

Thai Proverbs for Australian
Tourists

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1.

It is because of birds, there are nooses and snares

In the cool shadow of a huge billboard

Thai women sit beside sacks of scented rice

topped with Mekong (mother water) whiskey

at their feet a small hand-drawn sign declares:

"Rice have 1 condom inside—50 Baht"

2.

The road is the mouth of the traveller

Just for the delirious first night crash

Ho Tell Ho Hum Hil Ton air-con Rose

lining the palm bar jaded journos burn

uploading Mekong into bored Isan

love taxis in squeaky pink new sneakers

3.

One can not breath through another's nose

Lotus flowers turn slowly in my cold bath

fleshy manifestations of our lives critiqued

don't help an elephant to carry her tusks

in time we all go night shopping

for fresh kidneys in Bangkok

4.

Lick a

Media

500 s

dumb

gathe

on the

5.

Your

In No

prop

their

picn

chan

6.

A pig

Chris

indiff

tiny p

me a

city c

4.

Lick a tourist's leg today

Media PR stunt unfolds in the lobby

500 street monkeys loot banquet tables

dumb artists set a sublime fruit palette

gathered guests read an auspicious future

on the cheeky wet face of sated excess

5.

Your body is my Lonely Planet Guide

In Nong Poon and Mae Sod untouchables

prop up concrete bridge homes with white bones

their children (()) bent like crying bamboo

picnolepsia grips whole families

chanting TV Buddhas in shiny metal suits

6.

A pig's tail collects a ball of clay

Christian morals lose their flavour in this

indifferent country of wok fried Being

tiny phylum thoughts, sweet hot sins done crispy

me and Camus in sweat bathed Pat Pong

city of ecstatic clubbing angels

7.

The bird leaves no trace of its flight

Noi, Nan and Song fed our boys in '63
Go Go bars now underwrite Hotel chains
GDP splendid in skin-tight dictator brown
at night teak logs silently float off shore
while Akha girls tend the gardens of eros

8.

"Easy Come See"—"Paradise You"—"Soo-ay"

Sponsored mums wrap sons in cummerbunds
golden threaded fear of unemployment
Loi Krathong celebrates new beginnings
a million wishes set afloat in paper boats
bar boys fix blood-shot eyes on kick-boxing

9.

Don't strike a fish in front of a trap

Balanced poses of Kodak death avenged
unblinking eyes fixed on survey figures
in the Sawasdee Kim turns and blurts out
"khun felang ling see kow bah bah baw baw!"
fucking you crazy foreign white monkey

10.

Little is spent with difficulty, much with ease

Grab a tuk-tuk to meet Noel at Siam Square
baled-up in the Ambassador Hotel dreading
his museum talk before Her Royal Highness.
Thais in rambutan shot-silk. Noel in a blue
box-creased nylon shirt picked up in duty-free

11.

*Praise teachers in their presence; friends in their
absence*

Ko Samui 1835. Darwin and Wallace
sit sipping tropical insect theory
of fallen angels and mosquito nets
Darwin passes Wallace the long shin-bone pipe
entrails of dogma rise slowly at night

12.

*The dead elephant leaves his track, the shell-fish its
shell*

At dusk fishing fleets return to Hua Hin
stone-headed Buddhas call tourists home to eat
snuffers, sweetlips and grunters greet them all
under my table lapping waves cancel
the obscene sounds of cameras going off

13.

Waters flood the mouth

Lies told well make sculptures out of water
death bends close over desire *sous rature*
inadequate yet necessary Kimhaing
hates eels yet eats them in the empty night
in two boats—can't swallow it, can't spit it out

14.

A fish dies because of its mouth

Homo Touristicus slopes off the bus
high on nostalgic simulations consumed
can't stop the mobility of absorption
"doing nothing" versus "doing it all"
ending the affair or putting it on ice, maybe

15.

See an elephant shit and you want to shit like him

Notices of marriage pinned at the Embassy
a queue of Thai brides wait for passport photos
VD clearance cards snug in tight jean pockets
the rhetoric of tourism holds out hope
for a simple quiet life using your real name

16.

Mangosteen Stains the Wattle

I hit the backwall of Jula's kitchen
chopped chillis flying high read the salty air
undressed caresses "sabai sabai khun ferang moo"
"you happy foreign pig, squealing ANXIOUS SHIT"
slow motion footage of a petrol tanker exploding

17.

When the peas are cooked, the sesame is burnt

like dried squid caught between hot wire grates
fire engines piss on burning patchwork bodies
iconic tonic for tired commuters
Madonna and fire child recalls napalm
Adam & Eve cast out of old Saigon

18.

If you take care of an elephant you eat its shit

Euphoria rides antibodies blind-folded
Soi Cowboys shoot the politics of pleasure
a slow vogue of twenty masturbating
boys at The Pink Shrimp stock exchange
sliding easy as rice through open fingers

19.

If you suffer misfortune quarrel with your shadow
we dance seduced by evocatio 'n coke
tourism is the mother of all our intimate
transactions—"make it a Jetski orgasm 'n ice"
let's head for Ko Samet, the home of all
Thai poets with sunburnt *nam prik'd* souls

20.

Fish eat ants at high tide while ants eat fish at low
tide

No one works the coconut groves these days
tourists killed by falling nuts left unpicked
old men cut palms to make deluxe bungalows
finally the quotient of palms is exceeded
morning back-packers move on to Ko Tao



(For Jula Chandrsuda—missing person: male, aged 28.
Last seen: The Happy Club, Soi Cowboy Rd Bangkok,
August 21, 1990.)