

TUM TEAV



A Translation and Analysis
of a
Cambodian Literary Classic

George Chigas

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CHAPTER 1:
The Importance
of
Tum Teav



Tum Teav is a tragic love story about a talented novice monk named Tum and a beautiful adolescent girl named Teav. There are numerous versions of the story that cover all the major modes of expression in Cambodian culture. In addition to oral versions, *Tum Teav* appears in different historical texts, as it is generally believed that the story's characters are based on actual people and events in Cambodian history. There are literary versions and modern adaptations of the story for Cambodian theater and film as well. The different versions of *Tum Teav* in various genres attest to the story's enduring importance and popularity in Cambodian culture and society.¹

Tum Teav is a cornerstone of the Cambodian literary canon and has been taught in Cambodian schools since 1957, the year Khmer literature was introduced into the national curriculum after the country won independence from the French (Cambodia was a French protectorate from 1863 to 1954). In 1958, the government stipulated that *Tum Teav* be taught in schools and universities beginning at the secondary level. By the 1960s, it was a central text in the Khmer literature curriculum for secondary schools.

In the third-year class (the equivalent of the second year of high school in the West), *Tum Teav* was taught along with such classical texts as *The Reamker*, the Khmer version of the Indian epic, *The Ramayana*. These texts were used to illustrate the influences of Buddhism and Brahmanism in Cambodian literature (the two other categories of literature taught in 1957 were modern texts and aphorisms). In the first-year curriculum, the story was studied along with the modern novel because of its realistic portrayal of everyday life in Cambodian society. Its description of ancient Cambodian customs also demonstrates that it is a uniquely Cambodian product and not an adaptation of a foreign text. In 1965, the curriculum of Khmer literature was revised and many works were removed. *Tum Teav* was maintained in the curriculum, affirming its importance to Cambodian literature and cultural identity.²

By the 1960s, *Tum Teav* had become a topic of serious literary research

and debate among Cambodian scholars. In 1960, the Khmer Writers Association, under the direction of Hel Somphea, traveled to Tbong Khmom to research the origin of the story and its basis in Cambodian history.³ They met with supposed descendents of former slaves described in the story and were shown sites where episodes from the story were believed to have taken place, such as the site where Teav committed suicide.⁴ A number of critical texts on *Tum Teav* were written in the 1960s as well. The scholarly texts that investigate the authenticity of different versions of the story and other questions, as well as texts that provide background on the controversy concerning *Tum Teav's* authorship, are discussed in Chapter 3.

Oral Versions

The historical, literary and modern versions of *Tum Teav* trace their origins back to the oral versions of the story.⁵ These versions were performed by professional singers who traveled the Cambodian countryside during the 19th century.⁶ In the 1950s, for example, a famous storyteller known as Ta Krud inspired many listeners with his performances of the *Reamker*. In the late 19th century, a woman named Sai Pour recited *Tum Teav* to the accompaniment of a *chapei* (a long-necked, two-string guitar) in Srok Sithor Kandal in Prey Veng province and many other places.⁷ The fact that *Tum Teav* was part of the repertoire of stories recited by these traveling minstrels is a good indication of the story's importance in Cambodian society since at least the middle of the 19th century.

The story's importance was clearly evident to Etienne Aymonier (1844-1929), who produced two translations of the oral versions, and Louis Delaporte, who published Aymonier's first translation.

Etienne Aymonier arrived in Cambodia in 1869 as a member of the French navy. He held various posts and in 1873 was named adjunct representative of the Protectorate in Phnom Penh. This position required Aymonier to travel throughout Cambodia and enabled him to pursue his study of Khmer by translating palm leaf manuscripts and temple inscriptions. In 1874, Aymonier supervised the instruction of Cambodians enrolled at the College of Administrator Training and was director of the college from 1877 to 1878. He produced his first translation of *Tum Teav* in 1880.⁸

Aymonier attempted to investigate the source of the story by traveling to Tbong Khmom district in 1883.⁹ Its residents told Aymonier that the story was true, and he learned that their resentment for being called the

descendants of hereditary slaves was the reason it was strictly forbidden to tell the story in Tbong Khmom.¹⁰ For this reason, Aymonier was accompanied by French forces during his research, and his Cambodian guide was as discreet as possible when showing Aymonier the locations where events in the story were believed to have taken place.¹¹ Aymonier included the information he gathered during this trip to supplement his second translation of *Tum Teav*, which was included in his *Le Cambodge I, Le Royaume Actuel*, published in 1900.¹²

Louis Delaporte was chief of a mission to Cambodia for the French Ministry of Public Education. Earlier, in 1865, he had been part of a mission under Doudart de Lagrée sent to find the source of the Mekong. Delaporte also heard *Tum Teav* performed during his travels in the Cambodian countryside. In 1873, for example, he heard the story performed in the village of Beng Mea-Lea during a journey between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. At the invitation of the village leader, Delaporte attended a Buddhist Kathin ceremony that was followed by a banquet and entertainment.¹³ The banquet ended with a performance of *Tum Teav* that Delaporte listened to from beginning to end with the aid of an interpreter. Delaporte was so impressed with the story that he included Aymonier's translation in his *Voyage au Cambodge, Architecture Khmère*, published in 1880 (at that time, Delaporte was in Saigon as part of the administration of the French Protectorate).

Both Delaporte and Aymonier described the story as a "drame historique" that depicts actual events in Cambodian history. Aymonier suggested two dates when the events in the story took place. In his *Cambodge I*, he dates the story to the first half of the 18th century. He later modifies this date in his 1903 text *Cambodge III* to the second half of the 18th century during the reign of an unpopular monarch named King Rea-mea.

The characters and events in the oral versions of *Tum Teav* published by Delaporte and Aymonier are similar to those in the literary version of this book's Chapter 2, which is based on the 1962 edition of *Tum Teav* by Venerable Botumthera Som. There are, however, some notable exceptions. In the oral versions, the novice monk is named Ek instead of Tum. Also, in the oral versions Tum and Teav are officially engaged before they are brought to the royal palace, which is not the case in the literary version. Last, in the oral versions Orh-Chhuon and his son are the ones who devise the trick to call Teav back from the royal palace and convince Teav's mother to write the letter stating falsely that she is very ill. In the literary version, it is Teav's mother who devises the ploy.

Historical Versions

As stated above, the events described in *Tum Teav* are believed to have taken place in Cambodian history. The provinces and towns in the story do in fact exist, and the modern residents of Tbong Khmom have preserved items they believe belonged to Teav, the story's heroine.¹⁴

Despite popular belief, however, it is difficult to find empirical evidence to support the argument that the people and events described in the story are based on historical fact. The most convincing written evidence is the story's inclusion in Cambodian historical texts. Two kinds of historical sources are considered here: the Royal Chronicles and historical texts that use the Chronicles as a primary source.

The Royal Chronicles

Tum Teav appears in two versions of the Cambodian historical documents known as the Royal Chronicles. This disparate group of texts traces the reigns of successive Cambodian kings back to their mythical origin.¹⁵ The oldest existing Chronicle was written during the reign of King Ang Chan II (1806-1834) in 1818. The most recent version was written in 1966, when Prince Norodom Sihanouk (1941-1970) was in power. In 1879, a legendary part that describes the mythical origin of Khmer kings was added to the original historical part of the Chronicles.¹⁶ The versions that include both the legendary and historical parts are referred to as the complete versions.

In an attempt to clarify the historical validity of the Chronicles, contemporary historians make a distinction between the legendary and historical parts of the various versions. However, it is questionable just where the legendary part ends and the historical part begins, or what is historical and what is imaginative or legendary in the Chronicles as a whole. The 1818 version is solely historical and begins with the 14th century reign of King Nibvan Pad. It was not until the 1869 version known as Wat [okasis] Ko Koh (KK) – written during the reign of King Norodom – that the legendary part first appeared. It traces King Nibvan Pad's royal lineage to its mythical origins in the 5th century BC.¹⁷ For this reason, this KK is considered to be the first complete version of the Chronicles.

The etymology of the Khmer word for the Chronicles, *bansavatara*, describes their primary function. *Bansavatara* is a Sanskrit word composed of the roots *vança* (offspring or issue) and *ava-tara* (descendant or incarnation).¹⁸ Thus, *bansavatara* could be translated as “the lineage of (Khmer) kings.” The Chronicles present “the history of Cambodia” in the

sense that they trace the past in terms of the successive reigns of Cambodian monarchs. Thus, the primary task of the palace functionaries or monks who drafted the Chronicles was to record the reign of a particular king and to affirm his place in the royal lineage.¹⁹ In doing this, the writers praised the reputation of their monarch in the most glowing terms. As such, the Chronicles were not “historical” in a Western sense. That is, the writers were not necessarily obliged to support their accounts with empirical evidence. Indeed, there are many inconsistencies concerning dates and names in the different versions. Nonetheless, the Chronicles remain the primary source for piecing together Cambodian history up to the 19th century.²⁰

Tum Teav appears in two of the later versions of the Chronicles. The first is a fragment whose date of composition and author are not known. It was copied in 1916 by L'École Française D'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) and referred to by the number P57.²¹ The original fragment was found in Phnom Penh by French explorer Edouard Huber, who traveled to Indochina for the first time in 1901 and died there in 1914. It was copied in two volumes and kept at the Bibliothèque de L'École Française D'Extrême-Orient in Paris (BEFEO).²² The first volume of P57 covers the period from 1557, prior to the fall of Lovek in 1594, to 1608, during the reign of Sri Suriyobarn Paramaraja VII (1602-1618), and is missing the period 1608-1635. The second volume of P57 begins in 1635 with the death of Cau Bana Tu Sri Dhammaraja I (1627-1631) and ends in 1802.

Tum Teav appears on page 17 of the second volume of P57 as part of the account of the reign of King Rea-mea (1641-1656), whose royal capital was located at Oudong.²³ According to P57, King Rea-mea took the throne in 1641, after having his uncle and cousin assassinated. He was an unpopular king who converted from Buddhism to Islam and committed crimes against foreigners and his own people. He died in 1656 after being taken prisoner by the Vietnamese.²⁴

The author of P57 states that the tragic events described in *Tum Teav* took place in 1654 near the end of King Rea-mea's reign. The following is my translation of Mak Phoeun's French translation of the story from P57:

His Majesty Rea-mea Thipadei had two pages that he held in great affection. One was named Moeurn Ek, who was a singer. The other, named Pech, knew how to play the flute. They pleased the king and would perform and sing for him every night.

One day, the royal servants who had gone to search for beautiful women to be royal concubines escorted Teav from the district of Tbong Khmom to offer to the king. Then Moeurn Ek bowed before the king

and said:

“Teav is the fiancée of your servant. We joined our hearts when Teav was ‘in the shade.’ That is, when your servant was a novice monk.”

Having heard that, the king asked Teav, and she confirmed that Moeurn Ek was truly her fiancé. Then, the king detached himself from Teav. He had them bow before him and married Teav to Moeurn Ek.

The news reached Orh-Chhuon, the governor of Tbong Khmom district. He called the parents of Teav and told them:

“Previously, I had asked for the hand of Teav to be the wife of Moeurn Amrith Snaihar, who is my son. Preparations for the marriage ceremonies were ready when the king’s servants came and chose Teav to take her to the king. Now, the king doesn’t love her: He gave her to be the wife of Moeurn Ek, who is a man without lineage. Thus, you must write a letter to tell Teav that you are sick, and that she must return home. We will get prepared for the marriage celebration, so she can marry Moeurn Amrith Snaihar. You will be famous, being related to our family.”

The parents of Teav composed a letter according to Orh-Chhuon’s orders. They offered it to Orh-Chhuon who ordered his servants to embark on a boat and deliver the letter to Teav.

Understanding that her parents were very sick, and so, unable to remain any longer with her husband, Teav went before the king and bowed to take leave.

When she arrived in the district of Tbong Khmom, she didn’t see her parents sick as the letter said. She immediately saw that they were in the process of making cakes in preparation for the marriage.

Teav was very upset. She could not go back because Orh-Chhuon had her under close guard, so she ordered a servant to return to inform Moeurn Ek.

Having learned of this, Moeurn Ek entered and bowed before the king to inform him of what had happened. Hearing the news, the king became furious. He ordered that a royal edict be drafted and gave it to Moeurn Ek so he could go and tell Orh-Chhuon to stop the wedding.

When Moeurn Ek arrived, he found Orh-Chhuon in the process of celebrating the wedding of Moeurn Amrith Snaihar and Teav. Seeing that Moeurn Ek had arrived, Teav left and went to Moeurn Ek in view of Orh-Chhuon. Seeing this, Orh-Chhuon seized Moeurn Ek and had

him put to death, violating the royal decree carried by Moeurn Ek.

Then Teav and Miss. Nor, who was Teav's servant, fled and committed suicide together.

Having seen Orh-Chhuon seize and put to death Moeurn Ek, his friend, Moeurn Pech fled to go inform the king, who became extremely angry.

In 1016 of the Culla era, the Year of the Horse, sixth of the decade [1654/5 A.D.], the king led his four ministers and his soldiers to embark on a voyage to Tbong Khmom. Thereafter, the king ordered the arrests of Orh-Chhuon, as well as Moeurn Amrith Snaihar and the parents of Teav, and had them all executed. Then the king had the members of the family of Orh-Chhuon and Teav's parents, along with the people that were closely involved in the marriage arrangements, made slaves. Then the king ordered:

"From now on, the residents of the district of Tbong Khmom must pay, once every three years, a tax on the number of carts from the profit of Orh-Chhuon."

This is why there were more slaves in the district of Tbong Khmom.

Having thus punished the people who had committed treason and were the accomplices of Orh-Chhuon, the king led his troops to return in a military procession to the royal palace.²⁵

The second version of the Chronicles in which *Tum Teav* appears in is *Preah reachea bansavatara*. This complete version is better known as Wat Tik Vil (TV), after the name of the temple where it was produced. TV was completed in 1941 by order of the temple's abbot, Venerable Has Suk, and is kept at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. It is based on earlier drafts of TV composed during the reigns of King Norodom (1860-1904) and King Sisowath (1904-1927). TV begins with the legendary King Preah Thon, whose marriage to the Naga princess led to the creation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and continues to the middle of the 17th century, with each chapter corresponding to the reign of a different king.²⁶

The information presented in TV suggests that the writers were not especially constrained by expectations for historical accuracy. Along with details of war treaties and civil and military functionaries, TV provides details that would probably not have been available, such as the number of dead and wounded in battles that had occurred centuries before.²⁷ In addition, dates are often in disagreement in the historical part and not plausible in the legendary part.²⁸

Tum Teav appears in TV in the chapter on King Rea-mea Thipadei (1638-1655), whose royal capital was located at Lovek. Unlike King Rea-mea (1641-1656) from P57, King Rea-mea Thipadei is depicted as a compassionate and devout monarch.²⁹

My English translation of Khin Sok's French translation of *Tum Teav* in TV, t.XVIII, p16+, follows:

In the district of Tbong Khmom, there were two persons named Ek and Tum. Moeurn Ek was a famous singer and Moeurn Tum a renowned flute player. A widow named Phan had a daughter called Teav. She was known for her beauty. She lived in the village of Por [Bodhi] Choeung Khal (village of Khum of Mon Riev, *srok* of Tbong Khmom, province of Kampong Cham) of the district of Tbong Khmom; Miss. Teav was betrothed to Moeurn Ek because he was a famous singer and their parents had accepted their union since they were still children. One day Moeurn Chuon, son of Chao Barma Ajudyh Jai, was walking with his friends in the village of Por Choeung Khal; attracted by the beauty of Miss. Teav, he fell in love with her. He returned home and talked to his parents. The latter sent a go-between to the home of Phan to ask the hand of Miss. Teav. The widow Phan gave her consent, but her daughter refused because she was in love with Moeurn Ek.

When S.M., the exalted master, learned that Tum and Ek were famous for their singing and flute playing, he ordered the director of music to go looking for these two persons to play music and sing to him permanently. The king had a great affection for both of them.

One day, the king ordered Ouk-nha Vamn to send his servants to the provinces in search of the most beautiful girls. At this moment, Preah Amrita Sneha Keo said to the king: "There is a pretty flower named Teav, daughter of the widow Phan; she lives in the village of Por Choeung Khal in the district of Tbong Khmom."

Having heard that, the king was delighted and ordered Ouk-nha Vamn to send a message to Chao Bunna Ajudyh Jai, governor of the district of Tbong Khmom. After having read the message, Chao Bunna Ajudyh Jai ordered his servants to accompany Miss. Teav, her servant Miss. Nor and the widow Phan to Ouk-nha Vamn, who escorted them to the king. His Majesty acknowledged that Miss. Teav was very beautiful. At this moment, Moeurn Ek sang to the king that Miss. Teav was his fiancée. S.M. asked Teav to respond to the words of Moeurn Ek. She answered him affirmatively. The king then ordered Ouk-nha Maha Mantri and Maha Debva to prepare the marriage ceremony of Moeurn Ek and Miss. Teav.

As for the widow Phan, she was very ambitious and wanted her

daughter to marry the king, when unfortunately she was only the wife of a singer. She took recourse in a ruse in order to be able to marry Teav to Moeurn Chuon, the son of Chao Bunna Ajudhyh Jai, the governor of the district of Tbong Khmom, who was extremely rich.

The widow Phan and the governor agreed to unite Teav and Moeurn Chuon. The widow sent a letter to Teav, who was at the citadel of Lovek, telling her that she was seriously ill. Having received the letter, Miss. Teav was very upset; Moeurn Ek, her spouse, accompanied his wife and Miss. Nor, her servant, up to the embankment. When they arrived at Por Choeng Khal, Miss. Teav was very surprised to see preparations for a wedding and that her mother was not sick. Then she understood that it was a ruse. Her mother forced her to marry Moeurn Chuon; she refused and preferred to die quickly rather than marry the son of the governor.

The first day of the crescent moon, of the month of Phalguna, in the year of the Naga, third of the decade [the year of the Naga always carries the same number of the decade], Miss. Teav ordered a confidant to carry a letter to her spouse, who showed it to the king. When he understood the matter, the king became enraged and ordered his secretary to draft a message in which he ordered Chao Bunna Ajudhyh Jai to turn over Miss. Teav to Moeurn Ek, since they had already been married for three months.

The third day of the crescent moon, of the month of Phalguna, Moeurn Ek arrived at Por Choeng Khal. He found everyone at a banquet and entered the house. Moeurn Ek started to sing, asking for bétel from Miss. Teav, and Moeurn Tum started to play his flute. Chao Bunna Ajudhyh Jai became angry and ordered his servants to capture Moeurn Ek and put him to death in a field behind the house; Miss. Teav and Miss. Nor fled and arrived at the place where Ek had been killed, then the two women committed suicide.

After the killing of Moeurn Ek, the royal message was found on a mat inside the house. All the participants at the ceremony were very worried. When Moeurn Tum had learned that Ek had been killed, he fled, walking day and night toward the citadel of Lovek in order to relate the story to the king. S.M. became angry and said: "This traitor is very insolent, he will be punished to the full extent, along with the guests to the wedding." This said, the king ordered war boats to be prepared. Then he left for Bohdi Choeng Khal, followed by his ministers and soldiers.

That night, having learned that Miss. Teav had disappeared from the house of the widow Phan and that she was dead with Moeurn Ek, the guests left to their own homes.

When he arrived at Por Choeung Khal, the king ordered his soldiers to bury alive Chao Bunna Ajudhyh Jai and his family, as well as the parents up to the seventh degree. In addition, the entire population of the village was made slaves. Each would have to pay annually a bundle of *sapeques* and a *tau* [15 kg] of rice to the governor. Finally, S.M. ordered the lowering of the titles of the five governors of the region of Chao Bunna to Ouk-nha, for they had shown themselves to be ingrates. Then the king returned to the capital of Lovek in 2112 of the Buddhist era, 1569 of the Christian era, 1491 of the Great Era, 931 of the Culla era [2112 of the Buddhist era corresponds to the other dates given].³⁰

Texts Based on the Chronicles

Eng Soth

The first Cambodian to produce a Western-style history of Cambodia was Eng Soth, whose *Documents of Great Khmer Figures* was published in 1969. Eng Soth based his text on a personal copy of the TV Chronicle.³¹ He also referred to other versions of the Chronicles, primarily *Preah reachea banscatara krong Kambujadhipati*, commonly known as “Vamn Chuon” (VC).³² *Tum Teav* appears in *Documents of Great Khmer Figures* in the chapter that deals with the reign of King Rea-mea Thipadei (1638-1655), when the royal capital was located at Lovek. Eng Soth made some minor changes to the passage of *Tum Teav* from TV, for example, changing the name of Tum’s friend to “Pech.”³³

Earlier French historians’ use of the Chronicles can help shed light on the extent to which the inclusion of *Tum Teav* in Eng Soth’s text adds to the credibility of the story’s historical basis and whether his use of the Chronicles as a basis affirms the historical validity of his *Documents of Great Khmer Figures*.

VC, one of Eng Soth’s primary sources, was first drafted in 1929 during the reign of King Monivong. The French were directly involved in the production of VC in two important ways. First, the commission that King Monivong charged to draft the text included the French Résident Superior M.F. Lavit.³⁴ The second concerns King Monivong’s desire to print VC. In 1928, he sent a letter to the Résident Supérieur expressing his wish to print the text. In 1934, he sent a second request, apparently after the initial draft was revised.³⁵ Unlike previous versions of the Chronicles that were written on palm leaf manuscripts, VC was the first original version considered for printing.³⁶

French interest in the Chronicles began towards the end of the 19th century as part of an attempt to determine the history of the building of the

Angkor temples. This was the objective, for example, of the French academic and administrator Doudart de Lagrée, who published the first Western translation of the Chronicles. The translation, entitled *Histoire d'un Centenaire: Roi du Cambodge*, along with copies of the original text, were deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale and Bibliothèque de la Société Asiatique in Paris. Subsequently, F. Garnier translated the 1818 version of the Chronicles, supplying missing information and elaborating on the truncated syntax of the Khmer.³⁷

In 1883, J. Moura's two-volume text, *Royaume du Cambodge*, appeared. Moura used one of the later "complete versions" and supplemented his translation with personal reflections. Moura went further than either de Lagrée or Garnier in adapting and transforming the original Khmer text. The skill with which they did this is questionable, however, especially in the case of Moura, who states in his introduction that the original Chronicle was in Pali, although no such version is known to exist.

With the appearance of E. Aymonier's *Le Cambodge* in 1904, French efforts to assimilate the Chronicles into a historical discourse in keeping with Western expectations became more sophisticated. Unlike the earlier French studies described above, which he saw as having little historic value, Aymonier's analysis compares the Chronicles with foreign documents in an attempt to verify the historic events presented in the Khmer text. In the same year G. Maspéro's *Empire Khmer* appeared with its copious notes and commentaries supplementing the information derived from the Chronicles. Then in 1914, *Histoire du Cambodge* by A. Leclère was published. Leclère's study uses legends and inscriptions in addition to the Chronicles and other historical documents, and remains one of the most comprehensive studies of that period. It also assimilates the Chronicles into Western historical discourse more than any previous work.

Returning to Eng Soth's *Documents of Great Khmer Figures*, we find that it is not "historical" in the Western sense described above. That is, it does not make a critical analysis of the Chronicles or systematically compare the different versions in an attempt to determine the historical validity of particular dates and events. Instead, as its title suggests, Eng Soth's text was designed to appeal to a general reading public. It is thus a more "literary" than "historical" text. *Documents of Great Khmer Figures*, along with the passage on *Tum Teav*, might well be described as "historical fiction."³⁸

Mak Phoeun

The French-educated Cambodian historian Mak Phoeun included a passage on *Tum Teav* from P57 in his text, *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge* (de

1594 à 1677), which was published in 1981. Mak Phoeun used the 1929 VC version of the Chronicles as the basis for his study and he supplemented each chapter with information from other Chronicles. Mak Phoeun used the Chronicles in a more critical and scholarly way, making comparisons between different versions in order to determine the most reasonable chronology of events.

He located the *Tum Teav* passage in the chapter on King Rea-mea Thipadei, who reigned between 1638 and 1655, because the chapter corresponds to the one on King Rea-mea in P57.³⁹ The chapter on King Rea-mea Thipadei states that he took the throne in 1638 after he had his uncle and cousin killed. In 1644, he took a voyage and fell in love with a Malay woman he saw along the bank of a river. He made the woman his concubine and subsequently converted to Islam. The royal court was ordered to convert as well. King Rea-mea Thipadei's reign came to a violent end when his two cousins tried to avenge their father's and brother's deaths by recruiting the help of factions of the royal court who were unhappy with the King's conversion to Islam and renunciation of Buddhism. To bolster their forces, the cousins sought the help of Vietnamese troops, who were all too eager for an opportunity to enter Cambodia. King Rea-mea Thipadei was soundly defeated in the battle that ensued and died while being held prisoner by the Vietnamese.

The passage on *Tum Teav* appears after King Rea-mea Thipadei's conversion to Islam. The plot and characters in P57's version of *Tum Teav* are similar to those in the literary versions of the story. However, there is no similarity between the king in *Tum Teav* and King Rea-mea in either P57 or VC. In *Tum Teav*, there is no mention of a Malay concubine, and the king is clearly Buddhist. There is no information, other than the name of the monarch, to link King Rea-mea Thipadei in VC with the king in *Tum Teav*.⁴⁰ While Mak Phoeun's scholarly use of the Chronicles makes every effort to establish the facts of Cambodian history during this period, the inconsistency between the king in *Tum Teav* and the king in the Chronicles where the story appears underlines the difficulty in determining the historical basis of *Tum Teav*.

Khin Sok

Khin Sok, another French-educated Cambodian historian, includes a passage of *Tum Teav* from TV in his 1988 text, *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge de Baña Yat a la Prise de Lanvaek (de 1417 à 1595)*. As with Mak Phoeun, Khin Sok used the VC version of the Chronicles as the basis for his study and supplemented each chapter with information from other Chronicles referred to in footnotes. In Khin Sok's text, the *Tum Teav* passage

appears in the chapter on King Rea-mea, who ruled Cambodia between 1638 and 1655 and whose royal capital was at Lovek.⁴¹ Unlike the chapter on King Rea-mea Thipadei, where *Tum Teav* is located in Mak Phoeun's text, there are definite similarities between the story related by Khin Sok and the account of King Rea-mea's reign.

The chapter on King Rea-mea in VC states that Paramaraja succeeded his father as king at Lovek in 1568, during a period when Cambodia was constantly at war with its neighbors, Siam and Laos. In a battle with Siam, the village of Tbong Khmom is mentioned as contributing to the 40,000 troops who pursued the Siamese forces as far as Ayudhya. In 1572, King Rea-mea moved to Nagara Wat, leaving his son in charge at the royal palace in Lovek. Laos tried to capitalize on Cambodia's drained resources and challenged the Kingdom of Cambodia to a joust on white elephants, the loser of which would become a vassal state of the victor. Although Laos was defeated, the Laotian king refused to accept the terms of the agreement and attacked Cambodia. King Rea-mea's governors in the outer provinces, including one named Orh-Chhuon (the same name as in *Tum Teav*), refused to enter into battle. Despite this, King Rea-mea was able to summon sufficient forces to soundly beat the Laotian army and force it to retreat. In 1578, in a final battle with Laos, King Rea-mea defeated the Laotian army and brought captured Laotian families to live in Cambodian villages, including Tbong Khmom. In 1579, King Rea-mea fell ill and died and was succeeded by his son, Satha Mohinda Reachea (1579-1595), whose reign ended with the fall of Lovek to the Siamese.

The reference to *Tum Teav* from TV appears in the chapter after King Rea-mea's defeat of the Laotian forces and installation of Laotian families in Cambodia. The plot and characters in *Tum Teav* from TV are similar to those in the literary versions of the story. In this case, there are some general similarities between the events in the story and those in the chapter about King Rea-mea. In both accounts, the royal capital is located at Lovek, and the town of Tbong Khmom is mentioned. Another similarity is the existence of a governor by the name of Orh-Chhuon, who, in both accounts, does not cooperate with the king. In *Tum Teav*, Orh-Chhuon does not acknowledge the king's marriage of Tum and Teav, and in the chapter on King Rea-mea, a governor by the same name does not comply with the king's order to oppose the Laotian forces.

In *Tum Teav*, residents of the village of Tbong Khmom are made hereditary slaves as punishment for their participation with Orh-Chhuon. In the chapter on King Rea-mea, families of the defeated Laotian army are relocated in Tbong Khmom to live (presumably) as outcasts. Finally, the

themes of betrayal and trickery are present in both accounts. *Tum Teav* contains the ruse of Teav's mother to get Teav to leave Tum and return to Tbong Khmom. The chapter on King Rea-mea relates the scheme of the Laotian king to make Cambodia a vassal state by challenging Cambodia to a joust under false pretenses.

Conclusion

The inclusion of *Tum Teav* in these texts does not provide conclusive evidence that the story was based on historical truth. In each of the cases discussed above, there is no compelling rationale to support the story's association with a particular Cambodian king. Indeed, the story's basis in historical fact is a matter of conjecture.

Literary Versions

The Place of *Tum Teav* in the Cambodian Literary Canon

Locating *Tum Teav* in the Cambodian literary canon poses similar difficulties to locating the story in Cambodian history. While scholars have defined Cambodian literary categories, designating a given text to a particular category is often problematic. Broad classifications such as "religious literature," "didactic literature," or "epic literature" have been used to organize traditional texts, but many texts fall just as well into a number of categories. The *Reamker* is a prime example. On the one hand, it is a religious epic. At the same time, the story is meant to entertain and teach. Because of this ambiguity and its tremendous importance in Cambodian culture, the *Reamker* is typically placed in a category of its own. But the *Reamker* is not so much an exception to the rule as an example of the difficulty of locating Cambodian texts in distinct literary genres.⁴²

Prior to the twentieth century, Cambodian literary works were referred to by generic terms for texts, such as *sastra* or *krang*, and not by typical Western literary categories like "fiction," "romance," "adventure," etc.⁴³ It was not until the 1930s that a term for "Cambodian literature" came into use in Cambodia and Western-style literary institutions began to emerge from traditional Buddhist and monarchical institutions.⁴⁴ Perhaps the most influential of these was the Buddhist Institute, which led the process of defining and cataloguing Cambodian texts according to such genres as "religious texts," "epic texts," etc., listed above.⁴⁵

The emergence of the modern novel in the 1940s and 1950s, along with 20th century Western-style Cambodian literary institutions such as the

Buddhist Institute, produced a new category of Cambodian writing that was distinctly different from the country's traditional works. Although Buddhism and the monarchy continued to influence this writing in a fundamental way, the differences between traditional and modern Cambodian writing have provided literary scholars with two broad, yet clearly different, categories by which to organize literary texts.

