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风情录

英汉对照

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S C E N E S

郁明亮 编著



东方出版中心

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1. Thailand—A Glistening Pearl in the Indochina Peninsula

Thailand, formerly Siam, means “land of the free” in the Thai language.

The Kingdom of Thailand is located at the strategic crossroads in the middle of mainland, South-east Asia. Thailand has a total land area of 514, 000 square kilometres, making it about the size of France. The Royal Kingdom shares its international boundary of 4, 932 km with four neighbours: Burma on the north and west, Laos on the east and north-east, Kampuchea (Cambodia) on the south-east, and the Gulf of Thailand on the south. Its longest north-to-south distance is about 1, 860 km, but its shape makes distances in any other direction much less. Perhaps it is quite interesting to notice what is its shape like on the map. To the Thai people, the geographical outline of their country resembles the head of an elephant with its trunk extending down the Malay Peninsula. This shape is significant to them as the elephant has provided invaluable power, supported Thai soldiers in battle, carried Thai kings into combat, and appears on the royal arms and on the first minted coins. Above all, the elephant has traditionally been a symbol of good fortune,

and a white elephant is the symbol of divine approval .

Topographically, Thailand presents a varied landscape of forested mountains, relatively dry plateaus, fertile river plains, and sandy beaches. On the basis of the pattern of rivers and mountains, there are four natural regions in Thailand: 1. the North, 2. the Central Plain (Chao Phraya basin), 3. the Northeast (principally the Khorat Plateau), and 4. the South (the Peninsula) .

Broadly the North include the area drained by the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya tributaries . It is an area of long, north-south mountain ridges and deep, narrow alluvial valleys. Villages and towns cluster in the valleys, making use of the alluvial rice soils that exist there. The mountain ridges are thickly covered by forests yielding valuable timber, but diminishing land reserves, causing exploitative clearing of slopes by a new generation of Thai farmers; intensive farming and population there push cultivation efforts up the slopes in vertical ascent patterns harmful to both watersheds and timber resources. The political and economic capital of the region is Chiangmai, one-time capital of the Kingdom of Chiangmai, which extended over an area corresponding to the North region. The notorious Death Railway, built by the Japanese during the Second World War, ran through the Three Pagodas Pass, one of the few natural gaps through this region .

The Central Plain, the historical and contemporary core region of the Central Thai, has long been considered the rice bowl of Asia. The heart of Thailand is dominated

by the Chao Phraya River and watered by an extensive network of canals. It stretches from the foothills of northern mountains at Uttaradit to the Gulf of Thailand, which is placed beside on the west by the Bilaukthang Range and on the east by the Khorat Plateau. The cultivated paddy fields stretch over hundreds of kilometres in an unchanging landscape and the highly developed irrigation systems of the region support a concentrated population. Here was based the historical kingdom of Ayutthaya, predecessor of Bangkok and the Kingdom of Siam. Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, is situated on the southern edge of the region at the head of the Gulf of Thailand and encloses part of the delta of the Chao Phraya system; it dominates 50,000 square miles of the Central Plain, but there are other important regional centres, such as Ayutthaya, Lop Buri and Rat Buri.

The Northeast is the least favoured region of Thailand, having poor soils and relatively scarce rainfall, and being isolated by its position outside the Chao Phraya basin from easy communication. It represents the most serious challenge to the economic hopes of the central government in Bangkok. But this region has the lowest inflation rate and cost of living. It does not get too much tourism; therefore it offers excellent value for the traveller—for example, a lot of good silk-weaving is done there—and it is still well worth visiting. Besides, it is linked by mountains and rivers. Mountains ring the plateau on the west and south; the Mekong, whose importance for Thailand lies in the links it provides to the

subcontinent, delineates much of the eastern rim. The Mae Nam Mun, the largest river within the Northeast, and its tributary, the Lam Nam Chi, empty into the Mekong.

The South is long sliver of land extending from Myanmar to Malaysia, just like the trunk of an elephant. A series of north-to-south parallel ridges divides the peninsula into a narrow, swampy, indented western coastal plain and a broad, smooth eastern coastal plain. North-south mountain barriers and impenetrable tropical forest led to an early initial isolation and separate political development. Rubber plantations, coconut growing, and tin mining by a largely Muslim population distinguish the region in many ways from the northern half of the country. Though, the South represents the expansion of the Thai down the Malay Peninsula during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

2. A Brief History of Thailand

Prehistory

The history of the geographical area now known as Thailand reaches far back into hoary antiquity.

