam.
- 51- KHOUN SIEO HA, PHAGNA MUONG CHANH, PHAGNA MUONG KHOUA, PHAGNA MUONG KANG, PHAGNA MUONG SAY : Generals of Hapkhana-souane.
- 52- YAK of Nhou Khanh Thone : Can kill anyone to whom he points his forefinger.
- 53- NANG THIP PHASOD : A girl of Nhou Khanh Thone who has killed the Yak.
- 54- THORAPHI : Buffalo who has killed his father.

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Further title in the press

NANG TAN TAY

(The Lao Arabian Nights)

by VO THU TINH

Dépôt légal 2^e semestre 1972

LAO VERSION OF THE RAMAYANA

The PhraLak-PhraLam is a Lao version of the Indian Ramayana. Over the centuries, this Lao masterpiece has acquired great fame throughout the Kingdom. But foreigners are still unaware of it, for there have been almost no available documents printed in Western languages about the PhraLak PhraLam; only a short summary was published by P.B. Lafont in a roneotyped paper in 1957. Nevertheless, some attempts to study this Lao version have been related. And recently, while translating a manuscript of the Vat Kang Tha in Ban Kang, Tasseng Bo-O, Mûong Say Fong, Khoueng Vientiane, I discovered from another document of Deydier's that a mural fresco illustrating the stories in this version can be seen at the Vat Up-Mung in Vientiane. I found this mural fresco still in the same state as Deydier recorded in his book, in 1952.