Khin Hoc Dy, the preeminent Cambodian literary scholar, chose to divide his extensive survey of Cambodian literature into two volumes, the first dealing with the traditional works produced between the 15th and 19th centuries, and the second dealing with the 20th century. Similarly, British scholar Judith Jacob recently published a text on "the traditional literature of Cambodia."⁴⁶ If the distinctions between the categories of texts within traditional Cambodian literature are ambiguous, the clear difference between traditional and modern writing marks a shift in the production of Cambodian literature and the way texts are organized.

The biggest difference between the two concerns form. The form of traditional texts, whether religious, epic, didactic or works for pleasure, is verse. Prior to the emergence of the modern novel, prose was considered a non-literary form reserved for practical writing or translations of religious texts.⁴⁷ There are several verse patterns, each with different requirements for rhyme and line length. Often, a particular meter is used depending on the purpose of the writing. The seven - and eight - syllable meters, for example, are frequently used with writing meant primarily for entertainment, while a four-syllable verse pattern called *kakagati* or "crow's gait" meter, is commonly used for didactic writing.

Another distinctive feature of traditional texts is the themes of magic and the supernatural. The heroes of these stories, typically princes or reincarnations of gods, are usually equipped with supernatural weapons, such as magic arrows in the *Reamker*, or such supernatural powers as magic spells learned from an ascetic that enable heroes to defeat their enemies.

In contrast, modern Cambodian literature is written in prose, and the novel is the predominant form. The reason for the shift from verse to prose has much to do with Western, particularly French, influence. The development of French-style high schools and universities in Cambodia and the growing nationalist movement of the 1930s and 1940s made the development of the novel an important feature of Cambodian cultural and national identity. For Cambodian writers and intellectuals seeking a place for Cambodian literature in the modern world, the development of the novel was a necessary condition.

Despite these two broad categories of Cambodian literature, it is still difficult to classify *Tum Teav* unequivocally. While it is written in verse, its characters and plot are not at all typical of traditional Cambodian texts. The main characters and setting of the story are taken from everyday village life. The protagonists are not princes or reincarnations of deities, and they do not possess supernatural powers. To the contrary, they are ordinary people with human faults and failings. While there is no mistaking the Buddhist influence in the story, that alone is not enough to make the text traditional. Buddhist themes are a common feature of both traditional and modern literature. In addition to the setting and characters, other major themes of the story, particularly the tradition of arranged marriage, closely resemble those in the early modern prose novels of the late 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁸

Tum Teav's content, particularly its treatment of the marriage custom, resembles early examples of the Khmer modern novel such as *Sopha* and *Kolap Pailin*. In Nou Hach's influential 1947 novel *Phka Sraporn*, the heroine dies after her mother arranges her marriage to the son of a rich Chinese merchant instead of her true love. One cannot help but wonder to what extent Nou Hach's text is modeled after *Tum Teav*.

Because it shares features of both traditional and modern writing, *Tum Teav* is placed more specifically in the transitional period between classical and modern Cambodian literature. Khin Hoc Dy, too, classifies it as a transitional work and places it at the very beginning of his second volume on the literature of the 20th century.⁴⁹

Palm Leaf Versions

In 1958, four years after Cambodia gained independence from the French, the Cambodian government stipulated that *Tum Teav* be taught in the third and first forms of secondary school. At that time, two versions of the story had already been published. The first, entitled *Teav-Tum*, was published in the periodical *Kampuja Bartaman* in 1932. The second, by Nou Kan, was entitled *Teav-Ek* and was published in 1949 and 1953.⁵⁰ At that time, older palm leaf versions of the story were known to exist as well. The commission responsible for selecting the text to be taught in the schools considered the palm leaf manuscripts to be more authentic and for that reason preferable to the newer printed versions.⁵¹

In order to locate and identify the palm leaf manuscripts, the commission undertook a search of pagodas around the country and identified four manuscripts with different titles and in varying states of decay. Lacking a complete original, it was necessary to construct one. The four manuscripts were compiled and missing episodes completed with

transcriptions of oral versions of the story. The text was entitled *Tum Teav* and published in 1960, with the well-known 19th century poet Santhor Mok identified as the author. The writing was uneven, however, and the text was not well received by other literary scholars.⁵²

A palm leaf manuscript by Venerable Botumthera Som existed as well. Unlike the other palm leaf manuscripts, this one was complete and the author and date of composition were known. The Buddhist Institute published the manuscript in 1962, and it was used as the text for instruction in the schools. However, the question remained as to whether Venerable Som's text was an original composition or an adaptation of an older manuscript presumably written by Santhor Mok. In the years ahead, the question of the text's rightful authorship became a source of debate among Cambodian literary scholars.

Contemporary Literary Versions

Santhor Mok

Santhor Mok's literary version of *Tum Teav* was published in 1960 by Kim-Ky publishing house in Phnom Penh. Four professors at Lycée Sisowath - Hang Thun Hak, Eng Soth, Neang No and Sam Thang - compiled the text from four incomplete palm leaf manuscripts, presumably written during the reign of King Norodom (1860-1904), to which they added passages from the oral versions of the story, as well as the final episode of the king's punishment from the version by Venerable Som.⁵³

Although the original manuscripts were missing the pages that would have identified the author, the poet Santhor Mok was credited with the publication's authorship.⁵⁴ However, Thong Phan notes that the original palm leaf manuscripts appear not to have been written by the same person. For example, some had the title *Tum Teav*, while others had the title *Teav Ek*. While Santhor Mok was indeed the preeminent writer during the reign of King Norodom, the variations between the palm leaf manuscripts indicate that more than one writer contributed to the literary version of *Tum Teav* published under the name Santhor Mok.

Santhor Mok was born in 1846 in Oudong. His father was a palace mandarin during the reign of King Ang Duong (1841-1860). When he was eleven, an invading Vietnamese army took his parents prisoner, and Santhor Mok was subsequently raised and educated by the abbot of a pagoda near Oudong. He lived a very austere life and later suffered from smallpox, which deformed and scarred his body. When Santhor Mok disrobed, the abbot presented him to King Norodom, who recognized his extraordinary

intelligence and made him the royal secretary.

While a member of the royal court, Santhor Mok eventually married and had five children. His daughter married King Norodom's son, Prince Duong Chakr. Two of his four sons studied in France and probably sent their father the stories of *La Fontaine* that Santhor Mok translated into Khmer. A prolific and gifted writer, Santhor Mok wrote many poems and songs, some of which were translated into French by P. Collard. Santhor Mok died in Phnom Penh in 1908.⁵⁵

A distinctive feature of Santhor Mok's version of *Tum Teav* is the story's Buddhist interpretation of events. The tragic deaths of Tum and Teav are attributed to the Law of Karma, the Buddhist belief that one's present circumstances are a result of past actions. Accordingly, Tum's disrobing against the abbot's instructions and betrayal of the Buddhist precepts produced the bad karma that resulted in his violent death. Even the letter from the king was not able to stop the consequences of Tum's bad actions. That is, Tum's karma was more powerful than any temporal forces, even the power of the king. Similarly, Teav's refusal to accept Moeurn Nguon to be her husband was not in compliance with the traditional marriage custom. According to this version, Teav's bad action produced the bad karma that led to her tragic death.⁵⁶



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Venerable Botumthera Som

Venerable Botumthera Som was born in 1852 in the farming village of Kamprau in Prey Veng province (Kamprau is on the border of the former district of Tbong Khmom where *Tum Teav* takes place). He was the sixth of seven children, all boys. In 1867, Venerable Botumthera Som became a novice monk at Wat Kamprau, where he learned to read and write. After two years as a novice, he disrobed in order to help at the family farm. In 1873, Venerable Som returned to Wat Kamprau and continued his studies. He learned to compose poetry on his own and was the abbot of the temple when he completed his palm leaf manuscript of *Tum Teav* in September 1915 at the age of sixty-three. He died in 1932 at the age of eighty.

Figure 1: Venerable Botumthera Som

In 1935 another monk named Venerable Oum copied Venerable Som's manuscript on a new set of palm leaf sheets. The copy comprises two fascicules and has 187 pages.⁵⁷ This version of *Tum Teav* contains 1050 stanzas, including a 39-stanza preface in which Venerable Som gives the manuscript's date of composition and identifies himself as the author.

The story is written entirely in seven-syllable meter, with each stanza containing four lines. The last syllable of the second line rhymes with the last syllable of the third line (*f*), and the last syllable of the fourth line rhymes with the last syllable of the second line of the subsequent stanza (*h*). There is also an internal rhyme between the last syllable of the first stanza and the fourth syllable of the second stanza (*g*). The rhyme scheme is represented thus:

X X X X X X g
 X X X g X X f
 X X X X X X f
 X X X X X X h

In 1962, the Buddhist Institute published the first edition of *Tum Teav* by Venerable Som using Venerable Oum's copy of the original manuscript. Because this text offered some important advantages over the other palm leaf manuscripts (the manuscript was complete and written on palm leaf, and the author and date of composition are definitely known), it was used for instruction in Cambodian schools.

However, these advantages did not satisfy those literary scholars who believed that Santhor Mok was the legitimate author of the story and considered Venerable Som's manuscript to be an imitation. For them, using what they believed to be a plagiarized text was an injustice to Santhor Mok and furthermore compromised the value of Cambodian cultural identity. On the other side, scholars such as Kong Somphea argued that Venerable Som's text was based on an oral version of the story performed by a woman from the region named Sai Pour, who recited the story to the accompaniment of a *chapei*.⁵⁸

Indeed, the style of Venerable Som's version has many features of oral discourse. At different times during the course of the story, the narrator speaks directly to the reader to say, for example, that the setting will shift from one time and place to another. Other times, the narrator comments on the conduct of one of the characters to advise the reader not to take that behavior as a model to follow. Like a good storyteller, the narrator keeps the action of the story moving to keep the reader's interest. When long

descriptive passages do appear, it is usually Tum speaking in his poetic voice, using his talent with language to list the trees and fish with clever rhymes and word plays. Finally, as with many Cambodian folk stories, the use of humor in the story provides comic relief from the tragic circumstances of the characters.



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Figure 2: Nou Kan

Nou Kan

The most recent literary version of *Tum Teav* is *Teav Ek* by the well-known writer Nou Kan (1874-1947).⁵⁹ Nou Kan completed *Teav Ek* in 1942 and it received first prize in a literary competition organized by the French Protectorate. The text, written in eight-syllable meter, was later published in 1949 by Kim-Seng Publishers in Phnom Penh.⁶⁰

In the introduction to his text, Nou Kan states that he based his written version of the story on oral versions he had heard and remembered during the reign of King Norodom (1860-1904). Nou Kan worked as a secretary in the royal palace between 1891 and 1895, and probably heard the story performed during that time.⁶¹

Nou Kan was born in Takeo province. His father was a farmer, and he received a traditional temple education as a novice monk. When he was fifteen, Nou Kan left the monastic order. He worked as the secretary of the governor of Traeng province in South Vietnam before being appointed as the palace secretary in 1891. In 1902, he won the first prize in a literary contest and was sent by the French Protectorate to study law in Paris. He subsequently held a number of administrative posts in Cambodia, including president of the tribunal of the court of appeals and secretary of state for the minister of agriculture.

Nou Kan was also a prolific writer. In addition to *Teav Ek*, he published four novels in verse and prose, adaptations of a Malaysian novel and a Chinese novel, and a book of proverbs.⁶² He wrote two other verse novels, which were not published.

In his preface, Nou Kan states that *Teav Ek* is a true story. The events he describes correspond with those in Venerable Som's version. Also like

Venerable Som, Nou Kan underscores the importance of the Buddhist Law of Karma in determining the fate of the story's characters. Nou Kan presents his interpretation somewhat differently, however, by emphasizing the deleterious effects of desire. Accordingly, desire is identified as the cause of the characters' wrongdoing and negative karma that leads to their destruction.

Nou Kan's version of the story also has a political dimension. He argues that imposing the punishment of slavery on successive generations of the people of Tbong Khmom in the story was destructive and only served to perpetuate violence. In 1884, when Nou Kan was employed at the royal palace, King Norodom abolished slavery throughout the Kingdom.⁶³

Kong Huot and Chau Seng (French Adaptation)

In 1970, a French adaptation of *Tum Teav* by Kong Huot and Chau Seng appeared in *Culture et Civilisation Khmères* No. 7 published by the Université Bouddhique Preah Sihanouk Raj. The authors based their adaptation of the story on the version by Santhor Mok and in no uncertain terms indicate their position on the controversy over the story's authorship in their introduction:

Better known under the name *Teav-Ek*, this poem would have been written by the poet Santhor Mok at the end of the 19th century; but no manuscript officially carries his name. The majority of Cambodians nevertheless consider Santhor Mok as the author of this tragic love story that took place in the 16th century.

They also voice their disapproval of the Buddhist Institute for giving Venerable Som instead of Santhor Mok authorship credit in its 1962 publication of the story:

On the other hand, our Buddhist Institute edited the same poem in 1962. The author this time was a monk by the name Som.

In its preface, the Buddhist Institute explained that it found itself with two manuscripts: the one by Som, the abbot of the pagoda in Kamprau, located in the village of Sithor Kandal in the province of Prey Veng, and the one by Ouk-nha Vilboreach Sena Nou Kan, written in Phnom Penh in 1942 and entitled "Teav-Ek."

Since no authentic manuscript carried the name of the author, the Buddhist Institute, despite popular opinion, did not attribute the poem to Santhor Mok.⁶⁴

Kong Huot and Chau Seng end their brief introduction by asking the

reader to forgive them for any discrepancies between their French adaptation and Santhor Mok's version. Specifically, they explain that the capital referred to in their adaptation of the story is Srey Santhor and not Lovek, as in the version by Santhor Mok. They explain that Santhor Mok's version takes place during the reign of King Rea-mea Choeung Prey. The authors changed the royal capital to Srey Santhor because "all the history texts" state that King Rea-mea Choeung Prey reigned between 1594 and 1596 in Srey Santhor, before being assassinated by the Portuguese Diégo Bellaso and the Spaniard Blais Ruiz, partisans of Prince Pontha Ton, the son of King Satha.

Modern Adaptations

In the 1980s, Cambodian society began to rebuild itself after the devastation it had suffered for almost four years under the Khmer Rouge. However, the Vietnamese-installed government in Phnom Penh was under an international embargo led by the United States and had few resources at its disposal.⁶⁵ Despite this lack of resources, the few Cambodian writers, dancers, singers and actors who had survived the killing fields returned to Phnom Penh and began the painstaking process of reconstructing Cambodian arts from what little remained.⁶⁶

Tum Teav has been adapted for theatrical productions, illustrated cartoon-format books, film, and musical compositions. These modern adaptations attest to the story's on-going importance and popularity in contemporary Cambodian society, as well as its continued use as a vehicle for social criticism and political propaganda.

Theatrical Versions

In the early 1980s, Pech Tum Kravel and Chheng Phon, two of Cambodia's pre-eminent artists, adapted *Tum Teav* for a *yi-ké* performance of the story performed by the National Department of Arts under the Ministry of Culture.⁶⁷ *Yi-ké* is a form of Cambodian operatic theater in which the characters perform their parts to the accompaniment of a traditional orchestra. In their adaptation of *Tum Teav*, two narrators describe the scene and introduce the characters and events with comical conversations between themselves and asides directed to the audience. Resembling the comedy team of Laurel and Hardy, the two narrators bring comic relief to the otherwise tragic events of the story. Eschewing political commentary, Pech Tum Kravel and Chheng Phon's interpretation of the story is primarily concerned with the ill-fated love between Tum and Teav.



Figure 3: Cover of the 1988 illustrated version of *Tum Teav*

under the Pol Pot regime.⁶⁸ From 1979 until 1981, he was vice-director of the National Department of Arts under the Ministry of Propaganda, Culture and Information and its director until 1993. He has written and adapted many works for Cambodian theater, the best known of which is his adaptation of *Tum Teav*.⁶⁹

Comic Strip Format

In 1988, the state-sanctioned publisher Youveavey printed a version of *Tum Teav* in cartoon strip format. The illustrations and text were done by Ut Roeun and based on the version of the story by Venerable Som.⁷⁰

In the forward to the text, the publisher states that the book was produced in order to instruct Cambodian youth about the morality of the youth of previous generations who opposed the abuse of power of the feudal system in the 16th century. The publisher also states that the comic strip format was chosen in order to make it easier for the intended audience of young people to read and remember.⁷¹

Pech Tum Kravel has been a vital force in Cambodian theater since the 1960s. From 1960 until 1967, he attended the School of Pedagogy, the National School of Theater and the School of Choreographic Arts at the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh. From 1969 until 1975, he was a teacher and actor at the National Conservatory of Performing Arts.

Born in 1943 in Kandal province, Pech Tum Kravel's original name was Chhorn Toat. After surviving the Khmer Rouge regime, he changed his name in honor of the characters in *Tum Teav*, whose example of steadfast devotion helped him find the strength to endure years of suffering



Figure 4: Tum’s Execution by Orh-Chhuon

As with all publications by the authoritarian government in Phnom Penh, this version of *Tum Teav* conveys the government’s socialist propaganda of “class struggle” and opposition to abuse of power. The introduction states that Tum and Teav provide heroic examples of the spirit of the struggle. It continues by pointing out that unlike the modern revolution, Tum and Teav were not part of an organized movement guided by a government ideology, and this was the reason for their failure to achieve victory over the ruling class. In his preface, the writer states:

The story of *Tum Teav* took place during actual feudal times. But the meaning and style of this story clearly show the terrible face of the Khmer feudalists of the 16th century that abused their power and trampled over the people.

This story also shows the spirit of struggle for freedom of the youth and people who opposed the abuse of power by the ruling class. But the struggle for freedom during that time was based only on individual aspirations and didn’t have a system of government to guide them correctly. ... Consequently, their efforts to seek freedom were squelched by the vicious ruling class.

Film

In 1966, the Association of Khmer Filmmakers in Phnom Penh produced a film version of *Tum Teav*. This version was centered primarily around the conflict between Tum and Teav on one side and Teav's mother and Orh-Chhuon on the other.⁷²

In 1972, Indra Devi Film, under the direction of Biv Chhay Leang, produced a loose adaptation of *Tum Teav*. Thong Phan informs us that for commercial reasons the film includes scenes that are not found in any of the literary versions. Nor does it address the central theme of true love between Tum and Teav.⁷³ It is interesting to note that Biv Chhay Leang (b. 1930) is also a prolific writer of historical fiction. Between 1951 and 1967, he produced twenty-eight short novels and works for theater. Since 1976, Biv Chhay Leang has lived in France where he has created the Indra Devi cultural association and established Cambodian folk and classical dance troupes that have toured widely around Europe.⁷⁴

Song

In the year 2000, the popular musical recording company Rasmeay Hang Meas based in Phnom Penh issued a compact disk entitled *The Love of Tum Teav*. The CD consists of fourteen songs based on the lyrics written by Pech Tum Kravel for the *yi-ké* stage performance of *Tum Teav* discussed above.



Figure 5: Cover of SSB Productions' film version of *Tum Teav*, 2003

As the title of the CD suggests, the true love between Tum and Teav is the primary theme of the songs. However, the songs do follow the general plot of the story as well. The first song is entitled “My Child Teav Enters the Shade” and is sung in the voice of Teav’s mother, who advises her daughter on the proper conduct for a girl who “enters the shade.”

The following songs alternate between the voices of Teav and Tum as the events of their tragic love unfold. The lyrics of these songs often closely resemble excerpts from the literary version by Venerable Som. For example, the fourth song entitled, “What are You so Afraid Of” is an exchange between Tum and Teav where they flirt before making love. The lyrics in two verses of the song are almost identical to stanzas 414 and 415 in which Teav and Tum trade playful metaphors:

- 414 I am like a flower,
While you are like a bumble bee
That flies around and spotting the flower enters straight away.
Afterwards, it doesn’t delay and is soon on its way again.
- 415 Tum said, “I am like the lion king,
While Miss. Teav is like a large cave.
If the lion king has a place to live,
He will never allow himself to leave.”

The songs do not deal with the king’s punishment or the abuse of power by Orh-Chhuon. However, in the twelfth song – “The Cake is Bigger than the Mold” – Teav’s mother angrily reprimands her daughter for challenging her authority and refusing to give up her feelings for Tum. True to the theme of true love, Teav holds her ground and affirms her love for Tum.

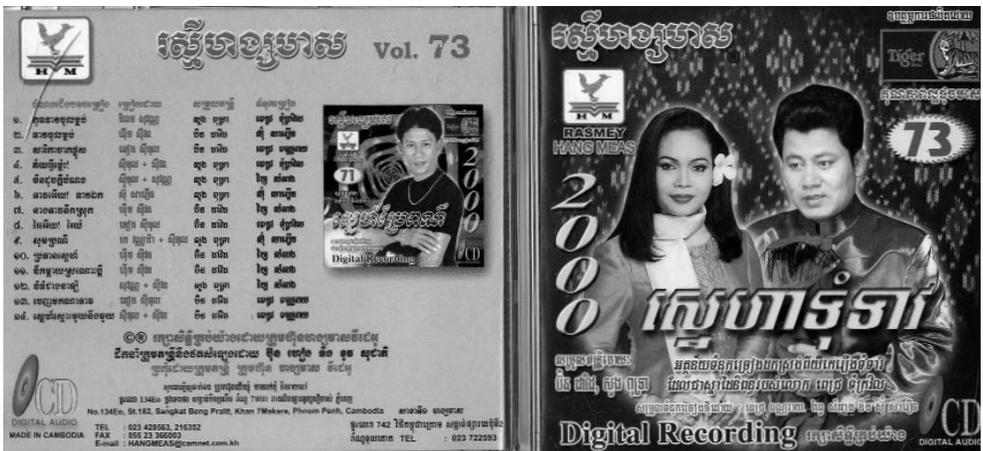


Figure 6: CD Cover of *The Love of Tum Teav*

End notes

- ¹ The importance of *Tum Teav* has also been recognized by Western scholars of Cambodia. In addition to the late 19th century French scholars discussed in this chapter, the story has been of interest to modern scholars. See, for example, Alex Hinton's article "A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide" (*American Ethnologist* 25(3):352-377, 1998) in which he uses *Tum Teav* as a primary reference for trying to understand the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge.
- ² Thong Phan, 1976:448-9.
- ³ The Khmer Writers Association was established in 1956. Hel Somphea (1922-1971) was its president from 1957 to 1964. During this time, he also supervised law courses at the Faculté de Droit in Phnom Penh (Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:70).
- ⁴ Thong Phan, 1976:450.
- ⁵ For a complete delineation of the different oral and literary versions, refer to Thong Phan's 1976 thesis, *Etude sur Tum-Teav: Roman Populaire Khmer*.
- ⁶ The oral tradition is deeply rooted in Cambodian writing and society. Prior to the advent of Khmer printing and the promotion of literacy in the 20th century, Cambodian texts were typically recited and stories were passed down orally. For example, monks would recite stories describing the previous lives of the Buddha, drama troupes would perform scenes from the Reamker, and minstrels would sing popular stories.

The oral transmission of stories and texts helps explain the predominance of verse before the 20th century. The use of standard rhyme and meter patterns made the stories easier to remember and recite. The prevalent use of alliteration, assonance and mellifluous compounds in verse compositions indicates the emphasis placed on the sound of the language. Often, the sound, more than the meaning, of the verse determined the literary quality of the composition.

The perpetuation of the oral tradition was reinforced by the physical limitations of palm leaf texts, which were very difficult and time consuming to produce. In addition, most texts were kept in local monasteries built of wood and thatch. Annual rains and accidental fires were responsible for the loss of many manuscripts and made it necessary to constantly recopy texts. The consequent scarcity of books limited literacy further and perpetuated the mutual dependency between speakers and listeners in the oral tradition.
- ⁷ Kong Somphea, 1971:16.
- ⁸ Thong Phan, 1976:42-43.
- ⁹ Thong Phan, 1976:43.
- ¹⁰ Thong Phan, 1976:57. The June 17, 1884 convention abolished slavery in Cambodia.
- ¹¹ Thong Phan states that there continues to be a stigma for residents of Tbong Khmom. Through the story of *Tum Teav*, it has become associated with misdeeds and slavery, so that all residents of Tbong Khmom are stereotyped as the descendants of slaves. He suggests that the first authors of the literary versions of the story did not sign their names to their manuscripts, fearing that residents of Tbong Khmom would seek revenge (Thong Phan, 1976:62).
- ¹² Thong Phan, 1976:44. In his 1903 publication entitled *Cambodge III, Le Groupe d'Angkor et L'histoire* published by Leroux, Aymonier included an essay on the dating of *Tum Teav*.

The title of the story used by Aymonier was Teav-Ek.

- ¹³ The Kathin ceremony takes place in the fall following the three-month rain retreat and is an opportunity for the laity to offer monks new robes and other items.
- ¹⁴ On a visit to Tbong Khmom, the author was shown the *Bodhi* tree where it is believed that Tum was taken and killed. A man living nearby stated that a spirit lived in the tree (see Chapter 4 for more details).
- ¹⁵ There are many known versions of the Chronicles in various repositories in Cambodia and France, including copies and fragments. Since the Chronicles do not generally provide references to sources of information, just how *Tum Teav* came to be included in these two versions is a matter of speculation. Although written versions of the story existed at the time of their composition, it is not known if the writers of these two Chronicles based them on written or oral versions of the story.
- ¹⁶ The lineage of the legendary Khmer kings spans a period of nineteen centuries from Preah Thon to Ta Trasek Pha-em, the father of King Nibvan Pad, who is the first king of the historical part. According to the legendary part of the Chronicles, the first Khmer king was Preah Thon, whose marriage to the daughter of the king of the Nagas led to the creation of Cambodia, when the Naga king drained the waters of the earth as a wedding gift to the newlyweds. Another important story in the legendary part concerns King Ketu Mea-Lea, the seventh king in the legendary genealogy, whose reign is said to have lasted four hundred years. King Ketu Mea-Lea is believed to be the son of the Hindu god Indra who sent Bisnukar from the heavens to build Angkor Wat for Ketu Mea-Lea.

Both of these legends continue to be passed on from generation to generation. There are references to the story of Preah Thon, for example, in the traditional wedding ceremony in which the inclusion of a scarf represents Preah Thon's descent to the Naga world holding the border of the scarf of the Naga princess. The legend of Ketu Mea-Lea appears in the 17th century poem, *Lboek Angkor*, and was told to Westerners to explain the building of the temple.

- ¹⁷ Subsequently, in 1878, the son of King Ang Duong, Prince Nupparot, wrote a version known as *Wat Sitpor* (SP); it contains a more detailed account of the legendary part. In both versions the legendary part begins with the Buddha's prediction about Cambodia followed by accounts of the Cham kings and first Khmer kings. Prince Nupparot's account of the legendary part, written fifteen years after the establishment of the French protectorate in Cambodia, became the model for subsequent versions. Not only is his version more detailed, it also shows a greater concern for accuracy in presenting the genealogy of successive kings. Although he lists the main sources used in compiling the information, these sources have not been successfully traced (Khin Sok, 1988:11).
- ¹⁸ Khin Sok, 1988:1
- ¹⁹ Mak Phoeun, 1984:1.
- ²⁰ With few other sources available, historians interested in studying Cambodia's Dark Age (between the 15th and 19th centuries) have relied on the Chronicles particularly for information on past kings and their reigns. Such was the case, for example, with the French scholar Adhémar Leclère whose *Histoire du Cambodge Depuis le 1er Siècle de Notre Ère* appeared in 1914. The same is true for Khmer scholars such as Eng Soth, Mak Phoeun and Khin Sok, whose historical texts are discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.
- ²¹ Khin Sok, 1988:25.

²² Mak Phoeun, 1981:8.

²³ After 1903, the successive reigns of individual kings are organized by chapter, and an attempt is made to account for the sources of information used in the text (Khin Sok, 1988:8).

²⁴ Thong Phan, 1976:76.

²⁵ Mak Phoeun, 1981:431-433.

²⁶ Even at their most basic level, however, the Chronicles do not define the Khmer solely in terms of the monarchy. Indeed, both the production of the text itself and the reputation of Khmer monarchs it affirms are linked to Buddhism. In the TV version of the Chronicles, the interrelation between Buddhism and the monarchy can be seen in the following excerpt in which the Venerable expresses his gratitude to the Khmer kings for bringing Buddhism to Cambodia: "These good actions are without end and could never compare to some object. It is for them [the Khmer kings]... that I [produced] thirty-two volumes of the revered Royal Chronicles... in order to conserve it as a testimony of my respect and as a remembrance of their good deeds" (Mak Phoeun, 1981:32).

Indeed, such prominent scholars as the French-trained Cambodian linguist Peouv Saverous see the influence of Buddhism as a defining feature of Khmer literature. In "Études Ramakertiennes," for example, Peouv analyzes the character of the epic's hero King Rea-mea and various events in the story in terms of Buddhist concepts. Moreover, she argues that the influence of Rea-mea in Cambodian culture is comparable to that of the Buddha. The recognition of his importance, she says, is inscribed in the suffix, *kerti*, of the epic's title, *Ramakerti*. Meaning "glory" or "reputation," *kerti* is seen by the Khmer as a function of one's past actions as governed by the tenets of the Buddhist Dhamma or Law. For Peouv, the text illustrates the popular belief that Rama's renown is a result of his exemplary conduct in previous lives, and the glorification of his reputation follows the Buddhist practice of praising right action (Peouv Saverous, 1981).

²⁷ Khin Sok, 1988:23.

²⁸ Khin Sok, 1988:22.

²⁹ Rea-mea was the name of several Cambodian kings.

