Hunting Certain Animals

There are certain animals the hunting of which requires special care and precaution, because they are very big and dangerous. Some of them we regard as being evil spirits or as having particularly close relations to their owner-spirits so that these spirits guard them with the utmost care and take revenge if their animals are killed.

The biggest animal in the jungle is the wild elephant, scáaŋ. We sometimes see herds of elephants passing by through the jungle. People in the north do not kill elephants, however, not even when these eat the crops in the fields as they sometimes do. Not only the Kammu but also the Lao in the north highly respect the elephants and equate them to human beings.

We have an ancient rhyme-pivot saying: “Kòt scáaŋ, làaŋ kmmú” (the elephant was born, man appeared). This means that after the primeval flood, men and elephants appeared at the same time, and therefore they are brothers and may not kill or hurt one another in any way. Thus in our opinion the elephants have the same “rank” as human beings, and we neither kill nor catch elephants in order to use them as domestic animals.

It could be mentioned that in northern Laos one also hesitates to kill horses, although they are used as mounts and also for work. Horses are highly regarded as long as they live. Most people do not want to eat their meat, however, for the horse is said to have a most evil spirit which may pass to the one who eats its meat.

The gaur, ktiiŋ, and the rhinoceros, rèt, are now extremely rare animals even in the jungles of northern Laos. I myself have never seen these animals, and I do not know anyone who has brought down one of them. We have only seen some dried skulls in the common-houses in some villages, and we have also seen gaur horns used for gunpowder and rhinoceros horns used as charms, and on rare occasions it is still possible to buy such objects. Yet, in our village we do not know of anyone who has actually taken part in a gaur or rhinoceros hunt. However, elderly people still remember that very special precautions had to be taken when such an animal was killed.

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10 For rhyme-pivot sayings, see Lindell (1988).
11 Lindell, Swahn and Tayanin (1976).
As soon as a gaur or rhinoceros had been brought down, the hunter would hurry back to the village. He would tell the villagers to go and fetch the game, while he himself stayed in the village to make a small garden with a fence around it. In this garden he would hurriedly plant some bananas and some sugar cane.

This was done in order for the hunter to be able to excuse himself in front of the owner-spirit of the animal. The gaur and the rhinoceros are supposed to be owned by the spirits of the jungle, and the owner of that particular animal may appear to the hunter in a dream and ask why his animal has been shot. If the hunter could then defend himself by saying that the animal had eaten the plants in his garden, nothing would happen to him or his family. Otherwise he would run the risk of the enraged spirit taking away the members of the hunter’s house one by one as a fine for the heavy loss.

Once this precaution had been taken, old people tell, the same rites as for other big game were performed when a gaur or a rhinoceros had been killed.

The Kammu word rwàay we usually translate by “tiger”, if it is not further qualified. In actual fact, however, “big feline” would be a more suitable translation. The word rwàay has a much broader meaning than the English word tiger in that also leopards, black panthers, jungle cats and fishing cats are called rwàay. When I speak of “tiger”, it should be understood that I mean one of these animals. If we Kammu want to make it clear what kind of “tiger” we mean, we call the striped tiger rwàay nám, which literally means “big tiger”, the spotted leopard rwàay srmïn (“star tiger”), the black panther rwàay yìan (“black tiger”), the jungle-cat – earlier called marsh-lynx in English – rwàay yìm (“red tiger”), and the fishing cat rwàay pìuk (“flushy tiger”).

We Kammu believe that all kinds of big felines have a kind of evil spirits, róoy hʔéep ‘spirits of death by accident’, because they are dangerous animals. In the West people speak of tigers as if they were animals one can see only in zoological gardens and on television, but to us they are very real. That it is not for nothing that we are afraid of them will be apparent by the following true stories of big cats that have come into Kammu villages as they sometimes do.

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12 When a person dies by accident, there is no time to give him the right ceremonies which pertain to severe illness and death. If a person dies in an accident, the dead body is not even brought into the village for fear that his soul will remain there and do evil deeds. Since the soul is not guided to the land of the dead, it will stray around forever, and because it is cut off from the correct relations to its relatives, it will not protect but harm the living. See also The Kammu Spirit World in FTK 3.
Sometime around the year 1960 there was a leopard which used to slay and take away the pigs in our area. One night it came and took a pig or sometimes a dog in our village, and another night it came to take animals in some other village in the neighbourhood. It went rounds in the whole of our area.