The Maekhong River valley and Khorat Plateau areas of what today encompasses significant parts of Laos, Cambodia and Thailand were inhabited as far back as 10,000 years ago. Currently the most reliable sources for archaeological evidence are the Ban Chiang and Ban Prasat areas for North-Eastern Thailand, where rice was cultivated as early as 4000 BC (China by contrast was growing and consuming millet at the time). The Ban Chiang culture had begun bronze metallurgy before 3000 BC; the Middle East's Bronze Age arrived around 2800 BC, China's a thousand years later.

Thai Migration

The ancestors of today's Thais were scattered amidst a vast, nonunified zone of Austro-Thai influence that involved periodic migrations along several different geographic lines. The early Thais proliferated all over South-East Asia, including the islands of Indonesia, and some later settled in south and south-west China, later to

‘re-migrate’ to north Thailand to establish the first Thai kingdom in the 13th century.

A linguistic map of south China, north-east India and South-East Asia clearly shows that the preferred zones of occupation by the Thai peoples have been river valleys, from the Red River (Hong River) in south China and Vietnam to the Brahmaputra River in Assam, India. At one time there were two terminals for movement into what is now Thailand—the ‘north terminal’ in the Yuan Jiang and other river areas in China’s modern-day Yunnan and Guangxi provinces, and the ‘south terminal’ along central Thailand’s Chao Phraya River. The populations remain quite concentrated in these areas today, while areas between the two were intermediate relay points and as such have always been far less populated. The Maekhong River valley between Thailand and Laos was one such intermediate migrational zone, as were river valleys along the Nan, Ping, Kok, Yom and Wang rivers in Northern Thailand, plus various river areas in Laos and in the Shan State of Myanmar (Burma). The migrant Thais established local politics along traditional social schemata according to *meuang* (roughly ‘principality’ or ‘district’), under the hereditary rule of chieftains or sovereigns called *jão meuang* (meuang lord). Each meuang was based in a river valley or section of a valley. Some meuang were loosely collected under one *jão meuang* or an alliance of several. One of the largest collections of meuang—though not necessarily united—was in south China and was known as Nam Chao, or Lord(s) of

the River (s). Yunnan's present-day Xishuangbanna district, a homeland for Northern Thai and Thai Lü groups, is often cited as the point of origin for all Thais, but in-depth histories place Thai groups everywhere along the Thai diaspora from Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam to Assam.

Early Kingdoms

With no written records or chronologies, it is difficult to say with certainty what kind of cultures existed among the *meuangs* of Thailand before the middle of the first millennium AD. However, by the 6th century an important network of agricultural communities was thriving as far south as modern-day Pattani and Yala, and as far north and north-east as Lamphun and Muang Fa Daet (near Khon Kaen). Theravada Buddhism was flourishing and may have entered the region during India's Ashoka period, in the 3rd or 2nd centuries BC, when Indian missionaries were said to have been sent to a land called Suvannabhumi (Land of Gold). Suvannabhumi most likely corresponds to a remarkably fertile area stretching from southern Myanmar, across central Thailand, to eastern Cambodia. Two different cities in Thailand's central river basin have long been called Suphanburi (City of Gold) and U Thong (Cradle of Gold).

Dvaravati This loose collection of citystates was given the Sanskrit name Dvaravati (literally, 'place having gates'), the city of Krishna in the Indian epic poem *Mahabharata*. The Dvaravati period lasted until the

11th or 12th century AD and produced many fine works of art, including distinctive Buddha images (showing Indian Gupta influence), stucco reliefs on temples and in caves, some architecture (little of which remains intact), some exquisite terracotta heads, votive tablets and other miscellaneous sculpture.

Dvaravati may have been a cultural relay point for the pre-Angkor cultures of ancient Cambodia and Champa to the east. The Chinese, through the travels of the famous pilgrim Xuan Zang, knew the area as Tuoluobodi, located between Sriksetra (northern Myanmar) and Tsanapura (Sambor Prei Kuk-Kambuja), the Dvaravati culture quickly declined in the 11th century under the political domination of the invading Khmers, who made their headquarters in Lopburi.

Khmer Influence The concurrent Khmer conquests of the 7th to 11th centuries brought Khmer cultural influence in the form of art, language and religion. Some of the Sanskrit terms in Mon-Thai vocabulary entered the language during the Khmer or Lopburi period between the 11th and 13th centuries. Monuments from this period located in Kanchanaburi, Lopburi and many other North-Eastern towns were constructed in the Khmer style and compare favourably with architecture in Angkor. Elements of Brahmanism, Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism were intermixed as Lopburi became a religious centre, and some of each religious Buddhist school—along with Brahmanism—remains to this day in Thai religions and court ceremonies.