³⁰ Khin Sok, 1988:327-330.

³¹ Eng Soth's copy of TV is missing volume XVII of the original (Khin Sok, 1988:21-2).

³² Khin Sok, 1988:31. Vamn Chuon also headed the commission that produced an earlier version known as P63. In 1903, King Norodom ordered the commission to draft a new version of the Chronicles; however, the project was discontinued the following year when King Norodom died (Khin Sok, 1988:16). The project was completed some ten years later under a different commission. The text of P63 is currently located in France at BEFEO. The features of P63 are significantly different from previous versions. First, it omits the Buddha's prediction and the lineage of Cham kings, and begins instead with the Khmer kings. Second, the date of the first Khmer king's accession to the throne corresponds with year one of the Christian era. The two features give rise to the question of French influence (Mak Phoeun, 1984:4). In addition to marking the first reign of the Khmer royal lineage with the start of the Christian era, the name of each month appears in French translation. French influence can be seen in the format of P63 as well. The text is organized such that beginning with the fourth volume, each chapter is named after a particular king, and the events described during each reign are more

clear and detailed than previous versions.

³³ Thong Phan, 1976:80.

³⁴ M.F. Lavit was Resident Superior of Cambodia from 1929 to 1932 (Khin Sok, 1988:17).

³⁵ Khin Sok, 1988:17.

³⁶ The opposition to printing in general was initially centered around the printing of Khmer sacred texts, particularly the *Tripitika*. The printing of religious texts was prohibited by traditionalist monks until the 1920s when Venerables Chuon Nath and Huot Tath, with the aid of the director of the EFEO, Louis Finot, were able to overcome this opposition (see Herber and Milner, 1989). Perhaps the opposition to the printing was based on the view that mass production of the texts would detract from their sacred value. This is because much of the merit earned by venerating the Buddha comes from the performance of the act itself. The act of bowing before the altar and repeating standard phrases of respect is the act's source of earning merit. Often what is said is not as important as the act of saying something in an appropriate way. In terms of writing, the act of copying the sacred texts of the *Tripitika* was an especially important way of demonstrating respect for the Buddha's teaching. The careful engraving of specially treated palm leaf manuscripts with steel-tipped pens and proper ink to produce the texts were integral parts of the process. To mass-produce the texts would of course obviate this performative aspect of religious veneration. Given the deified identity of the Khmer monarch, this view of printing would have also applied to the production of the Chronicles.

³⁷ Garnier's "Chronique Royale du Cambodge" was published in *Journal Asiatique* in 1871 and 1872.

³⁸ An earlier example of historical literature was published in the monthly journal of the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, *Kambuja Suriya*. For a continuous period of over twenty years, it published in serial form a Chinese historical text entitled "*Kambuja Suriya*" translated by Nou Kan, the author of *Teav Ek*. The first segment appeared in 1948 and was introduced by Nhok Thaem, a former monk and editor of the publication's literary section.

³⁹ Personal correspondence with Mak Phoeun.

⁴⁰ Thong Phan suggests that the author of P57 may have included the story here because of the king's unpopularity (Thong Phan, 1976:108).

⁴¹ The story appears in the appendix of Khin Sok's text as a footnote to paragraph 40, which mentions Tbong Khmom as one of the villages where Laotian prisoners were taken. The story of *Tum Teav* recounted in the footnote is a translation of the chronicle fragment known as Wat Tik Vil (TV); written in 1941, it is located at the Kampong Tralach Krom monastery. The version of TV used in Khin's text is located at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. Another copy of the original is part of the personal collection of Eng Soth.

⁴² One explanation for this difficulty has to do with Western assumptions of literature and its production. Like most Cambodian art forms, such as the ancient architecture, court dance and music, Cambodian literary writing has been closely associated with Buddhist and monarchal institutions. The majority of traditional literary texts were written by monks or princes aligned with the monastery or royal court. They were not written for the publishing houses or academies that for centuries have sponsored Western literary production and defined literary genres.

⁴³ "*Sastra* refers to documents written on palm leaves. *Krang* are scrolls or ancient

parchment books folded into several sections" (Headley, 1977:82 & 1131).

- ⁴⁴ With the establishment of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient in 1901, French academic study of things Khmer was formalized in Cambodia. In the process of considering Khmer writing, however, French academics found little they considered "literary." The repeated use of stock heroes, familiar settings and story lines based on the previous lives of the Buddha led French scholars to conclude that Khmer literature lacked the brilliance and originality they found in the temple architecture. In the words of the French abbot and scholar, Joseph Guesdon (1906:94), "toute la littérature khmère n'étant qu'une suite des poèmes sur les vies du Buddha" [all Khmer literature is only a sequence of poems about the life of the Buddha].
- Earlier published studies of Khmer literature by the French were made by Aymonier (1878), Moura (1883), Taupin (1886), Leclère (1895) and Pavie (1898).
- ⁴⁵ See, for example, the cataloging work of Nhok Thaem in the Buddhist Institute's publications of *Kambuja Suriya*, No. 8, 1965; No. 2, 1966; and No. 1, 1967.
- ⁴⁶ In 1990 and 1993, respectively, Khin Hoc Dy published his extensive compilations of classical and contemporary texts. Then in 1996, Judith Jacob completed her important delineation of the classical canon. Khin Hoc Dy, 1990 and 1993; Judith Jacob, 1996.
- ⁴⁷ Klairung Amratisha, 1998:14.
- ⁴⁸ The first modern Cambodian novel, *The Waters of the Tonle Sap* by Kim Hak, was published in the periodical *Kambuja Suriya* in 1938.
- ⁴⁹ Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:7-8.
- ⁵⁰ Thong Phan, 1976:435 and 447.
- ⁵¹ The commission was made up of Hang Thun Hak, Eng Soth, Sam Thang and Neang Ho (Thong Phan, 1976:447).
- ⁵² Thong Phan, 1976:447.
- ⁵³ Thong Phan, 1976:118-9. The passages from Botumthera Som's version cover the end of the story, namely, the punishment ordered by the king and Tum's death.
- ⁵⁴ The original manuscripts have been lost.
- ⁵⁵ Thong Phan, 1976: 123. Santhor Mok was also the writer of the Royal Chronicle that A. Leclère translated and published in 1914 (Thong Phan, 1976:126).
- ⁵⁶ Thong Phan, 1976:127-130.
- ⁵⁷ The copy was located at the Buddhist Institute library in Phnom Penh under code L.P. 664 (Thong Phan, 1976:135). This type of manuscript, which had been used for writing since Angkorian times, was incised with a metal-tipped stylus and treated with a kind of black ink. Typically, the leaves measured 35 cm x 5 cm or 60 cm x 6 cm and averaged five lines of text on each side. Modern printing did not come to Cambodia until the late 19th century and was not generally used until the 1920s. In 1890, the first Khmer publication was printed in Cambodia. The first Khmer literary text was printed in Cambodia in 1908 by Adhémard Leclère (Khin Hoc Dy and Mak Phoeun, 1989:52-3).
- ⁵⁸ Kong Somphea, 1971:12-19.
- ⁵⁹ Soth Polin, the great grandson of Nou Kan, gives 1950 as the date of his great grandfather's death (Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:213).
- ⁶⁰ Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:17.

- ⁶¹ Thong Phan suggests it is possible that Nou Kan heard the story performed by Santhor Mok (Thong Phan, 1976:147).
- ⁶² Khin Hoc Dy tells us that Nou Kan did not read either Malay or Chinese and that these adaptations were based on Thai versions (Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:17).
- ⁶³ Thong Phan, 1976:157.
- ⁶⁴ Kong Huot & Chau Seng, 1970:Introduction.
- ⁶⁵ Following its traumatic defeat to the Vietnamese, the United States maintained an anti-Vietnamese foreign policy until the early 1990s when the embargo was finally lifted and the process of normalizing relations between the two countries began. Since Cambodia was seen by the U.S. as a proxy of Vietnam, it was subject to the same policy of international isolation.
- ⁶⁶ The process of reconstruction was also going on in the border camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. In 1988, my wife and I visited Khao I Dang and Site 2, the two largest refugee camps along the border. In both cases, we had the privilege of being invited to dance and drama performances. In the early 1990s, for example, my wife and I had the pleasure to see a theater group from the Site 2 refugee camp perform *Tum Teav* while on tour in the United States. (See Toni Samantha Phim, 1994).
- ⁶⁷ My thanks to Professor Tomoko Okada, who sent me a video taped recording of the performance. In 1964, an earlier adaptation of *Tum Teav* for theater was made by a group of artists at the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh (Thong Phan, 1976:454).
- ⁶⁸ Personal interview with Pech Tum Kravel (August 1999).
- ⁶⁹ In addition, he has written texts on Cambodian poetics, shadow puppetry, and the many forms of Cambodian theater.
- ⁷⁰ In 1961 and 1963, two texts of *Tum Teav* in comic strip format appeared. However, the authors of these texts are not known. Although texts deal with the theme of abuse of power, the king is depicted uncritically (Thong Phan, 1976:452).
- ⁷¹ There was virtually no education under the Khmer Rouge. Until the 1990s, Cambodia was subject to an embargo that severely limited the reconstruction of the country, including the educational system.
- ⁷² The treatment of the Buddhist themes in this film adaptation was the cause of strong protest by some Cambodian Buddhists (Thong Phan, 1976:453).
- ⁷³ Thong Phan, 1976:454.74 Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:85.

CHAPTER 2:
The Story
of
Tum Teav



Introduction (stanzas 1-29)

- 1 This will be the telling of a story composed
In an entertaining verse-form.
Ever since former times, the story has been
Told, and over the years parts have been lost.
- 2 It is inexact, uneven, and unclear, and sentences are missing.
Striving to check and double-check the meter of the discourse,
We corrected it to be new, so that the world
Could preserve it and continue to pass it on.
- 3 We tried hard to keep it intact and correct it to be better.
We committed ourselves to the task,
And so no one could say that we threw away what was important,
We only adjusted it to conform to the times in which the story takes place.
- 4 My name will be presented anew
To the world. I have devised a plan.
I am determined and well prepared.
I have decided to deliver my name exactly,
- 5 And let all the great people, men and women,
In the world know in advance who composed this text.
This is meant just to be a break from boredom,
So that whenever they reflect on it, they will feel amused.
- 6 I will declare myself according to a riddle.
It begins by saying, "As a name, it is regarded as simple.
"The letter 'S' is given just as it is spoken.
"The name is then anticipated by adding on
- 7 "The vowel 'A.' The 'S' is then followed by an 'M.'
"The vowel 'E' before the 'S' is needed before making correct
"The original name as it was from our mother and father."
Now the name has transmigrated by its merits

- 8 And come to be embodied, and having good fortune,
The Buddha bestowed upon it existence.
Having a place, its body lived as a person
By means of the virtue of the Triple Gems upon which each day it depended.
- 9 It came to dwell as a monk at
Wat Kamprau where it resolved unequivocally
To release itself from the Wheel of Life. It was able to evade
Fatigue and fear because of its determination to succeed.
- 10 That name followed its master
And like a fragrant flower smelled even against the wind.
The title of Preah Padumatther was the achievement
Of the level of merit it earned through its moral conduct and offerings.
- 11 The master had total compassion,
The likes of which there is not on earth.
There were head monks in the city of Kamprau
And other monks who thirsted and hungered to have knowledge like his.
- 12 I went to the city devoutly,
Intending to commit myself to my objective.
I studied the Pali chants and dissertations,
Wanting to attain virtue and perfection.
- 13 The Abbot selected me
To study under his direction just as I
Hoped. Whatever the assignment or instruction,
The compassion of the Abbot came with it.
- 14 Organized by the Abbot, the work of the monks
Residing at the temple brightened
The light of the world. Whenever skills
Were attained, the Abbot gave his approval.
- 15 On our rounds to beg for alms, we went far and near.
We didn't have fear of there not being women to ladle rice for us,
Or that someone would take offense because we traveled
Without having permission cards and because of our negligence have us haul earth.
- 16 We finished composing these verses in the Buddhist era,
Year two thousand
Four hundred and fifty-eight,
On Monday, the fourteenth of the month
- 17 Which had passed four days in September

Plus one at the beginning of the rainy season,
In the year of the Rabbit,
The seventh year of the ten-year cycle.

- 18 I left the poem so future generations, whomever they may be,
Would truly have knowledge of composition.
My intention was to leave something for future generations, not to show off
What I know. Yet, I fear people will say that was my reason.
- 19 I declare my intention to narrate this poem
So that it may be placed in the religious tradition.
I raise my hands carefully to chant
To the noble Buddha
- 20 About the merits of the Dhamma, great and extensive,
Around eighty-four thousand high
And many deep, in an effort to help
Living beings attain the path of Nirvana.
- 21 And about the merits of the monks, the Buddha's disciples,
Whose dreadful fear of wrongdoing alerts them so they do not hunger for
things,
And are able to renounce the Wheel of Life. They truly
Make offerings to the Buddha. There are monks
- 22 Who are dedicated completely to cultivating a religious life.
Comparable to a vessel meticulously prepared,
They pursue the study of texts taking great pains
And effort in fear of misunderstanding their meaning.
- 23 I give thanks to the Great Teacher,
The mother and father of the Noble Forest
Spirits, who rescued my life.
There is nothing that can adequately compare
- 24 To the virtue of the Noble Teachings
Whose proclamation gave rise to my life.
I give thanks to the Noble Truths and Noble Path
Which push aside and extinguish misery and joy so we may achieve
Enlightenment.
- 25 I give thanks to the powers of Noble Fire and Water,
To the Noble Sun, Earth and Moon,
To the Noble Wind, Stars and Divinities,
Who reside in the prisons of the Sixteen Spheres,
- 26 To Noble Time and the Noble King of Hell,
And the four-armed guardian securely placed

At the Kingdom of the Enlightened,
Who rest in the Paradise of the Thirty-three Divinities,

27 To Noble Indra presiding over his Kingdom,
Whose power has authority
Over the sixteen Heavens and their Divinities
That Noble Vissakamma had built,

28 I ask that your power that rules all worlds
And is the shade and refuge
In order to evade the vicissitudes of the body
Protect me as I wish it would.

29 Despite whatever sickness may try to afflict me,
Do not allow it into my body.
Please cleanse me
With a clear light shining like a full moon.

Part 1 (30-137)

Tum and Teav's First Love and Separation

(Tum and Pech's friendship at the temple; their trip to Tbong Khmom
to sell baskets; the meeting of Tum and Teav)

30 This telling begins with the name Tum.
In the rice farming district of Ba Phnom,
He was born naturally of parents
About whom however nothing is known.

31 When he was big enough,
And many years had passed, his mother dressed him up
And brought him to study and threw away his toys.
She sought out a well-known temple

32 Where the Abbot received Tum gladly,
And taught him to be skillful in the fields of healing and prayer.
Tum was able to please the Abbot because of his intelligence and diligence
And resolved to be a novice monk.

33 Living at the temple under the Abbot for a long time
Was another monk who was also skilled
And well liked, by the name of Pech.
The two monks made baskets to sell.

34 Tum was eloquent and had other talents as well.

He had a beautiful voice and handsome body.
His good nature radiated through his disposition,
And eventually he considered Pech as his younger brother.

- 35 Pech knew how to play the flute.
He was intelligent and his musical skills were well developed.
The two novice monks thought similarly,
And the knowledge they each possessed was about equal.
- 36 They made the baskets and brought some to sell
At the houses of relatives near the temple.
But when the cold season arrived,
They became worried.
- 37 Evil thoughts tormented Tum's mind and body.
He met with Pech, and they talked together like one person.
Tum said, "Oh, Pech! You must help!
"We've sold only a few *taok* and it's been a long time already.
- 38 "It hasn't been profitable, and business is slow.
"But don't give up. Like the ancient saying tells us,
'Everywhere close by
'Young men are courting young girls.'
- 39 "What the ancestors say is not wrong at all.
"We are young men in the world,
"Yet we beg for rice and don't know anything!
"Why do we fritter away our lives? We should take advantage of our youth
and travel."
- 40 After thinking it over, they came to an agreement. Looking askance,
They couldn't contain themselves. They diligently prepared
Candles and incense and hurried to the Abbot's residence,
And knelt before him to offer salutations.
- 41 Before long, the Abbot spoke.
"That you should want to go somewhere seems suspicious."
The novice monks responded, "Not at all.
"We beg you not to doubt us. Please have mercy.
- 42 "As both of us wish respectfully
"To leave you, sir... I,
"The two of us, would depart
"To help someone who has a problem in a distant town.
- 43 "If we stay at the temple, it is sure that the boredom
"Would cause us relentless sorrow.
"I'm so unmotivated, sir... not happy...

"Frustrated and confused. I want to travel

- 44 "And follow my feelings carried by the wind of the season.
 "If we leave you, sir, we would be careful to act becomingly.
 "If we bring the *taok*, we would take along
 "Plenty to sell. Over there, we wouldn't have to negotiate the price."

- 45 The Abbot soon spoke
 Saying, "Ah, as you wish, go.
 "You have said goodbye to me and have decided to go sell the *taok* already.
 "Why is it necessary to tell me?"

- 46 "Go ahead! But be careful about getting into trouble!
 "Don't, boys, when you see girls,
 "Revert to clowning around or impropriety,
 "So that unkind criticism reaches me.

- 47 "A shameful reputation in the world
 "Is contrary to Buddhist law.
 "Once you have sold all of the *taok*, don't hang around
 "Figuring out your income. Come back immediately!"

- 48 The two monks paid respect
 Goodbye to the Abbot. Departing in a hurry,
 They quickly went
 To get the *taok* and arrange them upside down in preparation for

- 49 Loading them into the ox cart. They thought to take cooked rice,
 And, having wrapped it, tried to find a sack
 In which to pack it carefully with rice paddy in case the road was rough,
 Since during that season there was bound to be rain and thunder.

- 50 After the monks prepared the sacks of rice
 In preparation for their journey,
 They hauled the cart and set it upright,
 And led the ox to be yoked then drove away.

- 51 That day at around eight o'clock,
 The sun's sparkling light
 From the East, bright red,
 Illuminated the rice fields around them.

- 52 Seeing that there was water and grass along the road, they quickly
 Released the ox and tied him. The monks ate rice,
 While the ox ate grass. Afterwards, they quickly led the ox
 To fit him into the yoke. With the ox harnessed, they continued on.

- 53 They arrived at a village and the place where they could sell the *taok*.

The lay people bought them, and there were only a few left over.
The remaining few they sold along the road
As they forged ahead toward Tbong Khmom district.

- 54 At the border of Tortoung
Thgei province, monks usually stop because people gather
Who want to buy *taok* from them. Some monks watched jealously
Seeing that Tum had such a handsome appearance.
- 55 Some of the women said, "Oh! If
"He were mine, I would grab him and convince him
"To let me have my way with him!" They edged closer to Tum,
And stole furtive glances until they were face to face.
- 56 They weaved through the crowd toward their love near the well,
And jostled and stretched excitedly to see him from a knoll in the shade
Of a banyan tree in the unusual Year of the Tiger
That makes men and women so easily excited.
- 57 Tum and Pech stayed close to the village
As a number of lay people helped them
Sell off the remaining *taok*, taking advantage of the rare
Opportunity of having the monks there a long time.
- 58 The lay people delayed them for many days.
They housed them and wouldn't let them leave
Their village, because they knew
That the rainy season had arrived when,
- 59 According to their understanding,
The monks could stay as long as they wished
And give them the benefit of reciting the scriptures.
Tum had great skill and could mesmerize them
- 60 With his sweet voice so pleasing
To hear. Both young and old, the widows
And young women of Tbong Khmom, rushed
To hear the sound of Tum's words.
- 61 At that time, Miss. Nor, who was the servant
Of Miss. Teav, was making her way to the well.
Holding a clay water pot carefully, she tried
To enter the crowd to find out what was happening.
- 62 Straining her body to see, she furtively listened to
The beautiful sound like someone bowled over.
Swooning,
Nor was enraptured and speechless.

- 63 Nor couldn't wait to get back home to tell Teav everything.
Teav, who was in the shade, was bored.
The woman who was Teav's mother had for possessions
Only her child who was more beautiful than any other woman.
- 64 Nor thought to herself and quickly decided what to do.
She filled the jar and carrying it on her head quickly walked away swaying
side to side.
Reaching the house, Nor went up to Teav's room at once.
Reporting in detail, she spoke to Teav saying,
- 65 "Oh, Teav! Miss. Teav!... Goodness!...
"That monk knows how to chant!
"His voice... it's so soothing to hear him speak...
"Like the *sarika* bird eating a banana!"
- 66 Teav was perplexed. She didn't understand what Nor was talking about.
But when Nor told her clearly, she became excited.
At that point Teav was not confused. Understanding the situation, she
became overly
Excited and wanted to meet Tum and even dared to tell her mother.
- 67 She left her room and bowed low before her mother.
Teav said, "Oh, Mother! Mother,
"Indulge me a moment as I report some news.
"Our people are far from any temple.
- 68 "We have never met any young monks,
"Or even known of one coming this way.
"I heard Nor say that two monks
"Are staying in the village who have brought *taok* to sell.
- 69 "She said they have come from far away and have decided to stay
"At someone's house. They are young monks
"With truly beautiful voices. They know different things and can do them
well.
"Noe says their voices are worth hearing!"
- 70 The woman who was Teav's mother carefully listened.
After hearing Teav, her child, she answered saying, "Ah...
"Reach and get my scarf." And she walked away
Gracefully, eyes askance and well proportioned in the way of an older
woman.
- 71 Reaching the village, she heard the din of the crowd.
Teav's mother said, "Oh, it's really true!"
She moved up to see the young monks who were indeed very talented
And joined her hands and bowed to salute them.

- 72 Then she addressed them saying, "Venerable Sirs,
"Would you come to my house
"To eat soup? We would be so pleased
To have you. Please do not refuse us."
- 73 As Tum listened to the laywoman's invitation,
His eyes inspected her closely.
He answered saying, "If I am to accept your invitation, you must hurry
And go home to finish preparing to make it permissible."
- 74 Teav's mother returned home in a rush.
She unrolled mats and spread them out in place,
Then took various kinds of pillows,
White and black, and stacked them up and put them in a row.
- 75 Pech and Tum met and agreed to accept the invitation.
Pech said, "It's time to eat anyway."
Tum said, "Hold on, the cow is in the grass.
"If he breaks the rope and eats the seedlings, we'll have to repay the
owner."
- 76 Pech said evasively, "Let's get going!
"If we Miss. meal time, we'll be in trouble.
"I'm afraid when we return to the temple, Teacher will scold us
"Saying we're sneaking around after girls.
- 77 "We've traveled all this way for what?
"We should use good judgment.
"When called to eat, we should follow the rules and not behave improperly.
"What the old custom says cannot be wrong.
- 78 "It says there once were four monks
"Who had achieved good conduct and didn't have any faults.
"If they had an affair with the laity at all,
"Their reputations would be ruined making them five."
- 79 "For that reason, you should go alone. I'm afraid people will say something
about
"The laywoman who came and invited you
"To eat and have tobacco at her house.
"Go ahead and eat. I'll tend to the cow myself."
- 80 Tum, anxious to leave, fretted
That Pech would bring up
And explain every custom to elucidate his point.
Finally, Tum was able to dress up in his monk's robes.
- 81 Made of pure silk, the texture of Tum's robes was fine and good-looking.

The crisp fabric had a mustard-yellow
Sheen that shined brightly
And was accentuated by his white scarf.

- 82 He applied a fragrant root scent
And took a fan and stuck it in his belt. He looked quite handsome
With his charming shoulder bag lifted around his neck.
When he finished dressing, he left.
- 83 When he arrived at the house, Teav's mother came down quickly.
She knelt on the ground and bowed with raised hands together
Saying, "Thank goodness you've come!
"Now wait here while we fetch water from the tank for you to wash."
- 84 The perfumed water gave off a fragrant smell.
Using the soap they offered, Tum scrubbed himself clean and fresh.
The fragrant soap with its distinctive smell
Make him think he was lucky to be a monk.
- 85 After washing, he changed his robes
And climbed the stairs to the house. His stomach was in knots.
Teav's mother brought a kind of folded cushion and presented it to him.
Then she offered the monk some tobacco.
- 86 "Surely you know chants of some kind.
"Don't be modest. Please sir,
"Come recite a poem or read a *sastra*.
"We would like to listen a while.
- 87 "Give of all your knowledge, whatever it is.
"As you will, impart
"Your recollections in some way. We would enjoy that.
"My family have come also so we may listen all together."
- 88 As Tum listened to Teav's mother, he was suddenly startled.
His eyes glanced towards the doorway.
He noticed Teav standing outside pacing back and forth,
Flitting in and out of her room,
- 89 Glancing around fitfully, she poked her head into the guest room, mouth
agape.
She wanted to leave her room badly but no one had called her.
She could only look on anxiously by herself for she was young and single.
Then she darted into her room to get a scarf and draped it across her chest.
- 90 When Tum saw that, his stomach fluttered.
He fell in love and anguish arose, tightening his chest.
"Oh! Is that Teav, my dear?"

Instead of turning away, Tum tried to capture Teav's heart by singing the Dhamma.

- 91 Tum chanted *nair mo tas sas* three times
Truly beautifully, while some of those present bowed in awe.
Tum chanted the story of Metry when, under the direction of her husband, Siddhartha:
"She bid farewell to him and disappeared into the forest
- 92 "To traverse the mountain regions
"Looking to pick the fruit growing in the jungle.
"There were forest spirits everywhere
"That frightened Metr terribly.
- 93 "She eventually fell to the ground, completely lost.
"She sobbed, curled on her side pitifully.
'It's already cold and growing dark,' she said. 'There's no
'Person anywhere to help save my life.
- 94 'I'm separated from my husband because I left and went afar.
'Oh, dear god! I'm completely undone!
'I'm worried the children will Miss. meditating with their father.
'The children must be crying. My children, what can I bring to give you?
- 95 'They must be thirsty and hungry, and there isn't any fruit left.
'It's too much! My husband must have been searching
'And calling for me since morning. I'm worried he wasn't able to eat.
'The same for the children. They must all be famished...'"
- 96 Tum summarized and condensed the plot of the story
Then skipped to the story of Tum summarized and condensed the plot of the story
And reached the end of the philosophical story
He stopped to chew tobacco very briefly
As the family paid respect to the souls of their ancestors.
- 97 The family was mesmerized by Tum.
Some listened so intently they forgot even to relieve themselves.
The beauty of the chanting attracted the interest of passersby. They gathered around
And squeezed together in the shade in front of the house.
- 98 Then they said, "Venerable, please cast your words for us to hear as well."
Some moved in close to the house wanting to be the first to hear.
They raised both hands in salute saying,
"Please, tell us sir, what story are you chanting?
- 99 "Venerable, don't keep it from us. Speak clearly so we may know the

story.”

Tum tried to figure out what to do. He saw Miss
Teav take a velour scarf,
A newly bought vial, cigarettes and areca seeds.

- 100 When she finished folding the scarf, she raised it
Over her head three times and prayed
Saying, “Please, Venerable Buddha,
“Please, let my heart have its wish.
- 101 “Please help make it so he and I meet and are joined as one.
“Don’t let us be separated.
“In this life or any future life, I truly desire
“To attain the wish to which I dedicate myself.”
- 102 Teav finished preparing her offering and quickly went
To Miss. Nor
Saying, “Nor! Sister, have mercy!
“Offer the tobacco leaves wrapped in this *pha-hom* to him.
- 103 “Let me gain some merit.
“Don’t let me lack wealth. In
“This life and the next life, let me have high rank.
“Don’t make it so I continue to be poor.”
- 104 Tum received the offering
Then unwrapped it and took out the areca. When he had finished chewing
it,
He stopped to rest a little then sprinkled water mixed with oil and flour on
the laity.
Recall the magical *Sarika* bird!
- 105 The legendary *karivak* bird! Recall how
The matchmaker summoned the philosopher’s stone!
Tum took out some *proteal* and ate it with the areca
And continued to chant, revealing his feelings to Teav completely.
- 106 He chanted quickly to conclude,
Then tried to think of a story about a family.
He recalled the story of the Brahman thief,
Who led away a child tied with a vine.
- 107 “As the thief led him away, it makes you feel sorry for the child.
“He cries, thinking, ‘Oh! Today
‘The Brahman thief,
‘Will beat me to death. And where is my mother?’”
- 108 “The child had left the house a long time.

“His mother wanted to gather
 “Fruit for him. She was worried
 “And worked harder because her child returned hungry.”