One night it came into the Kɔɔn Sláay village, crept in underneath one of the houses and took a pig there. The pig squealed frantically, “wéek”, underneath the house. A woman who lived in the house took a fire-brand and rushed out and stood at the door of the house. The leopard did not dare to run out from under the house and hid between the stacks of firewood stored there. The woman cried out to call the men sitting in the common-house just in front of the family house. The men took torches, lit them and ran out to have a look under the house. They stood around the house with torches and some of them carried their guns.

Under a Kammu house there is a high bamboo fence going from pile to pile. It stretches all the way from the ground up to the floor of the house. There is only one opening in the fence, and the space under the house is used to store firewood. Now one man took his stand at the opening with a flaming torch in his hand.

The leopard got very scared when it saw that it was surrounded by firelight. It jumped out at the opening in the fence, and in passing it bit the man who was standing there. The man was so badly hurt that he died from his wounds.

In the year 1967 there was a jungle-cat that also began to slay pigs and dogs in our area. One night it came into our village and took one of our pigs, and another night it went into some other village and slew a pig or a dog, for it went around in the area during the nights just the same way as the leopard I told about earlier.

The brown jungle-cat is not much bigger than a lynx, but it is a ferocious animal just as the lynx is supposed to be. People used to burn small pieces of skin of this particular animal to prevent evil spirits from coming into the village. Babies often have a piece of its brown skin in their cradles, and children wear pieces of its skin in a string around their necks to protect them against spirits.

One night that brown jungle-cat came into Sɛɛn Tόŋ village. Around 8 o’clock in the evening a small girl, Tɛɛn Sɔɔ, was
sleeping alone in the house, while her mother had gone over to visit the neighbour next-door. The neighbour’s house was only a few yards away and the mother would hear her daughter if she should wake up. Tɛɛn Səə was not a baby either, but a girl about 9 years of age.

The girl woke up and found that she was alone in the house. She looked for her mother, but mother was not there. The girl then went out and sat on the staircase and cried for her mother. Her mother heard that her daughter was crying, but at first she did not pay attention to it. Instead, she said: “Are you crying in order to make the tiger bite you? What are you afraid of?” she said that in an angry voice to her daughter.

It was dark and raining a little, too. When the girl stopped crying aloud, she still made a little sobbing noise, “hʔɨ́, hʔɨ́.”

The jungle-cat came and heard the sobs “hʔɨ́, hʔɨ́.” It may have thought that the girl was a dog, because dogs often sit on the lower rungs of the staircases. The cat jumped on the girl and bit her. She cried out to call her mother: “Mother, the tiger bites me! Hurry home, the tiger bites me!”

Her mother did not believe what her daughter said. She answered: “Let it bite you! What are you afraid of?”

The girl called her mother over and over again, and at last her mother got really angry and came over to the house to see what was wrong with the girl. The mother was shocked to see that it was really true that a tiger had bitten and scratched her daughter. The girl was hurt, but not very badly.

The mother called the villagers to come and help her daughter. The villagers came and collected some medical plants which we use to cure wounds and put them on the bite and the scratches.

Tɛɛn Səə was not severely hurt, and after some weeks she was completely well again.

Since we regard the tigers as having evil spirits, we do not celebrate laying down of one of those animals in the same way we do with other big game. When a hunter has brought down a tiger, he returns home to the village and tells the villagers to go and carry the dead animal home.

The villagers fetch the tiger and carry it to the vicinity of the village, but not into the village. They put it down outside the fence around the village, for a dead tiger is not allowed inside the village gates. This
is partly because people are afraid that other tigers may smell their mate and follow it into the village, and partly because one fears that the hunter might have just brought down an animal which has already killed or eaten people. If it has, the people it has killed have died a sudden death in an accident, and the spirits of such people have not received the proper death rituals. Such spirits, róoy h?éep, are deeply feared, since they may cause calamities to the living.

Thus we believe that if people carry a dead tiger into the village, the villagers will not live well. They will lack food, for instance, because the spirits of those dead by accident may emerge from the dead tiger and make havoc in the village.

Most Kammu people refuse to eat tiger’s meat, not only for fear of the evil spirits but also because the meat has an offensive smell. There is no feast, nor any ceremony when the hunters have brought down a tiger, because the prey is no contribution to the food supply of the village.

Yet some profit may be made from the dead tiger. The bones and the skin of the dead animal are dried in the sun. When they get dry, they are usually sold to the Chinese who pay very high prices for such things.