Other Kingdoms While all this was taking place, a distinctly Thai state called Nan Chao or Nam Chao (650—1250 AD) was flourishing in what later became Yunnan and Sichuan in China. Nam Chao maintained close relations with imperial China and the two neighbours enjoyed much cultural exchange. The Mongols, under Kublai Khan, conquered Nam Chao in 1253, but long before they came, the Thai peoples began migrating southward, homesteading in and around what is today Laos and Northern Thailand.

A number of Thais became mercenaries for the Khmer armies in the early 12th century, as depicted on the walls of Angkor Wat. The Khmers called the Thais 'Syam', possibly from the Sanskrit *shyama* meaning 'golden' or 'swarthy', because of their relatively deeper skin colour at the time. Another theory claims the word means 'free'. Whatever the meaning, this was how the Thai kingdom eventually came to be called Syam or Sayam. In north-western Thailand and Myanmar the pronunciation of Syam became 'Shan'. English trader James Lancaster penned the first known English transliteration of the name as 'Siam' in 1592.

Meanwhile southern Thailand—the upper Malay peninsula—was under the control of the Srivijaya empire, the headquarters of which may have been in Palembang, Sumatra, between the 8th and 13th centuries. The regional centre for Srivijaya was Chaiya, near the modern town of Surat Thani. Srivijaya art remains can still be seen in Chaiya and its environs.

Sukhothai & Lan Na Thai Periods

Several Thai principalities in the Maekhong River valley united in the 13th and 14th centuries, when Thai princes wrested the lower north from the Khmers, whose Angkor government was declining fast—to create Sukhothai (or ‘Rising of Happiness’). They later took Hariphunchai from the Mon to form Lan Na Thai (literally, ‘million Thai rice fields’).

The Sukhothai kingdom declared its independence in 1238 under King Si Intharathit and quickly expanded its sphere of influence, taking advantage not only of the declining Khmer power but the weakening Srivijaya domain in the south. Sukhothai is considered by the Thais to be the first true Thai kingdom. It was annexed by Ayuthaya in 1376, by which time a national identity of sorts had been forged. Many Thais today view the Sukhothai period with sentimental vision, seeing it as a ‘golden age’ of Thai politics, religion and culture—an egalitarian, noble period when everyone had enough to eat and the kingdom was unconquerable. Sukhothai king, Ramkhamhaeng, sponsored a fledgling Thai writing system which became the basis for modern Thai; he also codified the Thai form of Theravada Buddhism, as borrowed from the Sinhalese. Under Ramkhamhaeng, the Sukhothai kingdom extended as far as Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south, to the upper Maekhong River valley in Laos, and to Bago (Pegu) in southern Myanmar. For a short time (1448—1486) the Sukhothai capital was moved to Phitsnulok.

Ramkhamhaeng also supported Chao Mangrai (also spelt 'Mengrai') of Chiang Mai, and Chao Khun Ngam Meuang of Phayao, two northern Thai *jão meuang*, in the 1296 founding of Lan Na Thai, nowadays often known simply as 'Lanna'. Lanna extended across northern Thailand to include the *meuang* of Wiang Chan along the middle reaches of the Mae Khong River. In the 14th century, Wiang Chan was taken from Lanna by Chao Fa Ngum of Luang Prabang, who made it part of his Lan Xang (Million Elephants) kingdom. Wiang Chan later flourished as an independent kingdom for a short time during the mid-16th century and eventually became the capital of Laos in its royal, French (where it got its more popular international spelling, 'Vientiane') and now socialist incarnations. After a period of dynastic decline, Lanna fell to the Burmese in 1558.

Ayuthaya Period

The Thai kings of Ayuthaya grew very powerful in the 14th and 15th centuries, taking over U Thong and Lopburi, former Khmer strongholds, and moving east in their conquests until Angkor was defeated in 1431. Even though the Khmers were their adversaries in battle, the Ayuthaya kings incorporated large portions of Khmer court customs and language. One result of this acculturation was that the Thai monarch gained more absolute authority during the Ayuthaya period and assumed the title *devaraja* (god—king; *thewarâat* in Thai) as opposed to the *dhammaraja* (dharma—king; *thammârâat* in Thai) title