- 109 Like a small boy Tum
 Chanted, keeping the *pha-hom* wrapped, not opened.
 He took it as evidence that Teav loved him.
 He finished telling the story and said thank you to Teav’s family.
- 110 The laity saluted Tum, and some of them tried to persuade him
 To stay in Tbong Khmom. “I will take care of you.
 “Please be my god-son, Venerable.
 “Have mercy and accept my offer.”
- 111 Before leaving, Tum said,
 “Dear people, I’m sorry if where I should have been correct I erred in my
 talk.
 “Goodbye everyone,
 “For the sun is setting and night approaches.
- 112 “Also, I left the monk Pech alone.
 “I am very distressed and upset
 “And afraid of hurting his feelings too. He takes care of me always,
 “And I always think of him. Furthermore, we are both monks.”
- 113 As Tum explained why he had to leave,
 The lay people listened. Then he left the house
 And set off. Reaching Pech, who was
 Like a brother, Tum said, “Hurry up, come here!
- 114 “Come here!” Tum thought to joke with Pech
 And let him know what had happened and especially to boast about Teav’s
 beauty.
 He said, “Pech! my dear brother,
 “I have begun my courtship of Teav.
- 115 “She is so good, my beloved brother!
 “Now, I am seriously thinking that I want a go-between
 “To make inquiries. She should initially
 “Find out what they want me to pay in order to claim
- 116 “Teav’s love and have her await my return.
 “We will go back to the temple but stay only until the end of the year,
 “Then say goodbye to the Abbot and disrobe because we will promise
 “Teav that we will come back as soon as possible.”
- 117 The two monks decided
 Not to delay at all. Tum

Spoke saying, "Brother Pech, it's time we
"Gather our rice and put it into a sack

- 118 "Then load it in the cart. Don't delay.
"It's time to turn back before it gets dark.
"The way back is far away.
"We must not delay. We can't wait any longer."
- 119 The two monks decided to return.
At the break of day they left promptly.
After saying goodbye to all the people of the village,
They proceeded to the main road.
- 120 After driving through some back roads, they had to stop and take a break.
Tum, overcome, head bent down, wallowed in grief.
Depressed, he tried to hide his long face and look normal.
"What pain!" he said to himself. Suddenly awake, he thought to open
- 121 The wrapped-up package that smelled of flowers.
He pulled it out and brought it close to his body.
Then he noticed all the trees around him
That he described in rhyme.
- 122 "Oh, *tonlap tonla* trees, come!
"Ripe *tlok* tree! *Saok* tree lining the road!
"Tlan tree! I feel better for the moment!
"How could I abandon Teav and leave her all alone?
- 123 "Oh, what flower's scent could be so fragrant?
"Is it the fragrant jasmine flower or the strychnine flower?
"The scents from the *pha-hom* which Teav arranged
"And applied to the scarf disorient me.
- 124 "Abandoning Teav puts her in a predicament.
"She never considered me to be a monk.
"That's why she dared to go ahead
"And make the offering so carefully to satisfy her desire.
- 125 "The wax containers of the *pahom* are over-filled with Teav's offerings.
"Teav, my dear, my constant worry is dreadful!
"I feel grief again anew... the tobacco leaves
"That Teav, my love, offered to me...
- 126 "Now I notice the birds frantically nesting.
"The mother and father call to each other then fly off to find
"Fruit to carry in their beaks. They want to bring it
"To their children protected inside the hollow of a tree

- 127 “And feed them until they are satisfied. My misfortune
 “Is so great! Teav’s pain is great.
 “Her sadness doesn’t abate or relent.
 “I pray to the gods to watch over her.
- 128 “Please grant me my wish and that you will have me
 “Return because Teav truly loves me.
 “Now, I have come to stop and rest.
 “This burden inside my body makes me numb and weep.”
- 129 After stopping, Pech called Tum saying,
 “Tum, don’t worry and depress yourself.
 “What’s to worry? Miss. Teav has made up her mind.
 “Who would dare take Teav away?”
- 130 Afterwards they retrieved the ox and brought them to be yoked to the cart.
 They drove away turning this way and that looking for a shortcut
 Or footpath that led to the main road.
 They drove straight for the city of Phnom Chrom Sralau.
- 131 Tum was stupefied as he thought about Teav again.
 His chest became tight, and he was morose.
 He had a worried and distressed look on his face.
 “Your husband sees the grass, the *smach* and *trach* trees and *tras* plant.
- 132 “Oh, Teal tree! My body is broken.
 “Teav depends on me. Thinking of her I feel such regret.
 “*Ph-diek* tree, I was wrong to leave her at all.
 “*Ko koh* tree, I can’t think. There is no relief!
- 133 “The *koki* trees, so abundant, are like my sickness.”
 Anger, overflowing, numbed him
 As he called out saying, “Pech, dear friend!”
 Pech didn’t answer. His apparent indifference helped Pech to keep from
- 134 Being sad. Then putting himself in Tum’s place, they both cried
 As Pech struggled to reply, “Dear Tum, stop this.
 “Wait until we reach the temple later tonight.
 “We must think about bidding goodbye,
- 135 “And informing our teacher of our wish
 “To leave the monkhood because we have an urgent matter to attend to.
 “We will lie to him saying a relative is not well
 “And has contracted a deadly disease that is most serious.”
- 136 The two monks talked together.
 They drove frantically as the sun
 Sank low. Cold, Tum and Pech watched

The sun gently sink

- 137 Until it had finally disappeared, and the people went into their homes.
Nearing the summit of the mountains in
The west, they turned toward
The mountain called by the name *somaroreach*.

Part 2 (138-298)

Tum's Sin

(Tum and Pech's return to the temple; the Abbot's refusal to allow Tum to disrobe; Pech's proper disrobing; Teav's longing for Tum's return; Tum's mother's failed attempt to help Tum obtain the Abbot's permission to disrobe; Tum's disrobing without permission; Tum's request for the Abbot's forgiveness; the Abbot's blessing and arnings)

- 138 Tum and Pech drove until reaching the Wat and stopped for good.
Right at dusk, they entered the temple grounds
And stopped to release the ox
And let him eat the fresh grass growing inside the temple compound.
- 139 Then Pech and Tum met
All the other monks who came
To greet them and say hello.
"Did you trade the *taok* for rice or silver?" they asked.
- 140 "Or did you take coins? Whatever else,
"Tell us, too!" Tum and Pech let them know clearly
To satisfy their curiosity, and since the two monks were eager to please,
They said, "We mixed with
- 141 "Rice and girls and baskets,
"With resin, with horns, with clay jugs,
"With *pha-hom* turbans and sweet honey,
"And scarves too that were equal in value to the *taok*."
- 142 Then Tum and Pech decided not to delay too long.
Together they went straight to find the Abbot
And greet their teacher. At that time, the Abbot was rousing from a nap.
Waking up, he cupped water in his hands to wash his face.
- 143 The two monks bowed down low,
Cautious and afraid of their teacher who had just awakened.
They were worried that he would be angry and that he would kick them.
After washing, the Abbot turned his face, and looking at them asked,

- 144 “Pech and Tum, did you go
 “To trade the *taok* all right?
 “Were the laity over there arrogant and rude,
 “Or did they all offer trades?”
- 145 The monks answered respectfully
 And told the Abbot they had received as much rice as they expected.
 Their profit was, they guessed, equivalent to three or four *taok*.
 This would be just sufficient to cover their spending for the coming year.
- 146 The monks told their teacher all the appropriate information,
 Then said goodbye and quickly turned back
 To their quarters to rest.
 Tum threw himself down in bed exhausted and started to think about Teav
 again,
- 147 Saying to himself, “What horrible things have I done
 “That grief should arise anew to make my heart heavy?”
 He reached for the *pha-hom* that he had wrapped and tucked into his robe,
 And kissed it and held it against his body.
- 148 Perfumed scents wafted from the flowers.
 Tum took the *pha-hom* in his hand
 And brought it to cover his head, believing
 That by doing that he could at least lessen his grief.
- 149 Tum said, “Oh, flowers! flowers!
 “You are fragrant and have pollen, while I am without peace.
 “The scent of the *romchek* flower keeps me from falling asleep.
 “The myriad perfumes of the flowers numb my breast!
- 150 “Oh, I so often imagine
 “Meeting my sweetheart to calm my heart.
 “Her mother invited me to chant the story of Metry,
 “And my love offered me flowers and fruit.
- 151 “Paying homage to the great Buddhist doctrine,
 “She perfumed the *pha-hom* and presented me
 “The offering. Humbly, Miss. Teav wished
 “That she would meet me just as I wished to meet her.
- 152 “Now there is a problem, and I am separated from Teav.
 “Oh, Teav! This stifling grief torments me.
 “Teav! Suppressing them cannot defeat these convulsions of sorrow.
 “I don’t know what to say.
- 153 “I am the one who imagines Teav here.
 “The one who helps her relax,

“And thinks not to let her touch the ground
 “Afraid that a tiger or an elephant or some animal might attack her.

154 “I imagine stealing Teav away to come
 “With me to stay forever. Teav! You could not relay your feelings for me directly.

“You could only give me a sign as evidence that you would wait
 “By way of the tobacco, the areca, the flowers and fruit,

155 “By offering the *pha-hom* to me.
 “Now I think of you every place I go.
 “As I wonder about you all alone, I am barely
 “Alive. Will my grief

156 “Drag on until the end of the year?”
 As the days passed Tum became despondent as his love for Teav kept increasing.
 He watched all the other young people come in droves
 Overfilling the temple during scheduled ceremonies.

157 They came to ceremonies. They came to ordinations. They came to P’chum Benn.
 They arrived for the gatherings from many directions.
 They came to feed the monks and make offerings as is customary
 At the end of the rainy season retreat.

158 Tum’s burning grief didn’t abate.
 Miserable, Tum called Pech to come and spoke saying,
 “Pech, dear brother, I’m hurting!
 “To continue like this is unbearable!”

159 Pech listened calmly to what Tum said then replied,
 “Oh, Tum! We must relieve your pain so you can relax.
 “Instead of awaiting the time we planned to disrobe,
 “Let’s go ask leave from the Abbot.”

160 The two monks agreed on this
 And quickly gathered candles and incense.
 They walked over to the quarters of the Abbot,
 And kneeling, they quickly bowed three times

161 Then lit the candles and incense and bowed to pray.
 When their chanting ended, they entered the Abbot’s room to ask leave.
 Nervously they said, “Please, sir... do not blame us....
 “Our reason for coming... to leave His Holiness...”

162 “To disrobe...
 “Agree, Your Holiness, to help us...”

Both of them then saluted the Abbot saying,
"Please give us, Sir... a sign of your pity..."

- 163 "Because we are worried... We are under obligation to...
"My relative... She contracted something...
"A serious and debilitating disease... She's not right...
"When my mother reached the rice field, she turned to pray..."
- 164 "Entreating the family spirits...
"In great fear... then she promised...
"To honor all the spirits for helping her...
"And remember her ancestors with a complete offering..."
- 165 "Danger engulfs her... my mother prays...
"Saying she would be relieved by having me return home...
"My disrobing would give her relief from the pain...
"I will stay with her until she is old and help her defeat any other difficulties."
- 166 Their teacher listened closely then grabbed
A writing tablet to make some calculations saying, "You scoundrels
"Are lying to me! You are cowering to
"A woman's cajoling! Now you rush to abandon the temple and hurry to disrobe!"
- 167 "I've calculated the numbers and recalculated every factor.
"The numbers indicate that Tum
"Must not act impetuously for fear of suffering.
"I see that Pech however can avert this adequately."
- 168 "Pech can disrobe at the end of the Second Month of the lunar calendar.
"Tum, you must wait until it is propitious.
"You must wait until the Sixth Month before disrobing.
"After disrobing you will surely advance to become important."
- 169 Upon reaching the First Month
The wind gusted continuously.
Anxiousness assailed Tum,
As he huddled in his room crying and worried about many things.
- 170 On the one hand, he was distressed at not being able to disrobe.
On the other, he pined for Teav who was
Beyond reach in Tbong Khmom and whom perhaps
Someone had taken away.
- 171 Tum and Pech looked for a way to end the torment.
Tum said, "Let's wait for the next holy day,
"Then we will leave no matter what!"

Pech answered, "Don't be too anxious, or it won't work!"

- 172 Tum's depression revived once again.
He missed Teav. He missed her beauty. He had no rest.
He wouldn't take rice. He couldn't eat,
Or only very little. From one bowl he had three mouthfuls.
- 173 The time to stop counting the days had arrived.
During the Second Month, strong winds swept in.
The refreshing, cool air made one alert and one's skin goose-bumped.
It scattered the clouds that came sewn together en masse.
- 174 They poured in, bunched together in close groups.
Darkness filled the places where the clouds patched over the sky.
The two brothers decided to stumble on,
Blindly unashamed of being as careless as anyone could be.
- 175 Pech entered the temple to bid goodbye to the Abbot
Thinking, "What if something goes wrong... the Abbot will curse me."
He went up to him and prostrated himself,
Lifting both hands together in supplication.
- 176 The teacher responded to Pech saying,
"Pech, whatever day you want to disrobe, go ahead and do it.
"Anytime during the Second Month appears correct.
"Disrobe and farm rice. The weather is comfortable."
- 177 Tum, hiding quietly, secretly listened to what they said.
"Pech, for you to disrobe right away makes sense."
Hearing this, Tum held back his sobs.
His insides became twisted more and more as he fretted and waited.
- 178 Finally, Tum said to himself, "I can no longer stay here.
"Dear God, why must I suffer so?
"How much longer do I have to endure this torment?
"I might as well be dead.
- 179 "I don't regret becoming a monk or having shaven my head like this.
"Fate has brought me to be plunged into darkness.
"I'm lost as if my head were covered with a pot or someone had grabbed
me tightly.
"I don't care anymore if the Abbot is angry at me."
- 180 Pech went ahead and disrobed that morning.
Tum, devastated, got up and went to await an audience with the Abbot.
But Pech tried to stop him saying, "Not yet.
"Wait until you have settled down and are not so upset."

- 181 We digress from our discussion of Tum and Pech to discuss Miss. Teav, worried, always in seclusion. She had become very miserable and introverted. Increasingly uncertain, she awaited Tum's return.
- 182 She said to herself, "My regret pains me.
"I can't relax. The weight on my body is like a mountain
"That was uprooted and fell, pinning me down.
"It crushes and bleeds me dry with its constant, hard pounding.
- 183 "Pain and anger twist inside my liver.
"My breath is intermittent. I'm scared to death.
"Enough! Oh Tum, I'm dying!
"My body is pale and emaciated from this misery.
- 184 "From a great distance, Tum has abandoned me.
"He has left me all alone."
Defeated and dejected, unable to revive herself,
Teav turned away to see beguiling hallucinations.
- 185 She imagined hearing Tum's voice.
He was chanting for a group of people. "Where are you?" Teav asked.
The sound of his voice made Teav yearn for
His charming and beautiful form.
- 186 Kind Teav recognized him immediately by his monk's robes
And glow like a full moon.
His bright face was round like the moon,
As though polished clean. Then he turned away and disappeared.
- 187 "Will he come back in body?
"Or has he taken a bad turn and fallen ill?
"What can I do to find out what's happening quietly?
"Perhaps I can hire someone to search high and low and investigate.
- 188 "I don't know which is the right way to go.
"Oh! The pain is so horrible!
"I buckle beneath the weight like a boat taking on water.
"Because I am frail, I am heading for a quick death."
- 189 Then Teav called for Miss. Nor,
"Nor! Dear friend, help me. Help me figure this out.
"Do my hallucinations mean it will be a long or short time before Tum returns?
"Nor, estimate how many months and days before he comes."
- 190 Miss. Nor, the governess, dodged the question
And said, "Wait until next month to watch the clouds

"Drift from the northeast to take shelter
 "And gather together. At such time thoughts will come to you, Miss. Teav.

- 191 "The wind will sweep in the cold air and the dew will fall.
 "A turmoil in Tum's heart will make him feel sympathy for you.
 "He will try to think about his Teav and want her love,
 "And ask himself, 'Why persist in being a monk?'
- 192 "Every day Tum worries, too. He has no peace.
 "He can't sleep at all because he has abandoned you.
 "He broke away from you because he had resolved
 "To build up merit and be true to the Doctrine.
- 193 "Tum's desire is to have you as his beloved.
 "The reason that took him far away
 "Will not last very long, dear Teav.
 "He will leave the monkhood and your wish will be realized.
- 194 "Don't grieve and fret. Please control yourself.
 "Most likely he is not sneaky, so don't panic.
 "I fear that if you are not well, hardships will arise.
 "If your mother finds out about this, she will surely curse you.
- 195 "She will say you are not pure and that you behave like a cow.
 "The family will snicker and laugh saying,
 "The child has family. She has ancestors.
 "Therefore she should not behave like a bad girl.'
- 196 "You called me to consider the future. Don't be angry.
 "I wouldn't refuse you anything, dear.
 "I've tried to understand you always.
 "The limit of your ability to control the situation is like the saying:
- 197 'One's nature is a cake that they have premixed.
 'It has been measured out according to the cook's wish.
 'Never is the cake any bigger than the mold.'
 "Oh, Teav! I am so worried about being able to take care of you adequately.
- 198 "I'm afraid Tum may not come to look for you.
 "Teav, my sister, don't scorn me. I'm afraid when
 "I think about it. I am afraid misfortune will beset you.
 "Because of what? I have heard that Nguon plans to revenge Tum.
- 199 "Because he is the son of the Governor of the district,
 "His rank is high, and he is wealthy. The Governor and his people
 "Rule over Tbong Khmum district,
 "While Tum is an ordinary person and must answer to them like everyone else.

- 200 "I went ahead and told you this. Dear, don't be hurt.
 "Don't be offended or upset.
 "Although we can't calculate just when Tum, looking for you,
 "Will arrive, he would not abandon a good thing."
- 201 Teav answered, "True, it's just as you say, Nor.
 "You have knowledge and insight
 "And speak rightly. Most likely Tum will arrive soon.
 "Your telling this makes me excited more than ever."
- 202 Believing this, Teav relaxed somewhat.
 She laid herself down and slept a while.
 Later, she awoke startled, and meditating on Tum,
 She lit a candle and incense and prayed to him.
- 203 Let's leave the story of Teav again in order to show
 The way Tum always takes the *pha-hom*
 To cover his robes and body. Its perfume smelled
 Truly fragrant without ever lessening.
- 204 In the dead of the night,
 He was afraid, body and soul.
 He was depressed and worried.
 He didn't regret wanting to disrobe, for he missed Miss. Teav terribly.
- 205 Early morning arose clearly, and sunlight
 Shined from the east brightly.
 The heat reached Tum's body not long afterwards. Quickly
 Tum got on his feet and walked away.
- 206 When he reached the haven
 Of his mother's house, Tum met her.
 Indeed, when his mother saw that her child had arrived,
 Joyfully she descended from the house in a hurry.
- 207 Reaching him she asked, "My son,
 "When did you leave your monk's quarters?
 "My darling child, did you come here for being
 "Miserable or content?"
- 208 Tum cried copiously. Tears ran down his face.
 He intended to lie because he was not happy.
 "Oh, mother! I cannot eat...
 "I'm not well at all.
- 209 "There is a throbbing pain in my stomach that hardly ever stops.
 "It's as though someone is scratching and pinching me. It seems like
 dysentery

"Or like a hot mucus churning inside me.
"It agitates and scares me, and I can't sleep.

- 210 "And I'm unable to close my eyes. Oh mother!
"Upon my mattress and pillows I lay rigid and motionless.
"When I lay down to sleep, everything is stiff.
"I'm kind of angry. I try to be patient and suppress the discomfort.
- 211 "I told this story previously
"When I went to bid goodbye to the Abbot, but he didn't even look at me.
"I said I was not well and that dysentery pained my insides.
"I said my body was uncomfortable, not so well.
- 212 "The Abbot wouldn't give me an inch, while he released Pech from the
monkhood.
"I begged the Abbot in every way, but he blocked every argument.
"What does keeping me here accomplish? It makes me miserable.
"Mother, go persuade him to let me leave!"
- 213 Tum's widowed mother cried along with her child.
She kneeled down then replied,
"My dear child, in every case
"You have never behaved improperly in any way.
- 214 "The Abbot likes you more than any other. He likes you so much!
"He has entrusted you with all the temple's possessions, old or new.
"He let you take care of his tobacco and areca nut.
"Rice, water and food, you are allowed to eat as you like.
- 215 "What has happened this time?
"I am always happy to give you my consideration. I feel sympathy
"And pity you as though we had the same life.
"Now you are miserable and no one knows.
- 216 "From the time you were small until you were grown up,
"Dear child, I have heard only good news.
"But after hearing what you've told me, I'm afraid of doing wrong.
"But if that's how it is, you may ask me to go speak to the Abbot."
- 217 When Tum heard his mother, his sadness lessened.
His body relaxed because of the comfort of being in her presence
And because his mother said just what he wanted her to,
According to his misleading information. Then Tum said goodbye,
- 218 "Mother, I am going to the temple.
"Mother, what time can you go? Make haste.
"Hurry. Don't delay.
"Come before I am too weak.

- 219 "Another thing you can do concerns the ancestor's spirits.
"They usually take care of us in every way.
"Therefore, help me placate them. If you can do this,
"When we go to ask leave from the Abbot, he will be put at ease."
- 220 Tum's mother reflected on the situation.
She arrived at a plan of action quickly.
She grabbed fresh betel nut and areca,
Candles and incense, and took a lace scarf to cover herself and left.
- 221 Tum's mother moved gracefully and smoothly.
Then she proceeded to enter the temple to seek an audience
With a monk of moderate seniority
Saying, "Oh, sir! I'm embarrassed.
- 222 "Everybody has always applauded Tum, both young and old.
"They would praise him highly. Now everything has changed.
"The Abbot is not patient with him either.
"Tum says the Abbot has changed his mind and attitude about him.
- 223 "Tum is my son. What happened, sir?
"Normally everyone is very pleased with him. Why did the Abbot change
his mind?
"My child came to tell me saying,
'I'm leaving the monkhood.'
- 224 "It's intolerable for me to keep this in.
"I can't restrain myself and remain silent.
"My son is only a novice, sir.
"Because I'm a woman, there are limits to what I can do."
- 225 Then Tum's mother bowed goodbye.
From there she went
To the Abbot's quarters. She greeted him,
Lifting her hands and raising them over her head.
- 226 Then she said, "I would like to say that
"If I speak incorrectly, please sir
"Have pity on me for I am only a lay woman.
"What do I know to dare to speak in Tum's stead?
- 227 "Tum, who is my son, arrived
"Home and leaving nothing out said he can no longer endure the
monkhood
"And wants to disrobe. If he remains a monk
"For a long time, he's afraid he'll Miss. the point of the Dhamma
- 228 "And commit careless mistakes because he's naive

"And fickle. He's too easily tempted by pleasure.

"Sir, I'm so worried. On the one hand, I'm afraid for him to disrobe.

"On the other I'm distressed about the dysentery that afflicts him.

229 "Is it true, sir, that it's very serious?

"I'm worried he was given Chinese or Vietnamese sweet cake.

"Urinating at night, he says, is sometimes difficult sometimes easy.

"Having to constantly defecate at night makes him unable to sleep at all."

230 The Abbot, not long afterwards, spoke,

"No, the young novice Tum

"Went away to sell *taok*. After selling all of them,

"He returned love sick over a girl.

231 "In the district of Tbong Khmom, there are many young women

"Who are charming, young and single.

"Now they desperately desire husbands.

"For that reason I am not pleased.

232 "We must not allow Tum to disrobe.

"I've calculated the numbers and seen that he would be met by death.

"Tum's fortune predicts bad luck.

"He must be prevented from disrobing until the end of this year."

233 The woman who is the widowed mother of Tum

Listened as the Abbot gazed

Glaringly at her. He dissuaded her sternly

With harsh language as though he were extremely angry.

234 Then she left and reached the road where Tum was waiting for her

She said, "Dear child, don't argue.

"How can you oppose the Abbot? It would be comparable to a war.

"He is like the French when they show off their guns.

235 "Although the Abbot may shoot you dead, your reputation doesn't end.

"Just as animals die, the same goes for ourselves.

"If the Abbot predicts you will be uprooted, then you will be

"Knocked down flat on your back dead.

236 "For this reason, are you going to stop trying to disrobe, my child?

"If you continue to be frustrated, you will be hurt.

"Now go find some water to drink and wash quickly.

"When you finish cleaning up and eating, begin on your studies.

237 "Study the Buddhist scriptures and their meanings and do whatever

"To move away from this problem once and for all.

"It's like mending a torn dress

"With fine needlework, or putting things right by sweeping dirt from the

house.”

- 238 Then Tum answered, “That’s enough! Stop!
 “Mother, don’t compare everything. I can’t stand it.
 “If that’s the way it is, go home and lay down to rest.
 “You’ve helped enough. Relax. Don’t torment yourself.”
- 239 Come the morning, we wonder why Tum
 Has taken only the *pha-hom* Teav gave him.
 He is walking into the forest to seek solace
 And quiet. Then Tum stands up to pray.
- 240 He salutes the Buddha and the Abbot
 And changes out of his monk’s robes. Not long afterwards he leaves the
 forest.
 Then he goes to enter the temple
 To expiate his sins, sad that in the future his wrongdoing will yield bad
 results.
- 241 Tum addressed his mother.
 Physically upset as though gravely ill
 With that sickness that is heartache and stays without letting go,
 He bid goodbye to her.
- 242 “Venerable Buddha, do not take offense at what I’ve done.
 “Do not use this sin against me, Sir.
 “Please, Your Grace, absolve me and allow me
 “To reach the shore where there is no more suffering.”
- 243 Tum decided to get away from the temple straight away.
 Distraught from frustration, he ripped his kroma and pinned the end,
 making a pocket.
 Then he grabbed his monk’s clothes, folded them and inserted them into the
 pocket.
 He carried the bundle on his hip as he walked until reaching the big forest.
- 244 He asked the forest’s spirits to hide and shelter him. Then he took out all
 The braided flowers, votive candles, incense and food
 To offer the spirits. Then Tum
 Joined and lifted his hands to pray.
- 245 Tum chanted saying, “Sometimes being
 “Who lust for pleasure in other lands
 “And become filled with desire
 “Abandon their faith without any regret.”
- 246 Tum prayed to the spirits not to hinder him,
 As he changed out of the last of his monk’s clothes without regret.

Then he put on a fine, clean silk sarong
And lifted all of his monk's garments and hung them from a branch.

- 247 The forked branch sagged close to the ground.
The young monk Tum who had dared to perform
His own disrobing then continued on his way.
Yet, his conduct, sneaky and improper, was not finished with him.
- 248 He arrived at the temple grounds after a short time.
Avoiding everyone, he looked for Pech. When he found
Pech, he laughed and took him out of sight.
Tum grabbed Pech by the shoulders and shook him playfully.
- 249 From that time, it was not long before
Tum began to pine for Teav and realize what he had done.
He hung his head in utter despair and confusion,
Missing greatly the place where they had first met.
- 250 He imagined waking up and grabbing
Hold of Teav's hand and saying, "Maybe
"As you are a single, grown woman
"You can run away from home with me."
- 251 He imagined his lovely sweetheart listening to him
As he chanted to her and the lay people outside the house
In the town of Tbong Khmom where they first met.
He had not forgotten the power of their love.
- 252 Tum, who had just disrobed,
Spoke to Pech saying, "Pech! I ask
"For your pity, since my
"Heart wants only to pine for
- 253 "And think of Miss. Teav who
"Has given me the wax container.
"The cloth *pha-hom* gives off a fragrance that makes me delirious
"Every night and day. I have just disrobed."
- 254 Pech readied himself as he waited and listened to Tum.
He responded, "Oh, Tum!
"If it is like that, you cannot go on in peace
"Because you will never be happy.
- 255 "Your sin remains because you are culpable.
"You are a monk who is clearly from a good family,
"Yet doesn't believe in the Buddha. Most serious
"Is that you dared to run away and disrobe without remorse!"

- 256 Tum said, "If that's so, Pech, let's go.
"We must find the food and all the things we need
"To offer the Abbot to absolve me of my sins.
"Then will be gone the anger in his heart for what I've done."
- 257 The two students fully realized what they had to do.
They proceeded to Pech's home as fast as they could
To find all the food and fruit they needed for the offering.
When they had finished, Tum told Pech to accompany him to the temple.
- 258 They entered into the temple grounds. When they climbed to the Abbot's quarters,
The Abbot was seated, reclining on a cushion.
Tum and Pech sat themselves down and raised their hands evenly
Clasped together above their heads.
- 259 The Abbot looked directly at Tum and Pech
Saying, "Tum, poor fellow, what business do you have coming here?
"Why do you want to meet me again, you rascal?
"Enough! I won't say anything against you.
- 260 "A teacher should never curse his student.
"I don't have anger for you. I will be honest and forthright.
"If a student slips and goes awry
"In his actions, I try to direct him
- 261 "So he can rebuild a reputation that is high and far-reaching.
"If a student is afraid and ignorant,
"I try to teach him not leave his studies undone.
"I call on him to study the Doctrine until he knows it well."
- 262 Pech and Tum respectfully listened to their teacher.
As he directed them about every path of action, they kept scratching themselves
And lifting their heads bashfully and sheepishly.
Afterwards they carefully responded to his words.
- 263 "Please grant us forgiveness for the suffering we have caused.
"Save us so we may go forward in our lives, Sir.
"Venerable, pardon all of our sins.
"Mercifully protect our reputations from now on.
- 264 "I was wrong and improper in everything I did.
"Please, I ask of you, Venerable, to save me.
"Being just a student, Venerable, I was made ignorant
"By mundane desires."
- 265 The Abbot responded,

“Ah, true indeed. It’s just as you’ve described.
 “Those words, in terms of accuracy, are well said.
 “But you must still beware of danger to yourself.

266 “I am not angry about any of your sins old or new.
 “But in the world do not let this happen again.
 “Sins from the past come to occupy you unseen.
 “You are never rid of them as the Laws of Karma tell us clearly.

267 “The Buddha showed us there is always sorrow.
 “Sometimes it changes to be happiness right up until you are old.
 “As for the state of death, it is unavoidable.
 “Such were the words the Buddha spoke in his teachings.”

268 Tum and Pech bowed with hands clasped while
 Listening to the Buddha’s teachings
 And as the Abbot, who pitied his students, chanted
 The Three Refuges of the Buddha.

269 “These prayers, the Lord Buddha bestowed His advice to
 “Anybody who thirsts and hungers for knowledge, both male and female
 “Born every day into the world,
 “Wishing that happiness may be attained.”

270 Pech and Tum listened to their teacher
 Chant to the end offering his blessing. They responded
 Saying, “Amen. May we have relief
 “And respite from sorrow as the blessing we happily receive.”

271 They lifted their hands in obeisance.
 In their hearts there was a sense of satisfaction
 That spread through their bodies, stirring happiness.
 They were so relieved and excited they seemed unable to contain
 themselves.

272 Then Tum bid goodbye to the Abbot saying, “Please
 “Venerable, disMiss. me because I have spoken
 “With all the laity in the outlying provinces.
 “They have already spread word amongst themselves that I will go there.

273 “Specific arrangements were made which I’m not allowed to miss.
 “Those families must act according to
 “Calculations to buy the *taok* on credit for rice.
 “If I delay too long, I’m afraid our agreement will be nullified.

274 “The good people of Tbong Khmom
 “Who reside in the thorny forest
 “Depend on my magic chants and knowledge of

"Ghosts, village spirits and sorcerers.