I was just a small boy of some ten years when I took part in a tiger hunt for the first time. It was in the autumn, the time of the year when people hunt very much and set many traps in order to collect meat for the busy harvest season. We had gone to examine our snares and lie in wait for barking-deer, but we also happened to encounter a leopard.

The day before we encountered the leopard I and my friend, whose name is Sét Dôn, went to set rat-snares along the Cûk stream. We began to set our snares at the mouth of the Cûk stream and walked towards the mouth of the Cróŋ Màay stream. It was about 4 o’clock in the afternoon when we set out, and we had almost ninety rat-snares.

While we went up the stream we found footprints of barkingdeer around a sŋá-tree not far from a waterfall. The barkingdeer came to eat the sŋá-fruits which had fallen to the ground there. We continued to set the rest of the snares, and when we had finished setting them, we went home.

The following morning we got up very early. We woke up at the first cockcrow, that is around 4 o’clock in the morning. Then we went to lie in wait for the barking-deer at that sŋá-tree. My friend had a rifle but I had not got my first rifle as yet because I was too young and I only carried a knife. Sét Đôn sat
down and hid under a bush, and I also hid in a bush about five metres away from him.

The sun started to rise and it was soon light from the early sun. I heard birds and squirrels chatting everywhere, and I turned my head and looked around me. Suddenly I saw a leopard running towards the stream. It was as big as a goat. It ran towards the stream and sat down on a fallen tree which lay across the stream close to the waterfall.

I called my friend in a low voice, but as he did not hear me, I took a small pebble and threw it on his back. He turned his head and looked at me, and I pointed to the leopard down there, only some ten metres away from me. The tiger did not hear us since it was so close to the waterfall which made quite a big din. Sét Dôn pointed his rifle to the tiger and pulled the trigger, but the rifle did not go off. He tried to fire once more and it went off, “plāŋ.”

The shot broke the leopard’s back, and it could not stand up. It crawled back and forth for a moment, but it could not run away. Then it fell down to the foot of the waterfall.

My friend had gunpowder for one shot only, so he could only fire the gun once, because he had forgotten his gunpowder horn at home. We could not go too near the wounded leopard and therefore took stones and threw at it, but it did not die, and we did not dare to go closer. We had one knife each, and we cut a bamboo, took my knife and fastened it to the top of the bamboo and tried to stab the wounded animal. However, the leopard was quicker than us. When we tried to stab it, it snatched the knife, it took our knife away with its claws.

Then we found a club to hit it, and we beat that leopard dead. We left the dead body there while we went to collect our ratsnares. Carrying the rat-snares and the rats which had been caught by the snares, we came back later to carry the dead leopard home to the village. At that time we were very hungry since it had taken quite a long time and it was already about ten in the morning.

On the way home we met my sister, when she was on her way to work in the garden-plot with her friends. I asked if she had brought some food with her, and she gave us some cooked rice, salt and peppers. I ate some of the food and felt better.
again. When we had rested a while, we carried the dead leopard, the rat-snares and the rats uphill to the village.

It was not very far away from the village, only a few miles. It is, however, always very tiring to walk from down a valley up to the village on the mountain ridge when you carry a heavy burden, and I was just a small boy.

We left the dead leopard outside the village and went home. Some villagers went out to cut up the dead body. Some of them brought meat home, cooked and ate the meat of that animal. Others did not, since there are many families who do not like to eat meat of big felines.

Also the killing of a python requires special caution in a similar manner, since the python is closely connected with the dragon, pryɔŋ. The dragon may transform itself into a man, a python, a water-buffalo or a small grasshopper called hɔɔs pryɔŋ which literally means “dragon grasshopper”. Should anyone accidentally kill a dragon in any of these shapes, the revenge may take the form of floods and landslides.

Yet pythons are killed for food, and some men eat python meat, but women never do. The dragon is particularly dangerous for women, and it is said that dragons rob women in order to marry them. Women must therefore always take care not to touch or have anything to do with things belonging to the dragon.

Even the killing of an ordinary python may arouse the wrath of the dragon, for the dragon is the owner-spirit also of pythons that are real snakes.

In order to find out whether a python is a snake or a spirit in snake form, a chopping block is placed beside the snake’s head, when a python is caught alive. The animal is carefully instructed: “Well, if you have an owner or if you are a spirit, then go away. If you do not have an owner and are not a spirit, then put your head on the block.”