- 275 "Then they had a happy idea.
"To prevent my leaving they planned to arrange a marriage for me,
"Then arranged things with Miss. Teav who had just entered the shade.
"Because Pech and I hated the idea, we snuck back to the temple."
- 276 The Abbot tried to listen to the words of Tum and Pech,
Then responded abruptly, "You've made this up!
"It's not true, you rascals!
"As usual, misery which causes everything is behind this.
- 277 "The people in the world, both women and men,
"Never really hate the opposite sex.
"Don't lie to me! I know the situation.
"But I will not talk like someone trying to catch you in a lie."
- 278 Then the Abbot gave
Tum permission to act according to his wishes without restrictions.
He said, "Go ahead and don't worry about having offended me.
"It's up to you to behave well.
- 279 "Don't flaunt your knowledge or be arrogant.
"Beware of others who can hurt you because you are too self-absorbed.
"Don't speak without respect for others or their family
"Relations. Always be on your best behavior.
- 280 "Don't be the type of soldier who overruns whatever is around him.
"Don't tease children, or people will curse you.
"As for the wives of powerful people, don't
"Entertain the desire to snatch them away for yourself.
- 281 "Don't flirt with them.
"Normally women are obstinate. They want you immediately.
"They look for men and lead them astray.
"They are quick to satisfy their desires without worrying about the
consequences.
- 282 "Gossip of your misdeeds will reach me.
"The Buddha's teachings show
"That one's sins continue a long time,
"Passing from one birth to the next.
- 283 "As for me, your teacher, you are without sin.
"Don't claim that I am close-minded.
"I give you my blessing. Please, come closer.
"Come and I will take this opportunity to chant the Dhamma."

- 284 The Abbot held a fan to block his face.
Hearing him chant gave them great pleasure.
“May they have long lives and true happiness.
“May their happiness be plentiful and give You merit.
- 285 “May they have strength
“And attain high rank, money and wealth.
“May their strength and intelligence not diminish,
“And may their wives be young and pure.
- 286 “May they have famous reputations which spread their power
“So that others respect and fear them. May both men and women
“Everywhere take care of them, especially those in the territory
“Of the district where Miss. Teav lives, so they may arrive there to govern.”
- 287 The students were both fulfilled.
Their worries were now gone and they were completely satisfied.
There is nothing to which this can be compared.
It was actually as though they had gone to heaven.
- 288 Afterwards, Tum and Pech bent down and listened to the Abbot
As he gave them his blessing.
They raised their hands to bid him goodbye,
And descended from the Abbot’s quarters and hurriedly walked away.
- 289 Tum and Pech climbed up the steps to Tum’s house and sat down.
Tum told his mother, “Now,
“Mother, we have decided that the time is right
“To make the journey to Tbong Khmom. Mother,
- 290 “Is the way open for me go, or will you prevent me
“From meeting our schedule over there?
“The Abbot says if I am to have inner peace
“And happiness, I must be free to go.”
- 291 Although Tum’s mother wanted to prevent him from going,
She said, “My child,
“Your mother every day seems not very
“Healthy due to having contracted an illness.
- 292 “Being old, the time has come to earn merit before I die
“And seek out the support of family.
“It’s not as though you are a child. Taking care of you does not require
discipline.
“I will not delay the time of your departure.”
- 293 She said, “You have set the exact time of your departure.
“Once you leave, there will be no stopping you.

"It would only be a waste of valuable time.
"You be careful of damaging your mother's good name."

294 As soon as Tum and Pech realized the situation, the two
Were both equally happy.
In their state of pure and extreme elation,
Whatever worries they may have felt were now gone.

295 Pech and Tum met together.
Turning toward one another, the dear friends conversed,
"We must get going, friend.
"There is no time to waste.

296 "We must proceed victoriously.
"To have success we cannot be afraid. This is our time of glory.
"With supernatural or earthly power,
"All can be reduced to nothing.

297 "The crow's foot that is not clean will lose its possessions.
"To start out on the wrong day brings misery.
"We must go on zero-two or zero-four.
"We must go when everything is just right."

298 Tum and Pech were completely satisfied with the time
They had decided was best to start off.
When the morning light clearly dawned,
Then the two would leave.

Part 3 (299-354)

Tum and Pech's Return to Tbong Khmom

(Tum and Pech's journey to Tbong Khmom; the terrifying night in the forest; the children along the road; the soldier; their arrival at their adopted mother's house in Tbong Khmom)

299 As Tum and Pech followed the road along the rice field,
They noticed relatives walking quickly after them. They turned around
And the entire family saluted them.
An aunt said, "Greetings!

300 "We all bid farewell to you that leave for Tbong Khmom!"
"Dear aunt," Tum said, "Don't cry. I'm not
"Abandoning our village. I will return as usual.
"Aunt, I would not leave my mother for good.

301 "But I feel sympathy for my brothers and sisters,

“Who, according to what I’ve heard, need my help and care.
 “I’m afraid a disease has afflicted them,
 “Spreading a debilitating sickness.”

- 302 The family of Tum and Pech evasively answered,
 “Oh, nephew! What happened to your face to make it yellow!”
 They turned away startled and went back quickly.
 Sorrow for Teav like water washed over Tum.
- 303 As soon as the two young men had bid goodbye to their families,
 They got back on the road to the district of Tbong Khmom.
 After walking a while, they hesitated, missing their village.
 Pech and Tum felt sick at heart.
- 304 Just as Tum reached a wooded glade,
 Incessant longings for Teav tied his stomach in knots.
 Tears flowed as he thought of his sweetheart.
 “Oh, Teav! My thoughts for you are beyond words!”
- 305 They arrived at a field of reeds, fallen and sprouting.
 The white flowers, creeping and sparkling bright
 Were like the shining body of his beloved.
 Like the reeds’ healing flowers, he longed for her so much.
- 306 Glimpsing the deep waters and the *trakaet* grass,
 Tum addressed Teav, “My heart is perplexed.
 “The *trakuon* plant is like my body. I must stop to lie down.
 “I will stop in the shade of the branches of the wild guava.
- 307 “The *yeaplong*, like me, has become dislocated and far removed from home.
 “To this sad forest it has come, so long separated from its bamboo grove.
 “It misses home always,
 “Just as I Miss. you, Teav. I’m afraid just to think about it!”
- 308 Then the two young men reached the forest.
 By morning, we observe Tum’s sadness increasing.
 Tum is listing the names of the trees cleverly,
 As Pech reaches to pull down the branch of a fruit tree because he is thirsty
 and hungry.
- 309 As Pech picks the succulent fruit to eat,
 Tum keeps thinking about Teav and says, “Oh, Pech! There are
 “*Puoch* fruits like the time Miss. Teav dared to give me the *pha-hom*.
 “It seemed that she wanted to show her love for me.
- 310 “Look, there are sandalwood, litchi fruits and plums.
 “They are like Miss. Teav who clearly misses her sweetheart
 “And whose dreamy imaginings she cannot reveal.

"Like the moon, the fruit falls far from the tree.

311 "The *srahom* has died.

"Its downfall is a result of wrong conduct. Observe the mango tree!

"Observe the monkeys in groups jumping quickly.

"Because their loved ones are far away, they call out.

312 "Their calls are really

"Vessels of Miss. Teav. They ask, 'Why is it

'That you left? You should try to borrow

'Someone's buffalo and thunder back to take her away.'

313 "I see there are fruits ripe and green.

"The wild mangoes are scattered here and there just as I am separated from

"My sweetheart. But my limbs move straight ahead.

"The desire inside me will never forget her.

314 "I see the vine pleased with its clinging fruit.

"It is like Teav's love. I can never turn away from

"The token of her love." Tum and Pech

Were now moving right along, but had not emerged from the forest.

315 "Far from the long rice fields, I am disheartened.

"It's as though I think this way because of the cicada.

"As the insects keep crying more and more, your Tum becomes obsessed with

"Hallucinations that it is afternoon already.

316 "It is afternoon and we have overshot the main road.

"Whether we have gone right or not,

"We've been a long time in the forest. Hey, Pech!" Tum said aloud,

"Let's look for a place to rest and cool ourselves off."

317 Pech answered, "If we do like that

"We should look for some clearing that is safe.

"We have to be careful. I'm afraid there are tigers crouched in hiding!

"If they attack us, we're done for!

318 "Keep going. Stopping to make camp here doesn't make sense.

"You're acting foolish because a woman has got you in a tizzy. Try to hold on!"

Pech and Tum talked it over. Then they decided

To climb a tall tree.

319 When they reached a branch where they could sleep,

They lay down without fear.

But upon hearing the sounds of animals calling, Tum quietly listened,

Readying himself. For some time,

- 320 Tum glanced up at the moon,
Shining a clear and radiant light. It was perhaps
Ten o'clock, deep in the middle of the night.
Thinking of this and that, Tum quietly nodded off to sleep.
- 321 The wind blew quiet and cool,
Refreshing the air as falling dew crackled on the leaves
It sprinkled down in front of him, soaking
And saturating the *oulaok* and *beng* trees.
- 322 The sounds of all the animals' nostalgic cries
Answering each other transfixed Tum as he listened to the melodies.
Pech and Tum, feeling afraid,
Became very worried.
- 323 Pech said, "Oh, we shouldn't have
"Come to sleep in the forest just because you were worried about your
sweetheart!
"Animals of every kind surround us!
"It is quite obvious that this is not right!
- 324 "If someone is dignified, he should live in a dignified way.
"If someone is defiant and opposes tradition,
"He will receive ridicule and be accused noisily,
"Especially for being willing to die for a woman!
- 325 "Sad one, the Abbot for a long time said
"That you will bring hardship to your family.
"But because you have been an adequate student, he was willing
"To offer his blessing straight from his heart.
- 326 "Word will reach the Abbot that you have been stupid.
"In the dark, you walked and slept in the jungle.
"If we kill ourselves meaninglessly in the forest,
"The Abbot will be sick with regret and sorrow."
- 327 At that time, the danger of the nighttime ended.
In the clear morning light, they could see everything in the distance.
It was time to move and get out of there.
Walking away, they emerged from the forest and arrived at the road.
- 328 Tum and Pech had fled the forest and spotted a village.
When they neared some houses at the outskirts of the village,
They went closer to ask for rice and food.
When they finished eating as much as they wanted,
- 329 They left the people of the village and went on.
Passing along, they heard male

And female birds perched in the trees.
Tum, having something to say, addressed Pech,

- 330 “Brother, look at the birds’ erratic flight.
“The brown owl timidly flies, testing new wings from out of the trees.
“The dove flies to its nest in the bamboo stand.
“The *popoch* swoop out of the *popoul* tree,
- 331 “And the parrot cries.” Tum could not stop worrying
About Teav, his beloved, with whom he was not yet united,
And to whom he had not yet returned. Was Miss. Teav still
Willing to wait for him?
- 332 Like an enraged lunatic, Tum pressed on.
Though anguished by the journey, he surged ahead
To reach Teav to find out whether she missed him
With all her heart or not.
- 333 Continuing on in the same direction, they arrived
At an area where the main road was very near.
Seeing some children, they called to them, but they did not reply.
They urged them adamantly to speak.
- 334 The children were all friends,
And their bodies smelled of water buffalo dung.
Tum and Pech said, “You there!
“You don’t need to be afraid of anything at all!
- 335 “We want to hire you for money.
“We won’t leave anyone out.
“Let’s get all of you to prepare yourselves.
“Now, children! When I ask you something you should tell me the answer!”
- 336 The children finally opened their mouths and said, “What do you want to
ask?
“If you want to know something, you had better keep your word
“Clearly and follow through on your promise.
“We’re frightened by the sound of your voice.”
- 337 Tum and Pech stepped forward
And said, “Boys, are we going in the right direction
“To go to the house of the good and kind Miss. Teav?”
“It’s very far!” the boys answered. “But if you hurry you can get there
before long.”
- 338 “Does Miss. Teav have a husband already or no?” Tum asked the boys.
“Tell me directly, just as you know.
“Tell me everything honestly according to your side

“Or is she still single and unattached?”

- 339 The children replied clearly,
 “Miss. Teav’s house, if you keep to the populated areas,
 “Is only as far as the amount of time it will take the sun
 “To fall past its zenith. By then you will arrive.”
- 340 “She has only a widowed mother who is pretty.
 “And she has a servant who is devoted to her.
 “The servant is a religious person who wants do the right thing.
 “She is even tempered and believes in following through on whatever she
 does.
- 341 “She treats Teav as a child and gives her free time,
 “While she waits for her at home. She has lived there
 “As Teav’s nanny free of resentment.
 “She is happy and has no faults.
- 342 “We have told you the real situation.
 “There are family far and wide or close friends,
 “Who could tell you and let you know this as well.
 “Our desire is to be clear and not disappoint you.”
- 343 Tum spoke to the children playfully,
 “Ah, you boys! We came here to pray
 “To the gods that Teav will know the medicine for infertility
 “Gray hair, sprained bones, hernias, blistered skin and blenorrhea!”
- 344 As soon as Tum and Pech had spoke,
 The children scattered
 And rushed back to the village. Tum and Pech thought a moment,
 Then Tum said, “Which way Pech to Teav’s house?”
- 345 “Don’t worry, Pech answered,
 “And don’t rush things. Be wary of other people.
 “They will be angry and blame Teav’s family because they will guess
 “We are looking for the house where Miss. Teav stays.
- 346 “Since we are here, let’s go to our adopted mother.
 “She will explain the way things work here.
 “Surely, she will remember
 “Our happy faces from the last time we met and needed help.”
- 347 After talking together, Tum and Pech forged ahead.
 They came upon a soldier, and Tum veered to avoid him.
 He didn’t dare ask him anything, afraid he might give them a hard time.
 Thinking it over, Tum turned around thinking he knew him, though he
 wasn’t sure.

- 348 Then Tum raised his hands in greeting to ask,
 "Please excuse me, sir.
 "One of those houses is my adopted mother's. It cannot hide from me.
 "I used to depend on staying there."
- 349 As soon as Tum had finished, the soldier replied,
 "That's right, go down the road,
 "The small path traversed by the fence,
 "Until you get to the house. It will be truly clear to you!"
- 350 Pech and Tum bid farewell. Arriving,
 They recognized the house definitely. It was not long at all
 Before they called out and their adopted mother happily replied,
 "Oh, children! You've been gone so long. Seldom do you come here!"
- 351 Tum and Pech, happy to see her, bustled up to the house.
 Raising their hands in salute, they bowed together.
 The woman who was their adopted mother sat close to them
 And asked them many questions.
- 352 When she asked about their parents in the village,
 Tum said, "Mother looks ahead but doesn't dare to hate me."
 Then their adopted mother spoke as though she were choking,
 "So you begin by coming to double check the situation here?"
- 353 Tum answered saying, "I ask you respectfully
 "To be quiet until I explain everything to you.
 "I ask of you, mother,
 "Not to feel anxious as I speak.
- 354 "The lying and concealing of truth,
 "Which up to now I have relied upon, has been because of Miss. Teav.
 "She promised her love and offered as evidence
 "A container of tobacco leaves wrapped in a *pha-hom*."

Part 4 (355-391)

Teav's Arranged Marriage to the Governor's Son

(The arranged marriage between Teav and the Governor's son;
 Teav's unwillingness to cooperate; her mother's anger at her refusal
 to marry into wealth and status)

- 355 We will stop and digress from
 The story of Pech and Tum and go to Tbong Khmom
 And talk about the endeavors of Orh-Chhuon,

Who is meeting with his wife.

- 356 He says to her, "Hey, wife! Our son who is so special to us,
 "We must guard him because I have rank.
 "There are wealthy children
 "Among the elite who line up in great numbers to meet him.
- 357 "I have heard all the people clearly
 "Speaking outright and with a kind of certainty,
 "Spreading gossip that there is someone of suitable rank for our son.
 "The child's appearance is as attractive as our Nguon as well.
- 358 "That girl has a widowed mother only,
 "But all the possessions she desires.
 "She actually has a servant to wash her feet.
 "Her complete attributes will last until she is old!"
- 359 His wife listened attentively to him.
 She believed that the girl's suitability was not yet clear.
 She addressed her husband saying, "Sir,
 "I detect bad intentions.
- 360 "We must think before arranging our son's marriage with someone's child.
 "A girl or a river, by having a body,
 "Has greedy intentions. We must think before giving Moeurn Nguon
 "To spend all the years, months and days of his life with her."
- 361 Orh-Chhuon reflected as he listened to
 His wife express her suspicions.
 Then he said, "Dear wife,
 "I have heard from people
- 362 "And others
 "Who come to meet with me
 "That there is nothing but praise for Teav's beauty
 "In the countryside.
- 363 "If our dear child is enamored with this girl,
 "We should empathize with our beloved son.
 "In that case, it would be appropriate for us to plan the breads, sweets
 "And various foods like fish and meats that we will need.
- 364 "Then identify someone who is clearly knowledgeable
 "And truly has knowledge of philosophy,
 "Who puts things cleverly, and is used to negotiating
 "Persistently and skillfully and knows how to be eloquent.
- 365 "He must be able to explain things to the girl's side

“And acting as our go-between follow tradition

“To inform the mother

“Of Miss. Teav and relate whatever conditions they may have.”

- 366 The wife of Orh-Chhuon undertook the matter of gifts immediately,
Gathering them together quickly as in a single motion.
She took all the foodstuffs and wrapped them to keep fresh.
When she had prepared the gifts completely, she sent them on their way.
- 367 The go-between and his helpers departed over-loaded with gifts down the
road.
Despite serious efforts to keep straight, they twisted and turned
As they tried to speed up, beating the oxen across the hills and plains,
Forests and jungle while trying to keep an eye on where they were going.
- 368 Looking ahead,
They saw someone who clearly was Teav’s mother. Without a doubt,
These were not ordinary people. When
They had come close enough for Teav’s mother to know who they were,
- 369 She scurried down from the house
And spoke as would befit an in-law,
Saying, “Sirs, welcome! Come in!
“Do you intend to travel far?
- 370 “Or is it that you come looking for me?
“Please, would you kindly explain.
“Let me know your business. Explain everything
“Clearly and don’t keep anything back.”
- 371 Everyone had reached the house.
Teav’s mother, very happy, had just arranged a wooden tray.
Bread was put on a copper serving table and quickly brought in.
The visitors climbed the stairs to the house, raised joined hands in greeting
- 372 And said, “We come in good faith
“To perform our responsibilities as best we can.
“If we act improperly, we respectfully apologize.
“If we seem proud or rude in any way, please forgive us.
- 373 “For the Governor together with his wife
“All two, all three, have given word
“To instruct us to deliver these gifts
“In the hope of securing your sympathies.
- 374 “They form a kind of road or bridge across which to step quickly.
“We politely inquire, Madame, what would you say
“To this offer to engage your child? For it would be of great moment

"If your daughter were to exchange vows with Moeurn Nguon, the Governor's son."

- 375 Teav's widowed mother listened,
Quite taken by the offer. Enthralled,
She managed to say, "How flattering!
"Sir, by all rights, she is a treasure!
- 376 "I do my best every day, but it is difficult still.
"They come in droves. It seems relentless.
"But, I must say, my child is busy!
"Even relatives want to come for her hand, many at a time!
- 377 "I don't know yet if it's appropriate that relations
"Proceed with the Governor
"Because we are commoners. We should restrain ourselves.
"It is quite unexpected, to have been called upon by a member of the elite.
- 378 "His Excellency, Orh-Chhuon, is too important!
"Usually, beneath the sky everything is lower than a mountain.
"Those who have power don't ask.
"They simply cut, stab and beat someone without mercy.
- 379 "It's only right that I inform our relatives before making any decisions.
"Go offer my respects to the Governor and his wife,
"And tell them that before we form relations,
"It is necessary that I consult my daughter."
- 380 The go-between remembered everything Teav's mother said.
Then she lifted the foodstuffs that were the gifts
And presented them to her. After, she bowed her body
Respectfully and raised her hands in salute.
- 381 The entourage started back to the Governor's residence.
Everyone bid goodbye to Teav's mother
And set off to inform Orh-Chhuon and his wife of what had happened,
Committing everything to memory exactly.
- 382 Afterwards, as for
Teav's mother, she rushed around overjoyed.
Seeing the breads and foodstuffs set on the table in trays,
She quickly put them away for safe keeping.
- 383 Then she addressed her child. "My dear,
"We should be happy!" she said, her face aglow.
"I am giving you in marriage to the Governor's son,
"So we can have the happiness that rank and wealth afford!

- 384 “We will have daunting power! We will have status!
“Accordingly, your rank will rise!
“I am talking to you! Don’t be proud
“And impudent! Show that you value your mother!”
- 385 As Teav heard her mother tell her to remember her place,
She became utterly afraid.
Then, having something to say, she said, “Oh, mother!
“I, who am your child, regret these gifts of rice and food.
- 386 “If you want to make an arrangement with them,
“Offer one of your children who is free. You have other boys and girls
“To offer to them. Whether you choose number two or three,
“It’s up to you to give them in marriage. Why must it be me?”
- 387 Teav’s mother listened to Teav’s stubborn refusal.
“It’s not wrong at all that I dare answer, ‘Mother, don’t!’
“You should arrange your child’s marriage with her interests in mind.
“When you see a powerful person, you offer me without my consent!”
- 388 The mother waited to hear Teav speak, then responded
Telling her, “Oh, Teav! You should calm down
“And control your emotions. You are not looking ahead.
“Calm down first. Don’t argue me into a corner.
- 389 “Be careful you don’t destroy everything with your recklessness.
“A chicken’s egg will come to have worries
“As it rolls straight for a stone and breaks into a million pieces.
“If you persist in cornering me, you will push me over the edge!
- 390 “In our tradition, you would be compared to
“The child who doesn’t listen and is obstinate.
“They take this kind of person to show
“How those who are stubborn and difficult become outcasts.
- 391 “It never happens Teav that the cake
“Can be bigger than the mold.
“The baby water buffalo that refuses to follow its mother through the jungle
“When it is on fire will surely meet its death.”

Part 5 (392-442)

The Consummation of Tum and Teav’s Love

(Tum’s seduction of Teav; Tum’s stay at Teav’s house at her mother’s invitation)

- 392 So ends this digression to depict
Teav's mother's outbursts. To continue,
We will speak of Tum who remains
Utterly grief-stricken.
- 393 For comparison, here is an example of Tum's feelings.
When he met with Pech, who was now completely recovered,
He said, "Brother Pech, we have come
"To stay here many days. My endurance
- 394 "Is almost broken. My insides are scattered in pieces.
"My sorrow is due to leaving Miss. Teav for so long.
"I've yet to meet with my sweetheart.
"Here, a moment is like being separated many days.
- 395 "Pech, let me go or let me die!
"How many more nights must I be without her, Pech!
"Don't delay any longer!
"Answer! Try to understand!
- 396 "If I don't have Teav,
"It will be the end of me!
"When I see her in my dreams,
"I cannot think of anything else!
- 397 "I dedicate myself completely to my precious!
"The limits of my body are like a hare
"That has taken shelter in a thicket high and far.
"Falling, it scatters its cares away."
- 398 Pech listened to Tum. Approaching him,
He replied, "Now, brother Tum, I agree you should go.
"But you must be careful. I fear that along the road
"There are enemies devising tricks to end your life.
- 399 "Don't worry yourself about her too much. Women speak in riddles.
"One type can be fickle.
"They say, 'We want to be your wife,'
"Then they become uninterested and you die meaninglessly.
- 400 Tum listened to Pech's words of advice
And said, "Yes, this is wise.
"But, brother, don't think that she is like any other girl.
"I am willing to die for her.
- 401 "Miss. Teav is absolutely good, and I love her.
"Her heart is joined with mine. She even dared to engage me
"With the *pha-hom* and send a message proposing our union.

"We fell in love because Teav is devoted to me."

- 402 When Pech and Tum finished talking,
Tum said goodbye to Pech and left. Wanting to meet Teav badly,
He asked himself, "Oh, dearest sweetheart so fine!
"Have you forgotten me already or do you still await my return?"
- 403 Thinking thus, Tum walked on by himself.
He began to feel sad and alone halfway down the road.
Melancholy thoughts pursued him,
As he walked closer and closer to Teav's house.
- 404 At that time, Teav's mother was not at home.
She had gone walking long before.
Tum arrived and stopped in front of the house and stood there weary of
going further.
Teav, seeing someone, said, "Sister Nor..."
- 405 "Sister, go and tell that person to let himself be seen clearly.
"I am afraid he has a problem. What did he come here for?"
Nor heard Teav tell her this and went out quickly.
"You there! What do you want? Please come closer, so we can see you."
- 406 Tum had been listening to their conversation out of view.
Upon hearing Nor call him directly, Tum got up
And approached the house. Then Nor, wondering,
Asked, "What business brought you here?"
- 407 Tum listened to Nor's question.
Tum replied in a way that was familiar,
"I have come looking for Teav, Miss,
"Because Miss. Teav promised herself to me."
- 408 Nor answered, "Sir, this is very strange!
"You are quite mixed up in the head!"
Then Tum said, "Mixed up about what? Don't be so suspicious.
"You have seen me chant for everyone to hear.
- 409 "Now you act as though you don't recognize me!
"But I have proof right here in my hand.
"Teav wished me to have this scarf and container.
"She wanted me to disrobe quickly and told me not to be long in
returning."
- 410 Teav, hearing Tum's words spoken that way,
Got goose bumps and felt butterflies in her stomach that didn't subside.
She opened the door and came outside saying, "Dear sir!
"You even dared to bring the scarf as evidence!"

- 411 "Who told you that stuff about the scarf?
 "Did they have you come here to make us worried?"
 Tum said, "Since I have the scarf from your hand directly,
 "What I said should not make you surprised. It's your own doing."
- 412 Teav said, "Who would have the gumption
 "To be so in awe of the words he dares to speak?
 "You may as well turn back home and quickly!
 "Don't stay and do anything that is unbecoming!"
- 413 Tum said, "What kind of person would be so easily fooled
 "Into going back and what's more allow himself to become separated
 "Before having his sweetheart? Don't wave me away.
 "Let's join together as one, not be broken apart."
- 414 Teav said, "You compare me to a flower,
 "While you are like a bumble bee
 "That flies around and spotting the flower enters straight away.
 "Afterwards, it doesn't delay and is soon on its way again."
- 415 Tum said, "I am like the lion king,
 "While Miss. Teav is like a large cave.
 "If the lion king has a place to live,
 "He will never allow himself to leave."
- 416 Teav said, "I am like a dock,
 "While you, so charming, are like a boat.
 "You are quick to park a while, precious one,
 "Then hurry away without a second thought."
- 417 Tum said, "Oh, I am like a large fish,
 "While you, young Teav, are like a river.
 "The fish that has deep water swims leisurely from side to side.
 "Don't, dear! Don't reject me or be suspicious."
- 418 Teav said, "I am like a tree,
 "While you are like a *sarika* bird that perches there every day.
 "You stop to perch and take shelter,
 "Then fly off at great speed to go to some other place."
- 419 Tum said, "I am like a tiger,
 "While you, dear, are like the jungle.
 "Usually a tiger doesn't turn away quickly.
 "He avoids leaving behind his precious forest."
- 420 "I am like tree trunk used as a hive,
 "While you, handsome sir, are like the bees
 "That come there to live then fly off one day,

"Leaving the tree trunk defiled and useless."

- 421 Tum said, "I am like an elephant,
"While you, young lady, are like sugar cane.
"Once the elephant tastes the sweetness, he never goes
"Far from the sugar cane, dear!"
- 422 Teav said, "Oh, dear sir!
"Who would not be suspicious
"Of the words of a man trying to show off his intelligence?
"So don't tell me not to be suspicious."
- 423 As Teav spoke wisely,
Tum had no fear at all. He grabbed Teav's hand
And kissed her saying, "Oh, my dear,
"Do you still doubt me? Do you still not believe how I feel?"
- 424 Teav was furious that Tum should be so disrespectful
As to grab her hand and harass her without consideration.
"Think of it! You should be ashamed of yourself! How could I
"Admire someone who would dare to barge in here this way?
- 425 "How dare you come here and kiss my cheek and even touch my breast!
"Someone who is not afraid of anything doesn't please me!"
Tum said, "I'm sorry if I was wrong! Please let me, my dear,
"Love you forever and ever!"
- 426 Miss. Nor, Teav's nanny, seeing the situation,
Left quickly without a word,
Afraid Teav would be embarrassed by her presence.
Teav was ready to give her love to Tum.
- 427 Tum hugged Teav in his arms playfully.
Neither of them was afraid to consummate their love.
Inside a comfortable house like that
The young woman became easily aroused with passion.
- 428 Teav willingly let Tum come close to her.
Tum, impassioned, kissed Teav's face.
They told each other that
They would exchange spit-up areca. Then Teav said,
- 429 "Dearest, I am afraid that you
"Have put all your love in this embrace,
"And that afterwards you will leave and abandon me!
"My dear, have pity on me!"
- 430 Tum kissed and comforted his precious sweetheart,

Saying, "Oh, my dear, love of my life,
 "I will not let go of your hand, my sweet.
 "I give myself to you for my entire life,

- 431 "Because you have merit as big as Mount
 "Meru, enormous, overshadowing the continent,
 "While I am short like an imitation necklace,
 "The life of someone sent to serve King Rea-mea."
- 432 Teav said, "I am like a star,
 "While you, dear love, are like the moon.
 "The star shines in the sky,
 "Accompanying the moon and never parting."
- 433 "Oh, Tum! Night has fallen.
 "May our love-making continue until midnight.
 "Wish that we will be together in every life,
 "Never to part, never to stray from each other from now on."
- 434 They heard the voice of Teav's mother
 Who had just come back home from the temple ceremony.
 Didn't Teav know enough
 To get Tum outside at once?
- 435 Teav's mother had given Nor to understand full well
 That Teav was in the shade and should have no mark on her reputation.
 Teav's mother arrived at the house as planned.
 The male and female servants arrived with her as well.
- 436 Teav's mother saw Tum. She went up to him and asked,
 "Sir, where are you coming from? Your appearance here makes me
 wonder."
 Tum said, "I came from far away.
 "I just arrived yesterday."
- 437 Teav's mother questioned Tum further, wanting to know his plans.
 "How many days before you return?"
 Tum said, "I came here looking to buy
 "Things for water buffalo and horses. To avoid bothering anyone,
- 438 "Since we came from far away together, the two of us
 "Have been staying at the residence,
 "The house of someone we have known for a while.
 "Previously, I chanted for her."
- 439 Teav's mother knew clearly what to do. As though it were no imposition
 at all,
 She requested Tum to stay at her house. Then she called Teav to tell

Her that she would stay downstairs for however long or short a time necessary.

Tum's appearance was already one of being pleased and not afraid.

440 Teav's mother then prepared a mat and pillow.
After completing the preparations, she went to tell
Her daughter where she would sleep.
"We must make a place for the Venerable."

441 During that time, when the handsome Tum
Was with Teav, they made love
With hearts full of passion.
For many days, they kept their love a secret.

442 Tum forgot about his home and didn't think of
Pech. The two lovers
Were not bothered by evil thoughts.
They were perfectly content to be alone together.

Part 6 (443-446)

The Governor's Son's Courtship of Teav

(Moeurn Nguon's courtship of Teav; Teav's silence)

443 Later on, word arrived from Moeurn Nguon,
The son of Orh-Chhuon, that he had gold and silver
To bring to gain favor with the adorable Teav.
He assumed Teav had been loyal to him.

444 He didn't know about Teav's mother's strategy. She made it appear
That Teav had love for him. Moeurn Nguon
Was so impressed with her he said, "Sweetheart,
"You are the best in the world!"

445 "If you agree in your heart,
"I will take care of you as husband and wife.
"Don't let there be any others.
"I alone will take care of you, my dear."

446 Moeurn Nguon came and went not daring to Miss. a day.
Teav's mother treated him as one who is loved greatly.
Miss. Teav did not act reluctant or doubtful.
She stifled herself and didn't speak.

Part 7 (447-531)

Tum's Summoning by the King and Separation from Teav

(Tum and Pech's recruitment into the Royal Orchestra by King Rea-mea; Tum's separation from Teav; Tum and Pech's journey to inform their families and the Abbot of the King's demand; Teav's sadness; Tum and Pech's sad journey down river to the King's Palace; Tum's title of "Moeurn Ek")

- 447 Having come this far,
We will stop to digress briefly
And describe the King
Who dwelled in the royal city.
- 448 The King who lived in the Cambodian capital
Was named King Rea-mea. His power was tremendous,
And nearly all the people were safe and content.
The capital where the King lived was the citadel of Lovek.
- 449 There was a wall surrounding the royal Palace
That was beautifully decorated and very tall.
There were official quarters to house the dancers
That were especially wonderful, like being in heaven.
- 450 The King had a royal queen
Who was attractive, adorable and virtuous.
She had every attribute and inestimable grace,
And didn't have any kind of disease.
- 451 The entire Royal Court,
As well as the army generals,
Were at the King's service
And dependent upon King Rea-mea.
- 452 There were the royal stables for the King's swift horses
And beautiful carriages under the direction of the elephant keeper.
There were countless items for amusement
And practically every valuable available for making religious offerings.
- 453 At that time, Tum's reputation
In the district of Tbong Khmom as an intelligent young man was spreading.
It was said he knew how to combine singing with stories of all kinds.
In that part of the world, no one could compare to him.
- 454 In addition, there was Pech,
Who was accomplished at playing entertaining music.
After hearing of the reputations of the two young men,

The King wanted to meet them.

- 455 He commanded to have
Tum and Pech brought before him.
He dispatched a royal servant with the order,
Stating his wish and that it be executed quickly.
- 456 The servant bowed respectfully.
After receiving the command, he turned on his heels
And rushed to his destination.
Finding Orh-Chhuon, he relayed the King's demand.
- 457 Orh-Chhuon received the message with a nod,
Then dispatched the servant to depart quickly
And get Pech and Tum without delay,
As the King had ordered.
- 458 When Tum and Pech were brought to the Governor's residence,
They approached Orh-Chhuon and saluted.
Orh-Chhuon told them that the King
Had ordered that they deliver themselves before him.
- 459 Pech and Tum saluted without argument,
Saying, "We will do our best to leave tomorrow.
"But we need time to get our personal belongings together.
"Governor, please understand and show pity."
- 460 The servant of the King said, "We sympathize with you.
"Handle this as you like. We won't say anything.
"But you must be quick and make haste,
"Because the King demands your presence as soon as possible."
- 461 At that time, Tum and Pech
Knew the situation clearly. They turned to leave
And bid goodbye to Orh-Chhuon, then returned to Teav's house
To tell all that had occurred to Miss. Teav.
- 462 "Oh, Teav! Because there has been a royal command
"Right from the King himself
"Ordering me to present myself before him immediately,
"I ask to leave you, my dear."
- 463 Teav answered, "Oh, my dear,
"My sorrow is endless. I am devastated.
"I cannot bear it.
"The implacable sadness inside me does not relent."
- 464 Tum said, "Oh, my dear sweetheart.

"Every day I have held you in my arms.
 "Starting tomorrow, we will be separated from each other.
 "Oh, Teav, don't worry."

- 465 Teav said, "Oh, my sorrow is so strong!
 "It doesn't have an outlet to go anywhere.
 "I am being separated from the love of my life!"
 Teav tried to grab some items to prepare a keepsake.
- 466 She took a cloth and betel leaves rolled into cigarettes
 And packed them into a new box and gave it to Tum.
 She kept reminding Tum, "Dear,
 "After you get there, prepare to return as soon as possible.
- 467 "Come back to get me, dear.
 "I'll be here withering away to nothing."
 Tum held her in his arms and kissed her face.
 He clung to Teav, his beloved.
- 468 When the day dawned clearly,
 Tum and Pech adorned and dressed themselves then went straight to
 The servant of the King, honest and true.
 Before the two young men started off,
- 469 Tum thought to address the King's servant.
 "At this point, I ask you, sir,
 "To escort me to Ba Phnom, so I may inform my mother
 "As well as the Abbot and my relatives of the King's command."
- 470 The servant listened, then without pause
 Said, "I can escort you as you wish
 "To let you bid goodbye to your mother and relatives.
 "That way your absence will not worry them."
- 471 They began to traverse the jungle of Tbong Khmom district,
 Listening to the birds in flight call as they returned to their nesting places.
 Hearing a male and a female, two together, crying sadly,
 Tum imagined that it was like Teav in his embrace.
- 472 Tum said, "Oh, Teav, my beloved,
 "Today you and I are separated truly.
 "We cannot meet, my beloved.
 "It is indeed as though my darling is orphaned."
- 473 Walking didn't relieve his sadness, and Tum become stiff and tight.
 Taking in the sights along the road,
 Tum recited the names of the various trees
 Growing on the sides of the road in long rows.

- 474 Tum saw that there were palm, fig, *songkei, tgnanh,*
Treal, trah, kravank, khoy, sraukhum,
Sraulei, sraulau, krbau, ktaum,
Traunom, ahaot, changva, tmat,
- 475 *Dongkau, trayong, ktung, krasang,*
Ompel, phlong, phlaeng, as well as phlubat,
Litchi, durien, mien, lang, sat,
Meakbat, bongkhau, phnau, chan, chaa,
- 476 *Trabek, trausake, ombieng-tgnei,*
Angkhrong, smach, smei, roke, roka,
Krauch, kraay, svat, svay, trach, treal, svaa,
Saeda, sandan, tgnanh, chrei, chrey.
- 477 There were also *dak-pheay, whay, dak-po,*
Songkho, pongrak, rang, smei,
Phnom-phneing, chkei-sreing, loet, lang, dei
Santei, kraukop, ngop, krahlañ,
- 478 *Chaurameas, bhos, neak, chaurakeig-thuy,*
Praupaenñ, khoe muy chhur, theal, traiñ,
Reach chhpheh, thmenh Trey, wey, añchieñ,
Akeñ, angkoal, kandoal-bhat,
- 479 *Trach, treak, chongreak, chras, khteng, ktom,*
Khokhei, rang, phnom, beng, bhay-mat,
Sdok-sdoe, sdei, sdoev, trav, kduoch, kdat,
Leang, sat, sau, tbah, kah, sral.
- 480 Tum walked in the forest looking around at the animals.
 There was only sadness and longing in his heart.
 Thoughts raced through his mind.
 He thought of Miss. Teav constantly.
- 481 Tum glimpsed a rose out of the corner of his eye.
 He praised it saying, "Oh, dear flower!
 "Flower that grows so near to me!
 "Your fragrance comes to me and the smell is so fresh.
- 482 "Fragrance of the *komphleng* flower,
 "Like me beside sweet Teav!
 "Fragrance of the *champeí's* rose flower,
 "Like me beside pure Miss. Teav.
- 483 "*Champa* tree, which I've just happened to meet,
 "Now I am separated from dearest Teav!
 "*Romdol* plant, a great sorrow passes over me.

"My heart misses my precious sweetheart.

- 484 "Oh! The fragrance of the *kravanh* flower,
 "Like the scent of Teav, so real and close to me!
 "All of these new fragrances... the scent of flowers...
 "Cling to the fringe of the *pha-hom* tied around my waist!
- 485 "Walking along long fields, *trieng* grass sprouts everywhere.
 "The setting sun moves across the sky.
 "In the corner of my eye, I see the overcast sky and scudding clouds,
 "Like my shifty flight from Teav, they come.
- 486 "The bumble bee that swirls around the *kraulaing* flower
 "Is like my body moving from place to place looking for your love.
 "The *popoch* and the *popoul* birds fly into their nests,
 "Just as I came to seduce you.
- 487 "The *kro-ling kro-lorng* and the *khraulieng-wake* birds
 "Desert their mates in the flock,
 "Like I deserted the precious and beautiful Teav,
 "To come over here by myself.
- 488 "Oh, how I pity the *tavav* bird
 "Calling in the deep forest in every language.
 "It is like the voice of the tender and beautiful Teav,
 "Coming in reply... I imagine.
- 489 "The *trayong* bird calls in answer to her mate,
 "Who has sped away deserting her,
 "Like I deserted precious Teav.
 "For many days I have been unhappy. My sorrow is unrelenting.
- 490 "I hear a plaintive crying sound.
 "A wild hen is trying to answer her mate.
 "I think of Teav again!
 "Oh, Teav! It's as though you were orphaned!"
- 491 They walked along the jungle, bypassing the dense areas.
Tor-tae birds flew towards their nests in formation.
 The flock flew, turning this way and that.
 A parrot led his mate cautiously to their nest.
- 492 The *sarika* bird called looking for his mate happily.
 They flew far away as he led her to eat the fruit of the *srahkhum* tree.
 All the animals bustled in the jungle mountains,
 Coming and going, calling back and forth, *mai! mai!*
- 493 We speak now about Tum and Pech,

How they sped on, traveling both night and day,
Until reaching the district village of Tuk Ahlay,
And how Tum met his beloved mother and conversed with her.

- 494 Tum explained the situation to his mother.
"I have a job. The King has sent for
"Me and Pech, my beloved brother.
"He has decreed that we go to the Palace
- 495 "To be singers to entertain the Royal Court.
"For this reason, mother, please prepare yourself.
"Don't worry. Don't despair, Don't let it bother you.
"The King knows what's best in this world."
- 496 Tum's mother listened to what
Her son told her. "I'm pleased, my dear.
"If you go, take care of yourself.
"Be sure your respect for the King is made clear.
- 497 "Don't you be neglectful or absent-minded.
"Don't look for Vietnamese women to flirt with.
"Be careful not to squander your money on gambling.
"Make good use of the situation there."
- 498 Tum bowed and saluted
Goodbye to his mother. Quickly, Tum and Pech
Went to the temple to pay respect
To the Abbot and inform him of their journey.
- 499 Both of them bowed before the Abbot.
Their teacher honestly and calmly
Questioned them. He wanted to know their plans,
And Tum responded straightforwardly.
- 500 "The King sent his servant to come for us," Tum said.
"After he arrived, he selected us to be singers.
"We are to go and be the personal servants of the King."
The abbot carefully listened. He was clearly attentive.
- 501 He said, "So, you are going to serve the King.
"Night and day, be careful of yourselves. Don't get into trouble.
"Don't you fall in love with the girls.
"Watch out that the palace ministers don't accuse you of wrongdoing."
- 502 "When you have an audience with the King, be careful that your bodies
"Are positioned away from the King.
"Don't enter when it is quiet. Watch yourselves.
"Serve the Monarch well.

- 503 “Don’t challenge the King’s authority.
 “Fear His awesome power.
 “As for the Queen, don’t go near her.
 “You will lose your lives because she is a woman.”
- 504 Pech and Tum listened to the abbot’s advice.
 They bowed with hands joined.
 They bid goodbye to their teacher and started off.
 They departed quickly remembering his words.
- 505 The entire royal delegation accompanied
 Tum and Pech as they prepared for the journey.
 They walked directly to the docks and waited for the boats because
 Of the King’s orders to make haste.
- 506 They boarded the boats and rowed down the river.
 Tum contemplated and scanned the surroundings.
 As the sun set behind the forest,
 Tum thought in silence and in pain.
- 507 From Tum’s journey we digress
 To talk of the lovely Teav.
 Since the time Tum separated from her,
 Teav became depressed and ill at ease.
- 508 She didn’t think of eating rice or drinking.
 The pork, chicken and duck meat that filled her plate
 Were left untouched as she could not eat.
 Worried and unhappy, she endured her sorrow.
- 509 Teav said, “Oh, love of my life!
 “I was used to your love and our being together.
 “Now, separated from my husband,
 “My heart withers away without cease.
- 510 Miss. Nor tried to comfort Teav saying,
 “Don’t feel so downcast, my dear.
 “Sooner or later you will surely meet again. He would never abandon you.
 “Oh, Teav, stop tormenting yourself.”
- 511 Teav listened to Nor tell her all of these things,
 And her sorrow abated quickly, and she was able to relax.
 Nor led Miss. Teav directly to her bedroom
 And put her to sleep on her bed.
- 512 Such is the situation of Teav regarding Tum.
 Let us now continue with Tum who is despondently
 Rowing the boat quickly along the river.

He is observing the fish swim just breaking the surface of the water.

- 513 “The *rah*, *chhtau*, *kahoe* and *reachrehoe*.
 “The *phruah*, *phra*, *tihoe-phroy*, *konlong*.
 “The *domrei*, *kahet*, *kahei* and *russei*.
 “The *changva-phleang* glimmering swiftly swimming.”
- 514 “The *sanday*, *kroh*, *kray*, *chpin* and *chaurakeing*.
 “The *pthok*, *krañ* and *andeing* are numerous and profuse.
 “Along the tributaries from Kompot province, dolphins and rays
 “Jump and dive in the river.”
- 515 “The *chlouñ* and *chlat* fish aggressively weave beside
 “The *chaurakeing*, *keis*, *kei*, *khrom*, and *khochrea*.
 “*Plah-mah-pha-mhu-bhul* water sounds swish in and out
 “From a cave where the fish gather swimming in schools.”
- 516 “Water lilies grow close to the *trakiet* plant.
 “The *traukuon* plant growing alongside is like my body,
 “While the *traukiet* plant growing next to it is like dear Teav.
 “The *traukuon*, like me, holds her in his embrace.”
- 517 “The *praulong* fish nibbles a *praulit* flower. It tugs at the flower
 “In the same way I tease Teav.
 “Now I abandon her swiftly.
 “Enough! Surely she awaits my return!”
- 518 We will quickly move on
 Without going into further detail.
 Let’s talk of the time they rowed rapidly until reaching their destination.
 They immediately docked the boats at Kampong Luong.
- 519 Disembarking they glimpsed all the merchandise for sale at the port.
 Squatting, selling and buying colorful silk sarongs,
 Were every race and Khmer ethnic group.
 Then, in front of the palace, they were quickly escorted
- 520 To go to the foot of the staircase of the King’s residence.
 The servant brought them to greet the palace ministers,
 Then he led Tum and Pech without delay
 To His Royal Highness King Rea-mea.
- 521 Oh, what a scene! At that time the noble
 King expressed His royal desire
 That all members of the court ensemble
 Make ready for Tum to sing.
- 522 When the ensemble finished preparing everything,

They presented themselves to the King in perfect order.
The King arranged for his concubines and their attendants
To sit around him in order of rank.

- 523 Pech and Tum joined their hands
And raised them above their heads. One of them reached to grab
A guitar and started to play.
Tum chanted in the form of a dialog.
- 524 "The noble King is endowed with power,
"Ascetic restraint and virtues which have no equivalent.
"It has been the expressed wish
"Of our Master to have us brought before him.
- 525 "Being a singer of songs of a sort,
"I ask His Majesty's forgiveness
"Whenever I perform incorrectly, distastefully or
"Improperly. It is because of a group of people from
- 526 "The countryside in Tbong Khmom district
"Who enter into my thoughts often, Sir, making me stupid.
"May His Majesty pity my immaturity,
"For I am young and afraid of addressing His Majesty"
- 527 "And not showing sufficient respect for His Majesty's authority.
"I ask Your Majesty to have pity on me.
"I am but a lowly commoner.
"May His Grace save me."
- 528 The King spoke kindly.
"Oh, Tum, it is well that you think
"And say that you are not of a noble family.
"If this were really true, you would not have gone so far
- 529 "From your country village. Tum, don't be afraid.
"Don't worry about anything. Now, you will stay here.
"I hereby bestow upon you a proper rank.
"Tum, from now on you will be called Moeurn Ek.
- 530 "Never will you be divested of your new status.
"Your King pities you greatly."
After many days, Tum could no longer endure his separation from Teav.
Tum worried about Teav being so far away from him.
- 531 Missing Teav again, Tum became forlorn.
With a heavy heart, he wished only
To be able to meet Miss. Teav who was the object of his love
And decided to ask the King to depart from the palace.

Part 8 (532-628)

Teav's Selection to be a Concubine and Reunion with Tum

(Teav's selection as a King's concubine; the reunion of Tum and Teav
at the King's Palace; the King's decision to marry Tum and Teav)

- 532 Oh, time! At that time the King,
Of great merit and royal birth, was relaxing.
He thought in his intelligent mind
To order a clear accounting of the potential concubines in the Kingdom.
- 533 "In the cities of Kampuchea throughout the land,
"In every province of the Kingdom,
"I want to arrange a search for any girl
"Who has the attributes to be a queen.
- 534 "Woman who are Chinese, Vietnamese or Cham, use your discretion.
"Don't say the order is from me, the King.
"Even if she is a Khmer peasant or farmer,
"You must act quickly without delay. Remember to fear the King!"
- 535 He decided at that time to end his speech.
The King gave the order
To have advisers called forth to transcribe the edict,
Stating that arrangements be made for the selection of a queen.
- 536 The Commander-in-Arms arranged things as necessary
And left to go to every province, one, two, three...
Servants brought the King's edict into the cities
Of the Cham, Chinese and Khmer local leaders.
- 537 Some went to Treang, a southern province,
To the villages of Kampong Som, Banteay Meas,
Bati and Prey Kabas until, stumbling
From exhaustion, they stopped the delegation of horses and elephants.
- 538 Then they mounted the horses and elephants and went to Samrong Tong
district,
Phnom Sruoch, Thpong district and Korng Pisei.
Pressing forward as fast as possible,
They also looked for women who were not practiced in meditation.
- 539 Returning to Bati and Prey Kabas,
They were happy to have completely returned.
They continued the search in Sa-ang province and Kandal Stung.
Without worry, they decided to cross the river quickly

- 540 And go to Lovek province and Rolea Pha-ea,
Before carefully proceeding to Khlong Krang province.
Some continued to Pursat and Battambang
Then crossed the Batrae River to Kampong Svay.
- 541 They crossed into Choeung Prey district,
Kampong Siem and soon arrived in Parayan
Some jumped from place to place,
Kien Svay, Lvea Em and Ta Ek harbor.
- 542 They went to Romduol province and entered Svay Teap,
Constantly reversing direction and going to Romeas Hek.
They went to search Peam Chor and came to Loeuk Dek,
Then split up upon reaching Srok Muk Kampoul.
- 543 Some searched along the mouth of the Tonle River,
But were not able to find any concubines. They decided to go
Before the King and truthfully tell him of the results of their search.
The delegations from far and near came together to inform the King.
- 544 When their report ended, they took leave of the King
And made for Ksach Kandal because they doubted the use of going to Ba
Phnom, Prey Veng or Tortoung Thgei,
Which were very poor and wouldn't have what they wanted.
- 545 Tracing the river they continued their search in Romeas district.
Afraid of losing their way, they decided to requisition a boat and crossed
the river.
They rowed fast until arriving at Stung Trang.
Disheartened, they decided to stop and rest.
- 546 Though discouraged, they forged ahead with their royal duties.
They brought the King's message to Chhlong district and Kan Chor.
Along the way, there were *krauch*, lemon trees and jackfruit.
Across the land, they moved forward stealthily and came to Suong Songkei.
- 547 When they arrived at the border of Tbong Khmom district,
Orh-Chhuon, who was the Governor, had Chinese, Khmer
And Cham-Malay women assembled on a strip of land along the rice
paddies.
The royal delegation paraded past the women, glancing around
without satisfaction.
- 548 Reaching a *bodhi* tree at the northern side of the town well,
They saw the people scurrying around trying to see above the crowd.
Each member of the royal delegation closely
Observed the women but were not satisfied with any one.

- 549 When the setting sun refreshed the air,
Teav, a girl of superior demeanor, appeared.
The delegates' faces lit up and their disappointment lifted
As they said to each other, "Dear friends, what complete goodness!
- 550 "We searched everywhere in the Kingdom.
"Nowhere has there been a woman so refreshingly beautiful!"
The entire delegation was struck
With a truly overwhelming and incomparable joy.
- 551 Leading each other, they looked slantwise at Teav's appearance saying,
"There is no one anywhere endowed with such virtue.
"She is well-suited to be the King's concubine.
"Such is the level of her youthful and charming looks."
- 552 The royal delegates of each group questioned
The villagers who, wanting to please, knelt down and raised their hands in salute.
They said, "Teav is truly good, dear masters.
"Currently, she has been given to the son of Orh-Chhuon."
- 553 The delegates snoop around and made opportunities to interrogate the townspeople.
"Now, tell us. Should it be considered definite,
"The marriage, or has it just been arranged?
"Don't be vague or hide anything from us!"
- 554 The townspeople were afraid. They raised their hands to respond saying,
"It is at the stage of chewing tobacco, sirs.
"What we have told you is the truth."
After listening to the townspeople respond, the delegates didn't doubt their honesty.
- 555 Then the delegates delivered the King's demand to Orh-Chhuon with dispatch,
Making haste through the night and day.
Arriving, they entered, and Orh-Chhuon bowed and raised his hands
In respect. He quickly
- 556 Went to Teav's mother and told her that
The command of the Great and Noble Monarch
Was to have Teav escorted without delay
To greet his August and Powerful Majesty.
- 557 Teav's mother heard the Royal Proclamation.
Bowing down she raised her hands in obeisance. She then decided
To tell the family members and make it understood exactly
That they must present their beloved Teav before the King.

- 558 Orh-Chhuon hurried to ready the wooden boats.
He presented the delegation with supplies.
One boat, the good Teav boarded.
Her blood relatives and friends came to send her off.
- 559 At that time, Teav's mother addressed the gathering
And all the elders saying, "Now
"Let us decorate Teav, our child, properly."
Afterwards, the boats embarked swiftly.
- 560 The soldiers stood at the ready along the shore.
Then they grabbed the oars quickly all together and embarked.
Some paddled the boats around. Others pushed off.
Teav said goodbye to her family as her boat was pushed away from shore.
- 561 Seated in the boat, Teav was unhappy. Her sorrow would not abate.
Teav said, "Dearest, Nor! Look at us now!
"Sister, help straighten out my thoughts.
"They are taking me to go serve the King!
- 562 "Sister, don't you pity my troubled heart?
"This heavy sadness follows me. It has no end.
"Could this be your younger sister's time to die?
"Oh, misery! Two sorrows fill my heart anew.
- 563 "One sorrow is my worry over the King
"Taking me to be his concubine to join in love.
"The other is my separation from Tum, my beloved.
"Why go on living? I would rather die!
- 564 "I was born as a human in this world.
"Given to the female race, I must endure misery.
"My beloved sweetheart is gone away!
"What heart could withstand such grief?"
- 565 Teav's mother rode the boat along with her.
The crowd that slowly followed them from the shore didn't know the
situation.
They assumed that Teav went willingly to the King.
With incomparable joy, they sent Teav off.
- 566 Teav on the other hand was sad and withdrawn.
She tried, but could not bear her sorrow and appear unafraid or stay
Calm by following the Middle Path.
Meanwhile, the boats sped forward on the current.
- 567 The birds floating on the surface were too many to count.
The wind swirled the clouds.

Taking off, the birds scattered here and there.
 Entering their nests, they blocked out the circle of the moon.

- 568 Teav said, "Oh, moon so dear.
 "Your color, like a crystal in the sky,
 "Is like my body taken from Tum. Separated,
 "Your light becomes cold.
- 569 "A multitude of stars gather around you,
 "Like me and Tum when we used to care for one another.
 "The stars follow their orbits,
 "Like my body accepting Tum, my beloved."
- 570 At four o'clock in the still of the night,
 The wind blew very cold.
 Teav missed Tum, and because of her longing,
 Imagined him reaching out his hands to hold her.
- 571 When the faint light of dawn quickened,
 Miss. Teav discerned schools of fish
 Rising to the surface in the clear water:
Changva, ptong, ptok, kok, trauche.
- 572 The docile *slat* fish tried its best to swim
 Among the *keo* fish as they crossed each other's paths.
 Crabs and snails in clusters followed the schools of fish.
 The *praulit* plants with their "duck wings" seemed to take off in the wake.
- 573 The boats rowed swiftly down the river.
 Once they had passed the province, they sped along easily.
 Teav thought constantly about Tum.
 Going with the wind, they soon reached Ko Koh Island.
- 574 Rowing fast, they kept a lookout for Chikong Harbor,
 Then turned towards Russei Srok Island.
 Poor Teav could only think of Tum.
 She was unhappy and frustrated within.
- 575 They paddled to Potikong Traunung River,
 Roka Kaong then to Lvea Tae.
 Teav was quiet, thinking
 And wondering incessantly about Tum.
- 576 They reached the Dombang River, Metrei Point,
 The villages of Sla Torei and Moan Dap.
 They passed Ta Ek Port and the Prasap River,
 Then stopped rowing at Khsach Kandal Island.

- 577 Teav was unhappy and drained.
She missed Tum very much and the love they knew.
Those who are quickly excited are easily hurt.
It comes from not thinking things through completely.
- 578 The King's men had no knowledge of Teav's broken heart at all.
They rowed hard to pass the nearby islands.
Having reached the Luong and Bankang rivers,
They sped past the port of Chroy Changva.
- 579 Reaching the city of Phnom Penh, the land became flat.
The soft afternoon sun sank in the sky.
Disembarking, they saw the extensive wares along the marketplace
Where large groups of Chinese and Khmer bustled to and fro.
- 580 Afterwards, they boarded the boats and embarked.
They didn't dare stop for long out of fear of the King.
They reached Chraing Chamres and Prek Phneou then continued,
Planning to cut through Chhun Steang Harbor.
- 581 They rowed to Sbek Island down river from Chen Island.
Once the rice was cooked, they ate, then continued on their way.
They saw from their boats all the magnificent wares in the market
And the proud customers who came desiring them.
- 582 When the boats reached Kampong Luong, they stopped so Teav could
prepare.
They told her to look her most beautiful.
Teav bathed until she was perfectly clean.
She dressed up and wore a scarf over one shoulder, taking care to look just
right.
- 583 As the sun sank low in the sky,
Teav became depressed thinking about Tum.
The weak sun sank and was almost blocked out by the mountains.
Under a gray, cold sky, they continued to the Palace.
- 584 They walked along a divided road
And reached the citadel of Lovek as planned.
Strains of music came from the foot of the King's royal Palace.
They saw the bustling market with its rows of stalls spreading in all
directions.
- 585 The Palace was impressive with its ornamental spires.
Naga railings stretched along the road leading to the Palace.
Limestone cemented the sections of the citadel.
An expansive moat surrounded the Palace.

- 586 The army barracks and courtyard were well designed.
Teav saw the Palace and sobbed, upset about her separation from Tum.
She heard the sounds of melodic music being played.
Large brass gongs cried out in succession.
- 587 Out of respect for the King,
The court was not inattentive. When he spoke, they noisily clamored.
We will digress from the events we are describing,
And make the following presentation.
- 588 We speak of Teav, miserable and completely unhappy.
She yearned for Tum. Being
Late at night, it was quiet and gone was the stifling heat.
The wind blew against her body.
- 589 Teav lay down but could only think of Tum.
She could not get to sleep. Her suffering had no relief.
She cried, "Oh, Wind! You toss me here and there."
"How long must I be without Tum.
- 590 "I'm miserable again. Tum, my dear, you
"Are back home and must have forgotten me.
"Now I have come here only to lay down and cry.
"A spreading wound burns in my chest.
- 591 "This morning they will escort me to greet
"The King who lives far away and rules with a nod of his head.
"I am a commoner. Who,
"Compassionate One, knows the sorrow besetting Tum and me?"
- 592 The dawn light shined brightly.
Miss. Teav, upset, felt a great sadness.
Tears poured down. In sorrow over being separated from Tum, she cried.
Her body felt weighed down as though a mountain had toppled atop of her.
- 593 She relaxed little by little.
Her hands were barely able to untie her bundle of belongings.
Seeing all the articles of clothing,
She dressed up to make herself beautiful.
- 594 Dressed also in her sorrow, lovely Teav
Soon finished adorning herself. She then very carefully
Made-up her face with oil and colored powder,
So it shined like the moon.
- 595 When she finished getting ready,
They left in a group for the Palace.

Arriving, they clamored around the doorway,
And waited for the King at the end of the royal hall.