Although the snake thus takes the decision itself, as it were, further precautions still have to be taken. A dead-fall trap is made, and the severed snake head is put into it in order to make the owner-spirit believe that the python was caught by the trap and not by a human being.13

The killing of other kinds of snakes is not problematic in the same way, but still most people resent eating snake meat. It is also considered unlucky to shoot a snake with a new weapon, because a gun used in this

13 See FTK 3 13.B.e. The Log People’s Village.
manner will probably never kill again. In the same way it is believed that a trap that catches a snake as its first animal will never catch any other prey.

Snakes are thus creatures of bad luck, and therefore the laying down of a snake is not celebrated with a feast.

There are some kinds of animals, for instance bear, porcupine, sambar deer and tiger, that are hunted not only for food but also in order to make medicine.

Thus it is the gall-bladder of a bear that is used to make medicine. When someone is unwell, people boil water and then put a little piece of bear gall-bladder in it and let the patient drink the water. People also cook and drink the contents of the stomach of the porcupine. Bear gall-bladder is better than the contents of the porcupine’s stomach, however, and bear gall-bladder is therefore very expensive. The sambar deer’s young horns that are still covered with hide are also used to make medicine.

Thus when a hunter gets a bear, a tiger, a barking-deer or a sambar deer with young horns, he may sell parts of his quarry for quite some money. If he gets a bear, he sells its gall-bladder, if he gets a tiger, he sells its bones and skin, if he gets a barking-deer, he may sell the skin for making bags, and the young horns of the sambar deer may be sold with good profit.
Traps, Prnàam Mòk

When drawing the illustrations I have taken care to draw in such a way that the reader will get a clear picture not only of how the traps look but also of their function. Sometimes therefore a trap has been drawn twice, once as it looks when it is set and a second time as it looks when released. The numbers of the various parts of the traps have been placed in either one of these pictures, depending on where that particular piece is best seen.

The art of trapping is now rapidly falling into oblivion, and I have visited museums both in Southeast Asia and in Europe where exhibited traps were incorrectly put together and where nobody was able to set a single one of the traps stored in the museum. It is my hope that this book will be of some help in this respect.

For the interested reader it will be possible to find out how each trap functions – provided that he studies the pictures in the following sections carefully and considers the explanations.

In most – but not all – of the traps and snares it is the trigger, lèŋ, which causes the release. The lèŋ is always a piece of bamboo with a hole for the string or cord which attaches it to the moveable part of the trap. The movable part may be a spring which is kept bent when the lèŋ is in place but is stretched with a jerk when the lèŋ flies off. It may also be a balance beam which has a felling part attached to the other end. This falling part is counterbalanced by the lèŋ as long as this is kept in place. As soon as the lèŋ is removed the precarious balance is broken and the heavy falling part crashes down.

The lèŋ may be removed either directly, in that the animal going into the trap touches it, or indirectly, in that a treadle or some other device removes the stopper which keeps it in place.

As will be seen from the illustrations, the lèŋ are of different shapes. If they are to be touched by the animals, they are usually long and slender. In that case one side of the lèŋ has a notch which is hooked
on to a support so that the string is stretched and the spring kept in a
bent position.

Other kinds of lèŋ lean against a support. The tip of the lèŋ is then
pressed hard against a stopper so that the lèŋ is under high tension – in a
cage trap for big felines, for instance, the weight of the trap-door which
is to be counterbalanced is quite considerable. In such constructions it is
the stopper that is drawn away whereby the lèŋ flies off.

The traps and snares look very different and yet almost all of them
are but variations of the same basic idea.
There is a whole group of spear-traps, klár – sometimes also the Lao name háaw is used – of the most varying dimensions intended to catch different animals. Big klár are set in order to catch big animals such as sambar and barking deer, boars, bears and tigers. The klár set to catch such small animals as porcupines have to be small and low.

As is described below, the traps have to be made invisible to the wild animals – which of course means that they are invisible to domestic animals and human beings as well – and therefore all klár are dangerous. Sometimes cows or water-buffaloes roving the woods are caught and killed by the big klár. Even people may be severely wounded or killed.

### Parts of the spear-trap

1. kám = spear
2. kir = spring
3. ciŋ cìp = abutment for spring
4. krılɔŋ = run for spear
5. tklòk = supporting pole
6. rptháap = stopper for spring
7. tŋká kám = pole with bore for spear
8. rŋlɛ́ɛŋ sñéey = pole for the release string
9. sñéey = release string
10. rmpūh = suspension cord
11. lɛŋ = trigger
12. smcêr = attaching string
by the klár, and therefore the position of such traps must be carefully marked. Yet accidents may occur, wherefore there are rules for what the owner of a klár has to pay if a family claims damages for an accident caused by his klár. The rules are, however, not valid if the victim of the accident has no right to be in the area, and especially not if he has been hurt while hunting in an area which belongs to another village.

One year, I think it was in 1967, two men from the Kúng Pəh village went with torches to hunt frogs at the stream near the Mọŋ Lọt village. Since they were not on the grounds of their home village, this amounts to poaching.

The two men went up along the stream carrying their torches catching frogs. Soon they came to a place where they had to pass a very high and extremely steep rise. They slowly climbed the slope. When they reached the brow of the hill, the man who went first was caught by a klár for barking deer which the Mọŋ Lọt people had set. The spear went right through his heart and he died on the spot. The other man went home and fetched some of the men of the Kúng Pəh village and they carried the dead man home.

The owner of the trap did not have to pay any damages. In fact, he did not help the dead man’s family in any way, since the man had committed an offence when he was out looking for food in a forest belonging to another village.

In other cases, when the victim of the accident has a right to be in the area where the klár is set, the bereaved family can claim damages. If a man is killed, his family will receive at least sixty màn as a compensation, that is the same amount as for a waterbuffalo.

The take of every kind of klár – no matter how small the klár and the animal are – is always considered big game and therefore has to be shared among the villagers. This is quite natural as regards the big klár which catch deer and thus have an abundant yield which can be shared with many people. Usually many people also cooperate in the construction of the bigger klár.

It is less obvious why a porcupine should be considered big game and thus common property. The porcupine is caught in a small klár, and to build and set the trap is a one-man job. The yield is petty, even less than that of a pheasant which is not considered to be big game, and the porcupine is not at all dangerous.
The Kammu explain the peculiar fact that this very small animal is treated as big game in the following way:

According to tradition a man once set a spear trap for porcupines on top of a termite hill. A water-buffalo belonging to some other family went grazing at the termite hill. When the buffalo stretched its neck to reach some plants on top of the hill, the trap was released. The spear went right through the buffalo’s throat and killed it.

In real life the loss of a water-buffalo is a heavy blow for a family, and for the unfortunate trapper it would mean a great economic burden to pay the indemnity which is the same as for a human being, that is no less than 60 màn. Since few families would be able to pay that much alone, the villagers will have to help out. Kammu people also say: “When there is some meat or food, everybody should take part of it. When it is a question of paying, everybody should help one another.”

The head of the village, who used to get a piece of the sirloin when big game is shared, will act as a mediator and negotiate the price in a case like this. The price agreed upon is then divided into four shares of which the villagers should pay one share and the hapless trapper the remaining three.

In actual fact, it is not at all likely that a porcupine trap would kill a big animal like a water-buffalo. Small as it is, the trap is insidious, however, and sometimes both people and domestic animals are wounded by it. Also in such cases the villagers should pay a share of the damages. As it is the porcupine trap that causes this, the porcupine itself is regarded as common property and treated as big game.

**Constructing Spear-Traps**

Big klár for deer are built by a team of men – as has been said already, women never take part in the building of dangerous traps.

When people have decided to make a klár, they examine the entire area very carefully before selecting the spot where to construct it. They select a spot across an animal track, in a place where the track is narrowing down and where there is a lot of brushwood on both sides, so that the animals will not detect the trap so easily.

On the day when the work will be undertaken, the men go to the place selected carrying with them the tools needed and the things they
will use for a sacrifice. Before the actual construction of the trap is begun, the leader of the group of hunters will initiate the undertaking with a sacrifice to the spirits of the area, róoy èes. The area spirits have to be informed about the undertaking since the trap will be located on soil belonging to them.

The men put down the things they have carried along near the spot where the trap will be built, but not on the actual spot. All the time they have to take care not to disturb the growth too much, since that would reveal to the animals that something had been going on there. Especially deer are extremely sensitive to even the slightest changes in the area where they are accustomed to moving about.