- 596 Oh, time! At that time, the august
And noble King departed from the aviary.
The royal concubines and young women attendants
Of various rank took their places before the all-powerful Monarch.
- 597 The King came to a large hall.
The four Palace ministers greeted their Monarch.
The royal concubines, right beside the maiden Teav,
Had an audience with His Majesty.
- 598 Oh, time! At that time, the precious Miss. Teav,
Radiant, charming and good without fault,
Was led forward in the group
To have an audience with the great and powerful King.
- 599 Kneeling before him, the group bowed and saluted three times.
In fear of the King, they spoke while bent doubled-over.
The royal guards, ministers and concubines
Earnestly greeted their master.
- 600 The King turned on his throne to look closely.
He saw that Teav had superior attributes that matched her appearance.
He was impressed.
Speaking to himself, he said, "This Teav makes me swoon!"
- 601 The King gently asked the Queen saying,
"Of all the fine, young women, dear Queen,
"This Teav is the best, or am I just imagining things?
"My brimming heart tells me to keep her. It would be wrong to send her
away."
- 602 The Queen said, "She is truly fine.
"She is superb and radiant.
"Well-suited to be a concubine of the King, clearly."
The King gave instructions to have Tum called to sing for him.
- 603 Tum heard the King's voice and strained to hear exactly what he wanted.
When it was clear, he quickly entered and prostrated himself before the
Monarch.
When he had finished saluting, he prepared a song.
At that moment, he saw beautiful Teav and her mother who had escorted
her there.
- 604 In his determination to have Teav, he had no thought of personal
livelihood.

Hot as a cooking fire, he lowered his head silently.
In his torment, his chest tightened and thoughts ran amok.
At his wits' end, he didn't even fear the King's power.

605 He sang, "Oh, there once was an august king of tremendous fame,
"Who was the sovereign of every place in the world.
"The people throughout the land
"Feared the power of the noble king.

606 "One day, he ordered to arrange a search of the kingdom
"To select a woman to come and be his concubine.
"Now he had Teav, young and charming,
"But it was not appropriate and contrary to her destiny.

607 "Though I fear Your Majesty's authority and power,
"I respectfully ask permission to tell the truth regarding this Teav.
"She is already engaged to me.
"I promised to stay with her in every life.

608 "I made a pledge and the promise was born.
"In our rebirths as a boy and girl,
"I would meet my beloved Teav
"And would never let myself be separated from her."

609 Teav listened to the words that Tum sang.
She felt hot in her chest and tight.
She didn't dare look up at Tum's face again,
Afraid the King would blame them.

610 Tum sang, describing everything that had happened
Since he had fallen in love with Teav.
Teav, meanwhile, was pale and stricken.
Shocked, she was speechless.

611 At that time, the august
And noble King became angry with Miss. Teav.
He knew, however, that he should show mercy,
And he pondered judgment.

612 "The Law says I should blame her.
"Accordingly, I should separate her from her fiancé.
"By doing this, the Buddha would erase any wrong-doing.
"Thus, I should expel her from the Palace until goodness is restored."

613 The King told the Palace officials
To have Miss. Teav brought before him so he could question her.
"If the reply she gives agrees with Tum's words,
"We will release her in accordance with her response."

- 614 The King wanted first
To question Tum. "Tum!
"Is Teav really your fiancé? Answer!
"Don't hide anything. Speak the truth!"
- 615 At that time, Tum was terrified of the King.
He listened closely and quickly raised his joined hands respectfully.
Tum addressed the King truthfully.
"Please have mercy on me Your Majesty.
- 616 "Have me killed for my serious crime.
"Condemn me to live as a slave of Your Highness.
"I respectfully say as a slave and without deception
"That Miss. Teav is in fact my fiancé."
- 617 The King then questioned Miss. Teav.
"Teav! I have given your situation close attention.
"Speak truthfully. Don't be afraid.
"Have you and Tum laid together, or is this untrue?"
- 618 Teav addressed the august King.
"Your Majesty, please have mercy on me.
"Tum and I are exactly
"As Your Majesty has already been informed."
- 619 At that time, the august King
Had listened to all that had been said.
He completely believed Teav's words.
The King issued orders to his officers.
- 620 He ordered the ministers,
Royal advisors and slaves
To make ready the wedding materials
As he would marry Teav with Sir Tum.
- 621 The Council of Ministers took leave of the King.
They went house to house in separate groups
To inform one and all that the next day
They must not delay and hurry to the Palace for the wedding ceremony.
- 622 Then the King arose and retired to the royal bedroom.
Entering his sleeping chamber,
The King lay down upon his high and comfortable bed.
As for Tum, he thought about what had taken place that day before the
King.
- 623 When the early morning light shined coolly,
The noble King awoke from sleep.

He left his bedroom and entered the hall to meet his concubines.
All of the ministers went to have an audience with the King.

624 The King ordered that everything be made ready,
And that Teav along with Tum be escorted immediately to greet him.
Tum and Teav presented themselves before the King and bowed, saluting.
The great King wished them happiness and prosperity.

625 The important officials gathered together.
The Council of Ministers joined in to assist with all the preparations
For the wedding of Tum and precious Teav,
As the all-powerful Monarch looked on with compassion.

626 Having greeted the King that morning already
With an abundance of empty wishes regarding the wedding,
Teav's mother left the King
And led her family to return home.

627 As for the charming and beautiful Teav,
She was joined in marriage with Tum.
Teav was happy and without worry,
Truly fulfilled as though her heart had realized its goal.

628 Tum, for some time now, was happy and at ease.
He joined the King's court and relaxed with dignity.
In his place of comfort,
He didn't have anything to worry about.

Part 9 (629-751)

Teav's Mother's Trick and the Separation of Tum and Teav

(Teav's mother's plan to marry Moeurn Nguon and Teav; her letter to
Teav; Teav's separation from Tum; Teav trapped; Teav's letter to
Tum; Tum's vow to win Teav back; the King's letter; Tum and Pech's
journey to Tbhong Khmom; Teav's worry that Tum will not arrive in
time)

629 To speak of Teav's mother who had returned home,
Worries beset her without relief.
"Oh, Teav! My precious child!" she cried,
"How did you ever come to have such a pitiful husband?

630 "It's all because of that scoundrel thief!
"He is vile beyond limit! He dares to trick us!
"He said Teav is truly his fiancé,

"So the King would not blame him!

631 "I will separate Teav from this scoundrel.

"Have no doubt! I am determined

"To outmaneuver him by my wits,

"And be rid of that no-good womanizer Tum.

632 "I had already decided to marry Teav to Moeurn Nguon,

"The son of Mister Orh-Chhuon. It was definite!

"I will make that rascal Tum ask himself why he ever left his family

"To come here on that day!

633 "I had already decided to give her to Mister Orh-Chhuon!

"Moeurn Nguon, his son, had even offered his hand!

"He has wealth and high rank!"

In anger, Teav's mother plotted her revenge for many days.

634 As twilight fell, Teav's mother

Furiously dashed off a letter.

She was willing to lose everything she had known and bring on death

Just to follow thoughtless flights of fancy.

635 Then Teav's mother started off.

She arrived at the Governor's residence.

They had become like relatives to each other, because of their mutual trust.

Being a true friend like that, she would tell him her plan.

636 She entered and sat down composing herself.

Raising her hands in greeting, she said, "I

"Am only a woman. Because we had already made arrangements

"I'm afraid of doing wrong by taking back my marriage agreement with you.

637 "I'm so angry, Governor, with that rascal Tum.

"He has brought disgrace to my reputation.

"He is arrogant and has no respect for anyone.

"Now, I must ask you

638 "To find a way to prepare the desserts and food,

"The pork, chicken, duck, fish and rice wine,

"As well as vegetables of all kinds from all over.

"I have prepared a letter and arranged for its delivery

639 "To Teav my child to have her come back home quickly.

"The letter says that her mother who lives

"Far away is seriously ill and feverish.

"It instructs her to come, as her mother's flesh and blood.

- 640 'Return quickly before it's too late,' I repeated.
'I'm anxiously waiting, fearful
'My strength is very little... not enough to sustain me...
'If I don't see you, there will be a tragedy.'
- 641 "When Teav arrives,
"Interrupt whatever you may be doing to set our trap.
"She will be given to Nguon to be his wife
"As we previously arranged together already."
- 642 Teav's mother returned to her house.
She thought a while then hurried
To find someone to copy the letter quickly
And prepare every item for the journey. She told the servants to go
- 643 And make ready the messenger.
She instructed him to tell Teav not to delay
Or take a long time traveling, because now
Her mother is sick with a fever and unable to eat.
- 644 The messenger, along with a number of others,
Simultaneously clambered
Into the boat and paddled quickly down the river,
As though they wanted to reach the world beyond.
- 645 They docked the boat and went instantly
To Tum's house. Tum immediately asked them to explain their purpose.
Teav said, "How is my mother?
"Is she well or has something happened?"
- 646 Everyone from the other side listened.
When Teav finished asking about her mother, they explained the situation.
They produced the letter and gave it to Miss. Teav.
Reading the letter, Teav was frozen with fear.
- 647 Teav said, "Oh, my dearest,
"My mother is seriously ill, close to death!
"She says she is not eating, famished and emaciated.
"Now, she urges that
- 648 "I leave you and go immediately.
"I must hurry back in order to follow the custom
"Of gathering one's children and relatives
"To make offerings to the family spirits in the house."
- 649 Tum sighed deeply then responded.
"Oh, sweetheart. Go quickly.
"Afterwards, if your mother is well, hurry back.

"Don't stay away any longer than necessary!

650 "I will arrange for the journey to be made pleasant.
 "I am unable to go and must remain here.
 "My responsibilities to the King must be fulfilled.
 "My dear, take care of yourself!"

651 Teav said goodbye to Tum and boarded the boat.
 They rowed quickly and cleared the headland.
 Rowing hard, they did not stop anywhere.
 Teav felt sad, and her face was pale.

652 On the one hand, she was sad about leaving her one and only husband.
 On the other hand, she was sad about her mother being seriously ill.
 Teav said, "Oh, I dread being apart from Tum.
 "And I worry about losing my mother. I am sad in many ways."

653 They stopped rowing at the port and immediately reached a group of islands.
 They sped forward between the gaps in the islands. There was no straight course.
 They didn't stop to rest until
 Docking and disembarking at Tbong Khmom.

654 Teav climbed up the steps to her house and presented herself.
 She saw her mother and aunts and uncles gathered together.
 Relatives were busily conferring with one another,
 Preparing foods, breads and mixing rice wine.

655 Hands grabbed cooked rice, cakes and wine
 To offer the ancestors. They sprinkled water and saluted with hands clasped.
 "All ancestral spirits of the mother,
 "Please come to this side to eat.

656 "When you finish eating, please give your blessing to your grandchildren
 "And numerous descendants. Don't leave anyone out."
 At this point, Teav had just arrived.
 "Now child, restrain yourself and think ahead.

657 "Teav come here, dear child, and listen
 "As your mother explains everything from beginning to end.
 "Normally, when a child is born with an attractive appearance
 "And a charming voice,

658 "His renown will make its way to the King.
 "The King will then bring the child before him, and showing pity,
 "Make him an official because he doesn't have anything

“And is very poor and doesn’t have food to eat.

659 “For this reason, your mother looks at things differently.

“Orh-Chhuon thinks you should be pitied.

“He has rank and wealth.

“He wants to save you from a life of poverty and is committed to your marriage

660 “With Moeurn Nguon, his son, who has

“The status and wealth we have hoped for.

“For our rowboat to reach the shore, we must only work the oar.

“You’ll have everything your heart desires!

661 “You’ll have elephants, horse carts, Khmer buffaloes,

“And a palanquin with a shaded bed.

“You’ll have soothing music both day and night.”

Teav had had enough and was completely exasperated with her mother.

662 Hearing her mother go on, Teav nearly fainted.

She was ready to die from anger.

She said, “Oh, mother! You have extensive virtue.

“How did you become so removed from the meaning of the Buddha’s law?

663 “If you want me to have a husband,

“Tum is the one I love.

“To this I would agree to gladly.

“We are devoted to each other forever.

664 “If you don’t have pity on me,

“And force me to marry Moeurn Nguon,

“You may as well take my life, because the marriage is not right.

“I beg you to accept my refusal.”

665 Teav’s mother glared at her.

She had become upset because of her child’s defiance.

She cursed Teav saying, “Scoundrel! You are stubborn as steel.

“I would like to grab your mouth and tear it apart now.

666 “I tell you that I will let you have prosperity,

“And you dare to be so impudent as to say it’s not right!

“You say you love that rascal Tum who doesn’t even have parents!

“You don’t think about the gossip that would bring! You have no shame!

667 “He doesn’t know people who have wealth!

“And you want to marry that orphan!

“From where will he acquire a reputation?

“For a long time coming you would surely be poor!”

- 668 Teav heard her mother's intense anger.
Trying to get a word in edgewise, she pleaded her case.
Her mother, in silence, bolted straight
Over to the house of Orh-Chhuon.
- 669 Governor Orh-Chhuon, who had great merit,
Saw her, and with extreme pleasure
Said, "Madam, welcome! Come and make yourself comfortable!
"What is upsetting you? Does it concern me?"
- 670 The would-be in-law answered,
"Governor, prepare the wedding quickly and quietly.
"Inform the women to make the cakes.
"Call the guests to gather at once."
- 671 We stop to digress before presenting the wedding.
We will describe Teav who has become horribly sad.
She has no desire to eat,
And a heavy sorrow burdens her thoughts.
- 672 Teav lay down wide-eyed from pain and sorrow.
"Oh! Life is over!
"My death will be because I went far from Tum, my eternal love.
"I don't know if he will be angry with me.
- 673 "I left him, and they really tricked me!
"Oh, Tum! Now, they've locked me up.
"They will prevent me from seeing you until I waste away to nothing.
"I have pledged myself to you. My mind is made up."
- 674 Teav, in her sorrow, composed a letter to Tum.
After it was written, Miss. Teav carefully
Folded the letter shut and wrapped it tight with betel, areca seeds
And tobacco leaves. She then dispatched a servant,
- 675 A person in whom Teav placed her complete trust.
Sympathetic and a praiseworthy relative, he was
A skilled messenger who knew the roadways well.
He sped away as on wings meant for speed.
- 676 The messenger, clear about what Teav had ordered him to do,
Didn't delay at all in delivering the letter
And fresh betel, areca seeds
And tobacco that Teav had wrapped up together.
- 677 He started off,
And reached the roadway in an instant.
He caught his breath, then quickly

Accelerated to get to the river.

- 678 He spoke to the men and women at the river
To transport him down the river for free. They felt
Sympathy for such a distraught person.
They boarded the boat and shoveled the water, paddling furiously.
- 679 When they reached the provincial shore,
He called to everyone. "Oh, people!"
The entourage of Tum and Teav, wanting to be of service
To their beloved couple, approached the messenger.
- 680 Together, they went for help to the King,
Whom they respected, being good people.
Tum and Teav's enemies scattered far not daring to be close by,
For fear that they would be beaten to a pulp and killed.
- 681 The boatmen returned home
And recounted everything that had happened.
Teav's servant arrived at the Palace. Without
Worry of arriving unannounced, he proceeded to
- 682 Tum's house where he was already known and trusted.
Tum immediately asked a million questions.
"Did you come for pleasure or is something wrong?
"Whatever may be troubling you, please tell me."
- 683 The messenger took out Teav's letter.
Tum looked at it stunned. He reached out his hand and grabbed it.
Opening the package, Tum saw the container of betel
And tobacco that his wife had sent.
- 684 "Oh, Teav! My sweetheart. What misery!
"I'm shocked again!
"My spirit is stifled! Shall I prepare
"To travel as I believe I should or do something else?
- 685 "Oh, Teav! You went back because you believed your mother was sick.
"You didn't know it would turn into a trick to wedge us apart.
"Oh, Teav! My sadness is overwhelming!
"I'm devastated as though a mountain had fallen upon me.
- 686 "Oh, Teav! You pitied me
"Truly in that moment when you dared to write
"This letter
"Informing me of what has happened.
- 687 "Oh, Teav! My sadness about that ordeal weighs heavy on me.

"It overwhelms and paralyzes me.
 "I fall silent as though an evil force
 "Confuses and empties my mind.

688 "Oh, Teav! If they keep you against your will,
 "While I remain free, I will not be stopped easily.
 "I will struggle to the death like a soldier
 "Who dies within his citadel under siege.

689 "Normally, a royal army general
 "Doesn't panic or retreat.
 "He shoots! He stabs! He kicks and tramples!
 "This is like the struggle of our interlocked lives.

690 "Although they will try to make me give up, I will never stop fighting.
 "Oh! Teav, my dear! If we die,
 "Our deaths will bring another life. This is
 "A battle like the Buddha's against Mea during that time."

691 Tum, sad faced, could only worry about Teav.
 Teav's suffering broke Tum apart. He fell silent.
 In their separation, Tum felt her absence and lost his spirit.
 He lay down rigid and motionless on the floor.

692 "The bed where we used to sleep is still here.
 "Teav, my dear, when it would be time to eat,
 "We would eat our food here. You left from here.
 "Lost! Gone so far away!

693 "I wish her mother great misfortune!
 "She took Teav away. Split us apart!
 "She plotted to kill our love and destroy us!
 "Teav! Here, everything seemed right! I can't understand how this could
 happen!"

694 Tum observed the things around him: the container of areca,
 The sarongs and scarves, the cushions and pillows,
 And wool mats in front of him. He was drained and weak.
 After looking at these things, he crept to his room and slouched over asleep.

695 Then Tum bolted up and grabbed a pillow with his outstretched hand
 And hugged it in his arms. He was frustrated
 And nauseous, upset and confused.
 Restless, he got up and shuffled away.

696 He descended the steps to the ground and observed the night sky,
 Clear and wide. His throat was dry.
 The quiet grew as the night deepened steadily,

And Tum recounted the sequence of events since that morning.

- 697 "Oh, wind! Deliver
"The clouds in groups to Teav. She may think
"Because she is separated from me, I have stopped thinking of her.
"Oh, Teav! I have been drinking water instead of eating rice since you left!
- 698 "My misery is like having the wind knocked out of me.
"My distress compares to a child and mother
"Who were separated and died without seeing one another.
"I am far away from you. We are separated from each other.
- 699 "You are gone from everything: our sleeping chamber,
"Our eating implements, writing tools, and our oil and wax.
"I'm devastated and can't imagine not seeing you again,
"Or that you could ever live with Nguon as your husband.
- 700 "If Teav has really been given to Nguon,
"I will struggle to the death because she is my wife!
"They keep trying to take her from me again and again!
"They have no idea of compassion or the slightest fear!"
- 701 Sir Tum fretted over his separation from Miss. Teav.
At dawn, he quickly filled his arms,
Grabbing this and grabbing that of his belongings.
Once the things were packed, he planned to go.
- 702 He made his way to the King's Palace.
Entering straight away, Tum had no fear of anyone.
Arriving at the King's chambers, he presented himself before the King
Of great power and virtue.
- 703 Tum raised his hands and bowed,
Readied himself and comported his head.
Tum said, "I beg to inform you, my wife
"Has gone. She has a completely new husband!
- 704 "Your Highness,
"There have been evil doings of all kinds and great misery.
"I ask of you, my Lord,
"To send word of your command
- 705 "To Governor Orh-Chhuon from the district of Tbong Khmom.
"He is in complete control.
"A letter arrived saying Teav's mother was sick and feverish.
"It instructed her child to return home.
- 706 "Teav went and they had arranged her marriage to Moeurn Nguon.

"Miss. Teav, terrified, didn't dare object.
 "She arranged to deliver a message to me to see if I could
 "Request Your Majesty's help straightaway before it's too late."

- 707 The King listened to every word.
 He issued his decree forthwith.
 "That rascal thief Orh-Chhuon will break like a chicken egg!
 "He is deluded to presume himself deserving of my support!
- 708 "He doesn't know wrong from right, rice from weeds!
 "That thief is like a dog eating beef!
 "He dares to challenge me! That is a crime for which he must be boiled
 alive!
 "I will haul him in then boil him alive in an iron skillet.
- 709 "That thief will hide in the forest watching out for my attack.
 "He is used to being on the run like the kvaek bird.
 "That monkey doesn't know my big stick will crack his skull!
 "The rascal's head, tomorrow... tomorrow... will roll!"
- 710 Oh, time! At that time, King Rea-mea,
 The all-powerful, was clearly furious.
 He called out,
 "Come! All Court Magistrates!"
- 711 The officials and high-ranking ministers,
 Hearing the King's command, entered the hall and gathered to receive his
 instructions.
 In the presence of the King, they bowed their heads,
 Kneeled and brought their clasped hands above their heads.
- 712 The King looked directly at the group
 Of low and high ranking officials and ministers.
 "Chief Ministers and advisors,
 "Prepare a Royal Edict at once.
- 713 "I pity Sir Tum who has been separated from his wife.
 "They were told Teav's mother was seriously ill. A messenger came to tell
 her this.
 "Teav went there and was entrapped.
 "Orh-Chhuon has grabbed her in order to marry her
- 714 "To Moeurn Nguon, the scoundrel's own son.
 "The rascal dares to do this, thinking he has no need to fear anyone!
 "But I have married Sir Tum and Teav, because he said
 "Teav was already his fiancé.
- 715 "As for Tum, once you have my letter, go there

“Quickly to put things right according to my orders.
 “If the scoundrels don’t listen, you must turn back right away.
 “I won’t have you confronting them.”

- 716 The officials heard the King’s command.
 They raised their hands in salute all together,
 Then retreated from the hall and arrived outside the Royal Palace.
 Immediately, they stopped a group of royal scribes.
- 717 Conferring together, someone was sent to get a piece of paper
 And a special quill made of silver.
 When they finished writing the letter, they preceded to an office
 And ordered someone to stamp the letter with a large handsome seal.
- 718 Stamped and folded tight,
 And having already received approval, they wrapped the letter
 In a special cloth.
 Then Tum conferred with Pech.
- 719 “Oh, Pech! I’m very worried about all of this!
 “My wife... they took to be married to another!
 “Now, Pech! Make haste!
 “Arrange for a wooden paddle boat,
- 720 “As well as all kinds of provisions, cases of areca nut,
 “Scarves, silk sarongs, bottles of tea and drinking glasses.
 “Ready the paddle boat,
 “And call a team of paddlers. We must leave right away!”
- 721 Tum had already boarded the boat.
 They rowed away and the boats swiftly headed up the river.
 The wind blew against Tum, who sat blank-faced
 In the boat, hot and upset.
- 722 Unable to endure it, Tum lay down.
 He observed the stars near the moon as though in escort. Tum said,
 “Oh, Heavenly Moon encircled by stars!
 “Release me from this suffering.
- 723 “Holy Moon, aglow and resplendent,
 “Like the color of Miss. Teav’s skin. One cannot see the future!”
 Tum narrated his thoughts one by one while singing a melody.
 “Look at the land. Look at the girls. Look at the fish and reeds.
- 724 “Oh trees in close rows, why should I
 “Be separated from Teav my sweetheart and constantly worried?
 “I’m not like the *tras* plant or *kraukoa* and *tbaeng* trees.
 “Rather, I’m like strychnine that sprouts near fig trees and surely kills

them.”

- 725 Tum counted the trees as he went along.
Gazing into the deep waters he saw schools of fish.
The fresh-water *changva* and the *phtong* leapt up suddenly.
“You must be breaking out of the water
- 726 “To go look for your husbands.
“There are similar schools of fish in ponds
“Which won’t leave their mates or run away.
“Everyone in their school is content and happy.”
- 727 Looking at the land, Tum tried to distract himself by making rhymes.
Along the eastern shore were scattered
Villages and fields of sugar cane alongside mango groves.
Tum, distraught, cried into a water pot.
- 728 Come the dead of the night,
The wind blew very cold.
Tum pulled out a cloth and covered his head to block the wind.
Startled, he sprang up, thinking incessantly.
- 729 His vertigo would not lessen.
Distraught, he wanted only to lie down spread out.
He screamed into the dark. “Teav, my dear! Your spirit
“Leaves your body, and silently goes to me.
- 730 “I have reached this distant land.
“Oh, Teav! Are you his or still mine?
“I would do anything to know right now.
“If I had wings, I would fly to get there at once!”
- 731 The oars cut through the water as though in accordance with Tum’s wish to fly.
Tum concentrated, trying to hear
The sound of the wind and waves. The boat nearly turned over.
Tum recited verses to his sweetheart. “Oh, Karma!
- 732 “One is born doomed. Death becomes
“Life. Misery is inevitable.
“As with the taking away of lovely Miss. Teav,
“Our separation brings sorrow.”
- 733 Tum described the villages along the river.
His words flowed, carefully arranged. “Oh, fig trees!
“Inclined and hanging, harmoniously bent in search of each other.
“Trees know the right connections so not to be separated.

- 734 "Knowing so much they can entwine themselves
"Like blood relatives or village neighbors.
"The roka tree finds ways to stay together.
"Trees and Nature know better than anyone!
- 735 "Not like Orh-Chhuon who is human.
"Because he has had a high rank for a long time,
"He doesn't think he could be brought down.
"His desire for permanence will not endure."
- 736 Tum finished reciting and turned his attention to rowing.
He looked at the water still and deep,
Then looked at the northern bank of Tranung Sdau,
And veered towards Pitea Kandal.
- 737 From the back side of the marsh's end, Tum strove hard
And came up alongside Russei Srok. Overjoyed to see him,
Old and young acted comically together.
Happily, they greeted him and politely
- 738 Said, "You there! Paddling the boat in such a hurry!
"Dear man of graceful form! Try to row up here!
"It seems as though you are racing the wind!
"Whatever it is that you covet so badly, tell us too!"
- 739 The people who questioned him were polite, but Tum did not reply
Because he was pushing himself too frantically.
For one thing, he was trying to row fast enough to cross the marsh
And get to Port Chikong as he intended.
- 740 Tum rowed past Kok Island and Sotin.
Rice was cooked, and he stopped the boat. Tum was pensive.
Having set up a pole to which to tie the boat, he went ashore and stopped
quietly.
He watched the sun going down.
- 741 Gone was the light of the sun.
Tum was exhausted. It was the middle of the night.
He finished eating and was frustrated still
And became cold. The tide was falling.
- 742 Tum exclaimed, "Oh, wind which blows!
"Oh, Teav! Taken away! The scent of your perfume!
"I can hold only the wafts of fragrance!
"Teav! The greedy thieves took you from me!
- 743 "They left you and me all alone!
"Teav does not Miss. me! Beware of the heart of a woman!

"A charming heart without consideration or pity!
"Having Nguon to be her husband, she drops Tum.

- 744 "Oh! Teav! My sorrow is extraordinary!
"I will get to Tbong Khmom tomorrow.
"It is certain Orh-Chhuon will seek revenge
"And call the guests to gang up and kill me."
- 745 Let's digress a moment from Tum's situation,
And take up a portrayal of fallen Teav.
Being distraught and confused in turns,
Teav prayed only for her dear man to come to her.
- 746 "Love of my life! My sweetheart!
"Now, they plan openly
"To tear us apart. From the day
"We were separated, live or die, I will always be your wife!
- 747 "My dear! Are you on your way or not? I continue
"To watch the road for your arrival, but it is quiet and empty.
"I think of Mother giving me away
"Without considering my feelings at all.
- 748 "She boasts that she's giving me to someone who has status,
"Fine possessions, gold, silver and wealth.
"Oh, Tum! She says that you are poor and without possessions.
"It seems like you don't dare to steal me back.
- 749 "As soon as you were gone from me, I fell completely silent.
"My misery is as big as a mountain. I cry myself sick when I get up
"To go somewhere. Before I arrive, I become so confused, I must take
shelter.
"I still think about you all the time!
- 750 "What can I do to know if your arrival will be long or soon?
"There isn't anyone at all to go and tell you to hurry.
"When will we meet and see each other face to face?
"My misery is so distressing.
- 751 "At this very moment, they are planning to come and quickly
"Prepare the materials and select the wedding food.
"People are already gathering. They have even
"Rented a large area which has been sealed off and set aside for the
ceremony."

Part 10 (752-884)

The Wedding and Death of Tum and Teav

The rush to prepare for the wedding before Tum's arrival; the engagement ceremony; the wedding; Tum and Pech's arrival; Tum's intoxication and reunion with Teav; Tum's execution by Orh-Chhuon's strongmen; Teav and Nor's suicides; the burying of the bodies)

- 752 We digress here from presenting
Teav in her grief all alone and without comfort,
And continue by describing
Teav's worried mother.
- 753 She was worried because everything was taking a long time.
Anxious and unable to relax,
She decided to leave the house and walked straight to see Orh-Chhuon.
Arriving, she went up to the estate.
- 754 At Orh-Chhuon's house, she met his wife and son.
Teav's mother, indefatigable, addressed them,
Raising her joined hands appropriately.
"If you please, I have come here because
- 755 "Teav doesn't think of future shame,
"Or whether she appears idiotic.
"I want to inform the Governor without leaving anything out."
Orh-Chhuon's wife and son were taken by surprise at that time.
- 756 "Before the day of the wedding...
"Already Tum clearly understands our plan... It seems to me that
"He is already on his way. I'm worried. Get ready,
"Governor. Hurry while there is still hope.
- 757 "Find out which month and day
"The meeting of the parents should be held as is proper.
"The wedding must be carefully planned,
"Because delays cannot be allowed.
- 758 "Whatever sorrow Tum may be feeling, he will set off
"In anger, because Teav is his wife.
"I bid you goodbye as I should return at once.
"Think of how to prepare the wedding as soon as possible for fear of losing
later on."
- 759 At that time, Orh-Chhuon
Bowed happily. Trying to relax,

He admonished his wife and son not to let
Themselves be careless or imprudent.