The leader of the team picks a suitable broad leaf to put the sacrificial items on. He unpacks four màn coins, four liím coins, four lumps each of cooked rice, fermented tea, betel and tobacco. As master of the ceremony he arranges the things on the broad leaf and places the leaf on the ground near the trunk of a big tree or close to a high cliff, for it is in such places the area spirits take their abode.

Then he kneels down and says the following prayer:

“Oh, Lord of the Soil, Lord of the Earth,
Lord of the Place, Lord of the Area,
We make this trap, make this tackle,
Let it be successful, let it be lucky, too!
Please let us get your domestic animals, your livestock!
Don’t let them fear, don’t let them shun!
May those that are near come soon,
May those that are far come later,
May those down below come up,
May those higher up come down.
Let our trap be successful and lucky, too,
We will buy it with this copper and silver, Amen!”

A deer trap is examined every third day or so. When, during the following weeks, the trap has been examined three times, the things which were offered as a sacrifice to the area spirits are collected and brought home.

After completion of the ceremony the work begins. Some of the men go to cut the spring, others go to cut bamboo to make the spear. In the meantime the remaining men build a fence at each side of the track so that an animal coming along the track will have to pass the opening
1. sóok
2. kám
3. kám ṣyíin
4 a–b. cók màh or cám tɔɔn
4 a–c. kiip
5. ktáak
where the trap is placed. The men will take care not to walk on the track and they will be careful not to disturb the growth and the foliage too much.

The illustrations are drawn in order to show the construction and the function of the fence. In actual fact, however, the fence and the entire construction will be completely hidden by the brushwood on both sides of the track. If the trap is to catch anything at all, it has to be made totally invisible.

The hunters will, of course, know from the prints what kind of animal it is that frequents the track and build the trap accordingly. If the klár is meant for sambar deer, the spear should be placed four kɨp above the ground, that is as high as the heart of a deer. This measure is marked on a stick that is placed in the opening of the fence to indicate where the spear should hit. The spear is made of tlàa bamboo, because this kind of bamboo is poisonous. Thus the animal will die quickly, even if it is not killed immediately by the shot.

The string for the release mechanism is tied to the side pole, rŋléŋ sñeey. A liana is chosen for this purpose, because even a minor thing like an ordinary string would scare the deer. One goes down one kɨp from the level of the spear and ties the string there, for the string should hang about one kɨp below the spear. When the string has been tied to the pole, it is drawn tight across the opening, and then one measures how loose or tight it should be in the particular place where the trap is constructed.

Before the string is slackened one will have to consider the position of the trap. If it is far away from water, the string should be slackened one sɔk, but if it is near a river or a stream one kɨp is enough. This is because far from water the deer walk at an ordinary slow and careful pace. On the other hand, near the water they walk fast, because they know that they are in danger of predatory animals which often lie in wait for them near the water. When animals come close to a stream, they just hurry down to the water to drink.

If we slacken the string just a little, one kɨp or so, at a trap that is set far from water where the animals walk slowly, the shot will penetrate high up at the front part of the back by the shoulder blade. The spear will not go in but only hit the shoulder blade and bounce off. The spear will go in sharp under the shoulder blade if the string is slackened one sɔk. In a trap near the water where the animals walk fast, the spear will only hit the hind leg of an animal or even miss altogether if the string is slackened as much as a sɔk.
When the construction of the trap is finished, some sticks of Dracaena, which grows leaves very rapidly, are placed by the opening to hide it from view and all signs of the presence of man are removed. After that the trap may be set for the first time.

When an animal walks through the opening, it will stretch a string tied to a loop which is placed over the trigger when the trap is set. The string pulls the loop away. The trigger is thus free and will release the mechanism of the spring. The spear is shot out and will hit the animal.

Before the hunters return home, they put up signs of warning, prnàal, which point to the trap. Whether the klár is placed along a stream or high up on the mountain side, this kind of sign has to be put by the path. People who see such a sign will then know that there is a dangerous trap there.

The klár should be made during the rainy season when people work in the fields. People then stay in the fields all the time, and there is rarely anyone except hunters in the forest. When the hot season sets in, the spears are taken down, because during the hot season many people walk around in the forest, for instance in order to pick mushrooms, fruits and wild taro. Then people could get hurt or even killed by the big klár.

The construction of a klár for barking deer is precisely the same as the one for sambar deer, and the same kinds of material are used. The only difference is that the klár for barking deer is lower and smaller than the one for sambar deer, because a barking deer is a rather small animal. Thus the klár for barking deer is only two kɨ̀ɨp high, and if the string is slackened one handbreadth, the spear will go in just under the shoulder blade.
Also a klár intended for tigers is of the same kind as the one for sambar deer. It is of the same height as a klár for sambar deer, but the string is never slackened more than one kɨp whatever the location, for tigers always move fast.

The smallest klár is the one for the porcupines, but also this one is made exactly as those for deer. The material used is the same but is, of course, much thinner and weaker. The bigger the animal the bigger and stronger the trap. The klár for porcupines is thus no more than one cók mah or one kám ñîn high and the string is slackened three fingerbreadths.

Although the klár for bears and boars have to be just as strong as those for sambar deer; they are only two kîp high just as the klár for barking deer. The construction is also the same except for the arrangement of the release string. Instead of tying the string across the opening with a trigger to release the mechanism, the string is formed into a snare. The snare will catch the throat of the animal, and when the snare is drawn tight with a jerk, the trap will be released.

The traps are constructed like this, because boars and bears do not walk in the same way as deer do. The boar walks with its head lowered, smelling the ground along its path, and the bear walks in a crawling manner also with its head close to the ground. If the string were arranged as in a deer trap, the klár would not function properly. It is impossible to estimate where the string will touch a boar or a bear when they reach the opening in the fence. With a sling that catches the throat, however, the spear will hit just right.

**Examining the Klár**

When klár are in use they are examined twice a week and not every day. After each examination they are set anew. They may be used for some months if they catch well, and when they are not to be used any more, the spear is lifted down from the spring and put beside the animal track.

When the owner of a klár goes to examine his trap, and the trap has been released but only hurt an animal but not killed it, the hunter looks for drops of blood and foot-prints of the wounded animal. He looks carefully to find out which direction the animal has gone and follows the blood track and the foot-prints if it is not a dangerous animal. If it is a dangerous animal which may attack him, however, he must return home to fetch some or the villagers to help him to find it. Sometimes an animal may go quite far away before it dies from the poison of the tlàa bamboo.
When the hunter finds the dead animal, he looks how the animal lies. If it lies down with its head turned back towards the trap, it means that the trap will be successful in the future and catch more animals. If the animal is lying with its head turned in some other direction, on the other hand, it means that both the hunter and the trap will lose their good luck and success. The hunter will then not get more animals in the near future.

The hunter also looks at the ears of the dead animal. If there are rifts in its ears, it is a good sign because that means that the owner-spirits of that animal have marked it for the man who got it. Are there no rifts in the ears of the animal, however, the hunter should be wary because the owner-spirits may be offended and angry. Had they really wanted him to get the animal, they would have marked it for him.

When he sees the dead animal he says the following words as a prayer for success:

“Chick, chick!
He-animal, lead the she-animal along,
To let you have friends,
To let you form a group!
You should not go alone,
You should not come home alone!”

Memories of the Klár

Once I went with two of my elder brothers and a friend from our wife-taking group to make spear traps for sambar deer. Altogether we were four, Mɨ́n Ràw, Ñìi Ràw, Ràw Lìaŋ and myself. We got up early one morning, pounded peppers and wrapped up some salt and cooked rice, and went to the Kɔ́n Pryɔ́ŋ quagmire to make klár. It was during the rainy season and the area was flooded. Although we made as many as ten klár, we had very little luck with them, and they only caught two deer during the whole year.

Another time my brother Mɨ́n Ràw made a klár for sambar deer by the Klɨ́r stream. One autumn day he went to set the klár with his friend from our wife-taking group, Ràw Lìaŋ, and another brother of mine, Ñìi Ràw, went with them. The three of them set the klár by the Klɨ́r.

A big tiger walked into their trap and was wounded but not killed. Then one day our uncle Đia and his son went to cut krawid bamboo to make basket strips. They felt an unpleasant smell as from a dead animal
when they walked down to the Klír. They looked around and saw that there were foot-prints of a tiger all over the place. Well knowing how extremely dangerous a wounded tiger may become, the two of them got very scared and quickly went home without cutting any bamboo at all.

When they came home to the village, they told us what they had seen, and that they had heard a tiger going up and down along the Klír roaring as it went. Other people who spent the nights in the fields had also heard a tiger roar near that stream for several days.

There were thus two tigers, one that had been caught by the klár and one that kept watch over its dying mate. When Mín Ràw and Ràw Lìaŋ went to examine their klár, they found that the klár had indeed been released. They saw that there was blood and tiger foot-prints there. They went home and told the other villagers, and then they went in a group and followed the track of blood and foot-prints. Suddenly they heard a tiger growl, and they ran back to the village all too scared to follow the tiger any further.

Not until about a month later did we find the dead tiger by the Klír. Its mate had then vanished into the jungle again.

Many stories are told about the klár, and when I was still a small boy I heard another story that people liked to tell us. Our parents told us how one year uncle Cəə from the Sɛɛŋ Tőŋ village set a klár at the foot of his family’s field in the forest belonging to their village. There was a bear that had begun to walk into their fields and eat their rice and maize, and they wanted to catch it.

As they had hoped, a bear was also caught by the klár, but unfortunately it was not killed. The wounded bear went into the jungle outside their field to lie down. The bear was certainly dying, but it was not dead as yet.

Uncle Làay and uncle Làaŋ from our village went together to hunt in the forest belonging to the Sɛɛŋ Tőŋ village. When they walked around, they found a track of blood and as hunters should do, they followed it. A little further along they heard a bear growl, and the wounded bear rushed upon them and attacked uncle Làay. It bit his head and his throat, but he did not die, he was just badly wounded. Uncle Làaŋ lifted his gun and shot, and the bear fell down dead.

Now uncle Làaŋ carried uncle Làay and walked back, and on the way home they met uncle Cəə, the man who had made the klár. They told uncle Cəə what they had done: “We went hunting and came across a bear that had been caught by your klár. It was not dead yet and it bit Làay here. We have shot the bear so it is dead now.”
Uncle Cəə now rushed home and called people from the village, and several people working in the fields nearby came to help carry uncle Làay home to our village. They did not let him come all the way into the village, because they feared that he would die in our village. We believe that if a wounded man dies inside a village, the spirits of death by accident, róoy hʔéep, will stay in the village. Therefore people spread bamboo mats underneath one of the barns outside the village and let him rest there. They hung up round casting-nets around the barn to scare away the evil spirits of death by accident. After that they called the shaman to come and cure the wounded man, cure him both by magic formulas and by the aid of medical herbs.

They continued to work hard for three days and nights to save his life and his health, and during that time he had to stay underneath the barn. Several people came out from the village to assist in keeping watch over the wounded man. Fires were kept burning all around the barn to protect him, for they feared that the spirits of death by accident would come and fetch his soul. When so many people kept watch over him, they hoped that the spirits would be afraid to come.

The careful treatment succeeded and after three days they were able to help uncle Làay into the village. The people of his house caught a water-buffalo and slaughtered it to feed the spirits of their kin so that the ancestor spirits would continue to help the patient. Thus they killed the buffalo in order to cure him.

After that uncle Làay slowly got well again. When he was cured, uncle Cəə brought a jar of rice wine and slaughtered a pig and came to tie the wrists of uncle Làay with white cotton thread. He tied his wrists to strengthen his soul, fearing that otherwise his soul would leave him.

Many years later I myself went to see uncle Làay, and I continued to do so many times later on when I was a grown up man. He was a formidable hunter and everybody in our kin deeply respected him. Uncle Cəə was my mother’s brother so he was one of my wifegivers, and uncle Làay was one of our wife-givers, too, so we were all akin.

It should be mentioned that, although the bear had been shot dead, the owners of the trap did not go to fetch its body but only just left it

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1 In Kammu this ceremony is called sūu hrmāal ‘to the soul’ or simply tūk tí ‘tie the wrist’. Many peoples in Southeast Asia conduct similar ceremonies; for the Thai equivalent, tham khwan, see Heinze (1962) which contains a bibliography of 20 pages. Kemmu hrmāal and Thai khwan are similar concepts to which there is no English equivalent. Heinze translates the word khwan as ‘the essence of life’, and Davis (1964) as ‘psychic energy’.
where it was. They did not dare to bring it home, because they were afraid that the dreaded spirits of death by accident might have entered the body of the bear.

Although the bear bit uncle Làay, the owner of the klár did not help him with medical treatment or money. The klár owner only helped to carry the wounded man, and afterwards he bound his wrists to strengthen his soul. That he did not have to pay damages was because uncle Làay had been hunting in a forest belonging to other people. The villagers of our village, however, helped uncle Làay with one fourth of the medical treatment since it is customary that the villagers share the costs also in cases like this.