- 760 He told the Lieutenant-Governor to order the district chief
To find wild boar, heron, beef, chicken, duck,
Carts, earthenware vases, garlic, pepper, sweet potatoes,
Cooking stock of arrowroot, *ptee* and French mint,
- 761 Imported cooking stock, and cooking stock for every kind of vegetable.
He assigned knowledgeable people to buy strong wine,
Sausage made of dried meats, grilled mutton,
Ray fish, bamboo shoots, watercress, snails,
- 762 Every kind of chili pepper, lemon grass, ginger, horseradish,
Selected lotus seeds and shoots,
Cabbage heads, greens, large red ants,
Bangkong birds, and beef shins in jack fruit, papaya,
- 763 And sliced vegetables. He ordered to have these items found
Then brought back, spread in baskets and dried to keep.
When they were nicely dried, they should be gathered up and stuffed into
sacks.
He ordered them not to delay and that they should act quickly.
- 764 Some were told to deliver wood, bamboo and rattan,
Knives, jars, covered pots, chisels and pliers
And take them to make a storage shed to be ready quickly.
He ordered that neighbors and relatives living far away
- 765 In numerous provinces be informed of the wedding as well.
Because Orh-Chhuon explained
That they must prepare for the marriage between Nguon and lovely Teav,
Everyone acted quickly to complete the tasks on time.
- 766 He gave orders to find a wiseman to treat Nguon and Teav's teeth with
castor oil,
And an astrologer to determine a wedding day that would be propitious
And glorious, and to gather cushions and have them put away for safe
keeping.
After meeting together for a long time,
- 767 Everyone set off in a loud commotion, anxious and helter-skelter,
To buy or confiscate all the materials needed for the wedding.
When they had finished, they quickly put everything in place,
As Orh-Chhuon had instructed them.
- 768 Running up to his residence, the Lieutenant-Governor informed him, "Sir,
don't

“Blame us. High standards were met without negligence.
 “I have ordered my men, each group through its leader
 “And according to his task, to plan together and transport

- 769 “The foodstuffs and take them to the cooking shed,
 “To use whatever materials to decorate the hall,
 “To wrap the areca in handkerchiefs,
 “And to organize the dancers and musicians.”
- 770 They brought forth all the materials for every aspect of the ceremony,
 And distributed them carefully
 In a hall adequately big, strong and spacious.
 Twenty-five homes were decorated with torches.
- 771 They lit all the torches and lanterns.
 The parents, relatives and beloved friends
 Entered and gathered together.
 During that time, there was surely no worry of lack.
- 772 As soon as the guests had gathered together, they entered a new hall
 Where the boys and girls, young and old enjoyed themselves.
 They ate cakes. They ate rice. They ate soup.
 They ate *kau*. They ate *kau*-shaped rolls, and drank wine.
- 773 The elders conversed with one another.
 “We must discuss which day and time to hold the wedding.”
 They stood up and approached the wisemen.
 When he finished eating, he instructed them.
- 774 The great wiseman was a deep thinker.
 Examining the situation, he said, “We will consider
 “The wedding date tomorrow.” After preparing the astrological table,
 Wisemen arrived to determine the exact point in time for the ceremony.
- 775 With the preparations complete, they deliberated together.
 The wisemen debated the issue shrewdly.
 The parents of the boy were not to delay at all.
 They had to gather the wedding pillows for whatever day the scholars
 determined.
- 776 The wiseman representing the groom’s side,
 At that time, he spoke,
 “Have all the decorations prepared
 “To transform the hall according to custom. Don’t delay.
- 777 “The wedding site should have
 “*Beisei*, sacred areca, five mouthfuls of areca,
 “Attendants wearing *sompot* cloth, sitting on the left and right, waiting to

bow.

"Be careful of making mistakes which people will remember."

- 778 At this point, the wiseman said it was time
To go up to the Governor's residence as required by custom.
The wiseman soaked an afterbirth with castor-oil,
And ordered someone to look for a clay pot in which to put this medicine.
- 779 He said that it was necessary to have a woven basket.
As for the materials for doing the teeth, he had someone get
White and red sandalwood and white bark
That were mixed together with the pith of various kinds of wood.
- 780 They pounded and packaged rice,
Then stuffed it into bamboo containers. They made soup and corked it.
From inside the clay pot, they dug out the afterbirth,
Turned it face up and placed it on the stove.
- 781 With the building materials, they made a fence around the wedding area.
Umbrellas and flags were set up in sufficient numbers.
Beisei and food offerings were put on tables in plates.
When everything was arranged, they stopped a while.
- 782 At this moment, we must turn from
Speaking of the matter of the wedding and continue with
The description of Tum who is burying his frustration
In his aching chest. He calls Pech,
- 783 "Oh, Pech! I have been trying to listen.
"I hear something like the sound of drums. They have married
"Teav and Nguon already! Where can we stop?
"Prepare to dock the boats! Throw the anchor!"
- 784 Tum and Pech disembarked and followed the sound of the drums.
There arose in Tum a paralyzing sorrow that didn't abate at all.
Tears trickled down his face. He kept longing for Teav.
He said, "Oh, I'm getting numb!"
- 785 With no idea what to do, Tum's will was waning, almost broken.
"Oh, me! Tomorrow looks to be my end!
"I will lose my life and lovely Teav!
"Teav will have no regret I came so close!
- 786 "This sorrow doesn't relent! I've reached the end of my rope!"
Tum said, "My dear!" and took out the package Teav had given him.
"Enough already, Pech! What shall we do?
"We must take risks according to the task and my Karma."

- 787 Tum opened the package and took out the *sampot*.
He got dressed in fear. Finally, he screamed and cried.
He pounded his chest and was bruised everywhere from the blows.
He was pale. His separation from Teav made him suffer from regret.
- 788 Pech told him, "Tum! Don't carry on like this!
"Come on, brother! Try to get up and show them we are brave!
"Get dressed!
"Hurry! Don't delay!"
- 789 Tum heard Pech tell him this and grabbed the *sampot*
That was long and pleated. Tum looked closer
And noticed the turban, the black silk *pha-hom*
And sampot that the King had presented to him.
- 790 Tum put on the garment that was embroidered in three layers
With a "chicken body" design using silk thread and gold braids.
He dressed in a green shirt, then meditated deeply on his objective.
He stepped forward and turned around to speak.
- 791 "Pech, my brother! Prepare your things!
"Make it quick!" Pech took his flute
And took the ring that Tum recently bought new.
Tum adorned his fingers with sun-stones.
- 792 Pech put on his sampot and went to grab a green shirt.
Fully dressed, the two of them strutted back and forth.
They walked for a long time,
And arrived at the cemetery after a while.
- 793 At that time of day, it was exactly approaching
The scheduled time to eat. Mats were spread on the ground
And people were drinking and eating, rolling around
And swimming. Then everyone ran to hide in the forest.
- 794 Completely senseless, they suspended people from trees and chopped
Their bodies close to death without a thought of fear.
Busy eating and drinking, people fell to the ground one by one.
Some would quickly run to grab a leg of beef.
- 795 The various people preparing the food for the great wedding
Were happy one and all and laughing uproariously.
They prepared raw meats of chicken and duck by quickly dipping them
In boiling water and cleaning out all the gizzards, livers and lungs.
- 796 Tum and Pech emerged from the jungle.
Without fear, they entered the wedding area furtively.
Mixing with the large crowd, they moved right in front of people.

They were not worried or afraid.

- 797 But there were evil deeds in store for Tum.
Oh, people! Listen and remember well!
Keeping himself hidden, Tum went towards Teav,
Weaving through the crowd. In his happiness, he didn't see the misery that
awaited.
- 798 We should take the Dhamma as our foundation.
The guidance of the precepts is a bridge for going forward.
It enables us to avert wrongdoing and extinguish evil.
Don't succumb to temptation or naive stupidity.
- 799 Don't take Pech and Tum as models.
In Tbong Khmom, the people were obsessed with pleasure.
They played with the fortune of good Teav, and made her
Sink into oblivion.
- 800 At that time, Tum and Pech
Had entered the wedding hall for some time.
The sun had set. Around them
The guests were gathering together. Tum went quietly up to
- 801 The house and politely greeted
The elder parents pleasingly, without being rude or disdainful.
Tum had become very drunk and acted impudently.
He behaved as though he were greater than his teacher.
- 802 Greater than everything! He expounded
In song, "The Teav over here has no thought of her husband.
"She avoids him. She hates Tum. Ducks for cover when he approaches.
"Her husband has been here a long time already, but she does not recognize
him!"
- 803 Teav was crestfallen and tense.
She answered back directly.
"Sweetheart, I am drained and weak.
"You arrive and criticize me. My love,
- 804 "You have no reason at all to think this way. I have missed you every
"Moment, day and night! Oh, Tum! Don't
"Distrust your sweetheart! Venerable, you may
"Beat me to death!"
- 805 Tum said, "Oh, Teav! My love!
"Your virtue is gone! You are sullied like a formerly polished stone!
"I arrived a long time ago. You should have shown your love for me!
"Dear Teav hid herself! Where could you hide?"

- 806 Teav answered saying, "Why are you so quick to criticize, my dear?
"Your wife has been in agony.
"I rolled cigarettes and prepared areca for you!
"I ladled alcohol for you to drink,
- 807 "And sent it to my dear man. I ask your consideration a moment."
Teav responded eloquently.
She sat close beside Tum, sobbing.
Tum understood and forgave his beloved.
- 808 Teav, weeping with regret, threw her body on the ground.
She recounted the original promise they had made to each other.
"Oh, my dear! There is no other like you!
"I love you truly! Why do you argue?"
- 809 Tum, crying, answered, "Oh, my precious!
"You wrecked our plans by coming to have another husband!
"Your virtue left you instantly!
"Come close to me, so I can hold my beloved girl."
- 810 Tum moved close to Teav, and they embraced one another.
Having hugged and kissed, Tum said, "Teav!
"Depend on me, your husband! Don't worry!
"Don't fear they will stab or shoot me! Or that we will lose to anyone!"
- 811 Tum continued, "My dear, pour some wine for me.
"I'll drink then take you
"To the city to have an audience with the King.
"He will rectify this sorry ordeal."
- 812 Teav listened to the words Tum spoke.
She handed him an areca cigarette, which Tum smoked,
And ladled wine for him to drink. Teav looked at Tum's face.
He looked nauseated and dazed.
- 813 Teav went into the hall
And lay down sad and confused.
She rolled over against the wall.
Someone slid the curtain closed tightly.
- 814 Teav's mother could not contain her anger.
Ignorance blinded her.
A violent rage possessed her.
She could not think clearly or overcome her anger.
- 815 She screamed, "Orh-Chhuon! You have power.
"We had better think of something quick!
"Grab that rascal Tum! That impudent thief!

"Pull him from the house and drop him down!

816 "Call all your gang to take him away quickly!
 "Stab and shoot him dead! Don't let him remain
 "To weigh down the house, weigh down the earth with his hateful person!
 "Teav's reputation has become a disgrace now already!

817 "He went too far with his sweet talking! The rascal's behavior
 "Is fearless! Whatever he's up to, the rascal knows no end!
 "He hugged my daughter and wouldn't let her go!
 "He called Teav to answer him! He necked with her and teased her!

818 "He kissed her everywhere and squeezed her breasts!
 "He had no thought of her reputation whatsoever! That scoundrel!
 "His hugs and kisses provoked her! He made it into a game!
 "He doesn't know how to respect anyone!"

819 Oh, time! At that time, Orh-Chhuon
 And Moeurn Nguon, who was the son he planned to marry to Teav,
 Gave rise to evil thoughts toward Tum.
 They had no pity or compassion for Tum.

820 In their aversion and fury,
 They drew their swords and banded together.
 They grabbed Tum and stabbed and hacked at him without discussion.
 They tied Tum very tightly, arms back like parrot wings.

821 Teav heard people say they had surrounded and seized her husband.
 Distracted, Miss. Teav fretted.
 Tum said, "Oh, Teav! It looks as though I am done for!
 "I am leaving to go to sleep upon the earth!"

822 They grabbed Tum and beat his entire body to a pulp.
 Blood flowed without end. They split open his head.
 Clots of blood choked him as he tried to speak.
 They told Miss. Teav that her husband was leaving her.

823 "Stay here my sweet beloved!
 "They stabbed me. They shot me dead!
 "My death bereft my mother of her child,
 "And let our family name disappear! I am going to die!"

824 Hearing this, Teav pleaded with them saying,
 "Please sirs, have pity on him!
 "If you must tie him, don't tie him with rattan.
 "Tie him with this black turban. Give me this one thing!"

825 They surrounded Tum and tied him with rope.

They stabbed at his face one after the other without compunction.
 They did not have the slightest thought of showing compassion.
 They committed sins of violence, even though Tum had done no wrong.

- 826 Tum, hurting, lay on his back, blacking out.
 He vomited blood. He had hot flashes like being dipped in boiling water.
 His thirst was so great, it practically cracked open his stomach.
 His flesh was pierced through. It was separated from the blood vessels.
- 827 Exhausted and defeated, he sobbed loudly.
 His weakness brought him to his knees. Gasping, he raised his hands.
 With palms joined, he prayed to The Triple Gems
 That sustain us every day and whose worth is so great.
- 828 "Oh, Master! If I am to die,
 "Please, Master, help me to be an iron fortress of strength.
 "Absolve me of my miserable sins, so they are not part of me.
 "Please enable me to reach heaven."
- 829 The people who had abducted Tum were a clever group.
 They had some sense of propriety as well. In their cruelty,
 The scoundrels said, "Tum! Try meditating
 "On the Buddha's teaching now!"
- 830 They brought Tum to an open space by the side of the road.
 Near the base of a *bodhi* tree, he fell unconscious.
 He lay next to the tree exhausted and dying.
 He gasped his last breath as his body stretched out stiffly.
- 831 He was dead. Extinguished was his material existence.
 Tum's body was impermanent like a pile of sand.
 The large gathering that is the world of people
 Encounters many pitiful schemes.
- 832 Tum's intimate love for Teav was without fault.
 Tum's wrongful death here was because of a woman.
 Lovers of the world!
 Oh! You should avoid this fate!
- 833 The people who had taken Tum away to be killed,
 Had already returned quickly
 To the hall. At the house, they greeted Orh-Chhuon
 And discussed what had happened at that time.
- 834 It was late at night,
 And Teav was lying down with her head covered, sad and confused.
 Miss. Nor, Teav's nanny, leaned toward Teav and said,
 "Oh, Teav! While I was sleeping I eavesdropped

- 835 "And heard people murmuring noisily together.
 "They said Tum had been taken away to be killed.
 "At mealtime, they surrounded him and grabbed him,
 "Then led him away quickly as planned."
- 836 Teav heard Nor say her husband was dead.
 Teav immediately jumped up. She screamed and wept saying,
 "Oh! The man I love with all my heart!
 "Oh, husband! When will I see your face?"
- 837 "I'm sorry, dear husband! We loved each other so much!
 "So much regret! I will never be able to close my eyes to sleep!
 "At eating time, I will have no inclination but to mourn.
 "Tum was tricked and drowned in boiling water until dead!"
- 838 "Oh, Tum! You used to respect me.
 "You never hit me because you loved me.
 "I will wait, watching the road for your arrival every day and month.
 "I regret this so much, my dear! Disbelief comes over me!"
- 839 "As far as I'm concerned, Tum didn't give up
 "Until losing his life. They took him away
 "And threw him in the forest. Oh, sweetheart!
 "Oh, Tum! Now you take your rest upon the ground!"
- 840 "You use the earth as a pillow!
 "Oh, Tum! You take the quick clouds,
 "Which block the sun, to be the roof of your forest cemetery
 "And darken my soul!"
- 841 "Oh, Tum! Enough already! I have no will to live!
 "It would be better to die along with you and let this life be done with!
 "My mother has no pity for her child!
 "She doesn't practice what she preaches!"
- 842 "Enough already, mother! You stay here!
 "I live just for you to boss around!
 "Now, your heart is like a pure Chinese!
 "You become angry because I don't agree to marry Nguon!"
- 843 "You go ahead and marry him yourself,
 "And take your plan to its end!
 "What to do? I must take care lest I run into
 "The guests coming in droves to see Nguon the groom."
- 844 "I must bid goodbye to this life today.
 "Such is the consummate evil taking place here.
 "That decided, I only wish to act quickly."

"Nor, don't regret this. Nor..."

- 845 Teav knelt down and composed herself quickly.
She raised joined hands to her head.
After bowing three times, she spoke,
"I offer homage to the Buddha,
- 846 "The Dhamma, and the Sangha.
"At this moment, I ask you for help,
"Supreme Indra, as well as that of your divine sons.
"Please help me to be fast and effective as I have vowed.
- 847 "I pray you will hide my body.
"I depend on you to put me out of sight. Please gods,
"Conceal me. Don't allow anyone
"To find me as is my wish.
- 848 "Nor! Please, sister Nor, pity me!
"Go get a knife and give it to me!"
Nor had the knife, and they both left.
Intending to go to Tum, they continued on.
- 849 Reaching the field, they entered the forest and searched for Tum.
They saw some children in a noisy group. They were playing while
Tending water buffalo, making sure they didn't eat the rice paddy.
Teav stood and yelled, calling them to come in a hurry.
- 850 Teav greeted them nicely then instructed them.
"Now, brothers and sisters, listen to what I have to tell you.
"Go to the house of the person who is my mother.
"Children, keep going until reaching the house of the wedding.
- 851 "People will still be eating. Some of them drinking
"Excitedly. Now, children, you must sing out,
'All elders! Listen to me!
'Wedding guests one and all! Teav has gone to kill herself!
- 852 'They have gathered together into one what were three bodies!
'She died in the cemetery where earlier in the day
'They had brought Tum to be put to death.
'His death beneath the *bodhi* tree is but a sacrifice to the Buddha!
- 853 "Remember children what I have told you! I must leave you now."
The children took the water buffaloes by the ring and led them forward.
Teav walked on until finding the exposed
Body of Tum. She called Nor to get the knife.
- 854 Teav lay down next to her husband and grasped his hand.

With the areca knife, she slashed at herself,
Severing the column of her throat. In death,
Their two bodies were entwined and overlapped in union.

- 855 All three, the two women and the man, together in death.
The corpse of Tum, whom they slaughtered without discussion,
As well as the corpses of the women, dead because of Tum.
They went to meet him by slitting their own throats.
- 856 To speak now of the children who still remembered clearly
The words of the excellent Teav. Remembering without
Forgetting at all, they went up to the house and barged into the wedding
party.
They dared to sit down among them, and spoke at risk.
- 857 They sang out shrilly, and everyone turned their heads.
Sitting in the middle of the circle of the wedding ensemble,
They bellowed sadly, calling the parents.
“All ye grandfathers and grandmothers!
- 858 “Listen! Men and women! This thing
“Should be considered carefully! You should stop what you’re doing!
“Wedding guests one and all, Teav has disappeared.
“She sent me to tell you they have died all together!”
- 859 The parents didn’t hear clearly what they said.
They dropped their plates and stood up awkwardly.
“Shhh... Don’t speak! Let’s hear them out.”
They got up and went hurriedly to the children making unpleasant faces.
- 860 Orh-Chhuon questioned them. “Children, sing that once more!
“This time, my children without mincing your words.
“When you get it clear, you can eat!
“Don’t worry about telling the truth, children!”
- 861 The children sang once again slurring their words together.
Hearing them grumble, the children changed around their evasive reply.
“Oh, sir! Tum and Teav are dead on their backs!
“Dead as well is Miss. Nor, Teav’s servant!
- 862 “We are thirsty for rice wine! Please, grandfather, get some for us!
“Please bring us a tray of rice and food
“With pork meat, venison, chicken, duck and fish!”
The children ate the food and stopped speaking completely.
- 863 Everyone hurried to go
Search the house. They bent over every corner calling out.
They looked for Teav and Nor everywhere.

They had not lost hope, not believing what the children had said.

- 864 The old woman who was Teav's mother was frustrated.
She was unnerved as though a cooking fire burned under her.
She trembled. Her head shook.
She was deathly pale, unable to accept or understand what was happening.
- 865 She was sad-faced, pale and tense with anger,
Enraged and frantic.
She cursed Teav's servants unchecked. "Do you know
"Anything about keeping a close eye on her?"
- 866 "None of you thought
"That you had better attend to her all together!
"That perverted thief was allowed to snatch her away fearlessly
"And cut up her head into seven pieces!"
- 867 "You fools dared to let my child disappear!
"You were not careful! You have only words!
"You're only good for telling lies, eating and shitting!"
Turning around, they saw Tum's body. They jumped in terror.
- 868 They didn't know at all what to make of it. The young toughs
Saw him and became more and more ecstatic.
People bunched together trying to get a look at them.
Teav's servants gawked in confusion. "They look like chickens and ducks!"
- 869 The head servant joined them.
She answered directly, "They are powerful! Don't try to get too close!
"We are all people, not ghosts!
"Teav, who is her daughter, truly said
- 870 "She was going down there to defecate.
"We tried to dissuade her in every way,
"But she refused to listen. Why, grandmother and grandfather,
"Is it normal for people to be at odds with others?"
- 871 "As for the other older women who took time to see to Teav,
"Normally, impetuous people don't know how to think about what they're
doing.
"Very angry, they proceed in ways that are bad. Neither did the parents
"Sternly guide her. They called her only to say this or that.
- 872 "They didn't know how to take anyone's words into consideration.
"Other elders as well knew the situation.
"This Teav very clearly had a husband.
"Why they forced her into the marriage with Nguon, I don't know."

- 873 Teav's mother listened closely. She was nearly out of her mind.
 "Oh, Teav! From the beginning, your temperament was different.
 "You were very different from me like a bone!
 "I was stern with you because of this, and so I talked to you that way!
- 874 "I said I would give you to Orh-Chhuon!
 "It's too much! Tum cursed you! He cut you up!
 "He shot you! He threw you away! He cut out your insides!
 "To kill you again, they scorn you in death!
- 875 "What wrongdoing have I committed?
 "I only gave you life and arranged your marriage,
 "So that Orh-Chhuon would spread his wealth.
 "Rings and gold belts, I wished to give you,
- 876 "To let you wear them.
 "His possessions would be your dowry.
 "Now, my precious dear is gone forever!
 "Teav, my child! You were everything to me!"
- 877 At that time, Teav's mother suffered alone.
 Delirious, her mind spun ceaselessly.
 She stumbled along, mixing up day and night.
 Thinking about everything at once, she walked on, calling out to people.
- 878 At that time, all of the wedding guests
 Threw away their plates, bottles, and baskets of rice.
 They threw away the pots. They threw away the frying pans and stomped
 on them.
 Some carried away the already boiled beef.
- 879 Fearing for their lives, they hid or ran, calling for help.
 The grandchildren went home immediately.
 Entering the forest, they kept a close eye out, afraid someone would grab
 them
 And kill them like Tum and add them to the group.
- 880 The royal official Orh-Chhuon and Nguon, his son,
 Were very angry. Trying to control themselves, they got up hurriedly.
 They left and went to the forest until recognizing the bodies of
 Tum, Teav and Nor. They were truly dead.
- 881 Approaching them, they pulled Tum's corpse that was still tied up.
 They decided to take him away to bury close by.
 They loosened and took the *pha-hom*. Looking closely,
 They saw blood drip down. Despite themselves, they became spooked.
- 882 Extending their hands, they quickly grabbed the body away.

Recognizing the top of Teav's beautiful head,
Orh-Chhuon became frightened. He raised joined hands
And prayed to the gods.

883 After burying the corpses, Orh-Chhuon returned to the house.
Wanting revenge, he called Teav's mother to blame her.
"You old perverted thief! You opened your mouth
"Once too often for your own good!

884 "Seeing I have wealth that is quite satisfactory,
"You talked rot! You fraud!
"Your plan, old lady, very clearly was
"To add my slaves to yours!"

Part 11 (885-1044)

The Punishment of Orh-Chhuon and Teav's Mother

(Pech's flight back to the Palace; the King's rage at hearing of Tum's death; the King's vow to punish Orh-Chhuon; the King's journey to Tbhong Khmom; Orh-Chhuon's fear of the King after receiving word of his arrival; the King's rejection of Orh-Chhuon's appeal for mercy; the judgment of the Ministers; the punishment; the King's return to the Palace)

885 This scene, if told, would go on and on,
So we will digress and not present any more of it.
Instead, we will continue by taking this opportunity to describe
Venerable Pech, who has emerged from hiding in the forest.

886 He had hid nearby, fearful of the power of Orh-Chhuon.
Nguon, his son, was planning
To destroy Tum's life. Tum's plan to steal Teav from him
Brought fear to everyone involved.

887 When Pech had realized this, he went alone
Into the hilly forest of reeds and *thaeng* trees near the braziers
And *teal* trees and short trees in the cemetery.
He boarded a boat and lay flat and motionless.

888 He was worried and tense.
He was nearly scared to death.
Well into dusk, it had become completely silent.
Pech was anxious about being separated from Tum.

889 Pech was unable to focus his thoughts.
He was unable to sleep. His face was pale.

He laid his arm over his forehead and burst into tears.
 "Oh, Tum! You have abandoned me! I am distraught!

890 "I loved you truly! Now, you've left me!
 "Oh, Tum! Your Pech is left all alone!
 "Your little brother lies upon the ground of a wild glade.
 "The calls of the crows and kites blend together.

891 "I accompanied you both day and night.
 "We never stopped to rest.
 "Since we lived at the Grand Palace,
 "We resided together with never a problem.

892 "We never left the Palace.
 "When the King called for us,
 "Oh, Tum! We went to have an audience with his Highness
 "And surpassed everyone else with our abilities!

893 "The King showed mercy on you.
 "He bestowed Miss. Teav upon you whom he admired.
 "His compassion for you and I would not endure.
 "Because of Nguon, you lost the glory that was yours for years to come."

894 Venerable Pech hid his face. In sorrow, he cried.
 He raised his hands and saluted.
 "Oh, spirit of Tum! Your little brother now,
 "On this day, for good or bad I ask to take leave.

895 "Tum, you must remain, my dear brother.
 "Now Tum, don't hold a grudge against me.
 "Go up to partake in the happiness of heaven.
 "Let's pray to meet together again in the next life."

896 This will tell of Pech's journey.
 He planned to slip out unseen.
 We will tell of Pech constrained by worry,
 As he tried to give orders expediently to the others

897 Who were his comrades to hurry.
 Pech told them, "Untie the boat quickly!
 "Store the oars and mooring post so we can leave!
 "Don't delay! Let's get going!"

898 Pech's comrades had simultaneously scrambled into the boat.
 The chopping of the oars panicked the fish that darted away.
 Some dove and some swam for cover in the grass.
 The oars drove deep through the water. Absorbed, they rowed

- 899 A long distance until emerging at the head of Svay Island.
The sun was setting in the distance. They turned closer to the disk.
Directly westward, it hung on the horizon.
Then the sun disappeared behind a mountain range.
- 900 They tried to row faster in order to reach the Palace,
Then stopped the boat to rest in the water.
They paddled to the shore intending to eat.
Pech kept thinking of poor Tum.
- 901 Pech was not thirsty or hungry. He didn't eat at all.
He missed Tum more and more.
Remembering Tum, he cried, unable to restrain himself.
"Oh, Tum! Where have you gone?"
- 902 "I don't see you anymore! Tum, you are truly my soul mate.
"My marvelous brother has gone away. Heavy loads were divided between us.
"You are no longer among the living. You didn't even say goodbye.
"Tum has left his fiancé. There is no doubt.
- 903 "They did away with your life without discussion.
"They cut short your years to the point of death.
"Without a thought, they dragged you to an open grave,
"All because of unfortunate Teav, whose mother insisted she marry Nguon.
- 904 "Evil has taken over everything!
"You couldn't restrain yourself. Why didn't you remember
"The Abbot's prediction that there would be bad consequences?
"His words should have been taken as a medicine to prevent this.
- 905 "To put it another way, evil is like an iron bludgeon.
"When it beats on someone, that person will die a certain death.
"It won't spare your life like the son of a noble family.
"This is according to the teachings which the Buddha spoke."
- 906 At dawn, the sun shone.
Pech was frustrated and alone.
He told everyone, "We must forge ahead
"As fast as possible! I fear we'll never arrive!"
- 907 The oarsmen would not stop until reaching the Palace.
As evening approached, a stillness
Overshadowed the world
Edging out the daylight.
- 908 They gathered up the equipment and oars and carried them over their
shoulders

And made their way to the Palace immediately.
Some broke off from the group to go home. The women greeted their husbands,
And they exchanged news since their separation.

- 909 Soon all of the people from here had gathered to hear the news.
“When you went to Tbong Khmom, was everything all right?”
Some of the men told the people that Tum had died.
Then they left to meet the King.
- 910 Coming before the King, Pech positioned himself carefully. His hands
Were raised over his head as he bowed to salute him.
He addressed the King, “Your Highness dispatched me to Tbong Khmom
“To give notice to your subjects regarding the marriage of Tum and Teav.
- 911 “As your humble servant, I must report that
“Orh-Chhuon has executed Tum.
“Your Highness, show pity on me! I fear your anger!
“Spare me! Let me live!
- 912 “Tum died along with the two others, making it three persons in all.
“He guessed that Teav and Nor would continue to live.
“He didn’t know then what his actions would lead to.
“Now, Teav and Nor are dead also.”
- 913 The King listened to Pech describe the situation.
He became frightfully angry. He spoke, “You!
“Tell the Infantry
“And the Royal Servants to assemble quickly!
- 914 “Go call the Royal Ministers
“To perform religious offerings. Have them hurry!
“Make ready the Royal Seat for
“Foot gear and water this morning!
- 915 “Tell the commanding officer of the Army
“Not to delay a minute!
“Go grab that home wrecker whose wrongdoing knows no end!
“For what he’s dared to do, he’ll be reduced to ashes!
- 916 “The scoundrel dared to oppose me!
“For that crime, he will be chopped up, boiled, harrowed over, and buried
alive!
“His dead body will be pounded into the earth!
“Don’t doubt me for one second, Orh-Chhuon!
- 917 “He dared to tear and burn up my command!
“For his crime, tie up and shoot that Nguon, his son!

"Make every last one of them suffer for their crimes!
"His brothers and sisters who joined in his work!"

- 918 At that time, the court officials and Royal Ministers listened to
The King's orders. They bowed and crept away,
And withdrew from the Palace to go to their homes to meet together.
Being rushed, they did not wait to take action.
- 919 They sped up to meet the deadline.
The King gave orders to make preparations for the journey to Tbong
Khmom.
Orders were given for equipment to be made ready.
All kinds of meats were quickly wrapped up and sacks of rice and plates
were prepared.
- 920 They packed the provisions in containers,
Along with various kinds of spices.
When they finished preparing, they entered the Palace to inform the King
directly.
The King ordered them to prepare his things.
- 921 His entire regalia was pure gold.
The resplendent and divinely beautiful jeweled crown.
The glorious King carefully
Put on the gold adornments and bathed his face.
- 922 The King had already ensconced himself.
He called the young Queen
And said, "Sweet beloved,
"You and our oldest son
- 923 "Must stay behind, sweetheart.
"Don't be concerned for me.
"You must protect and represent
"The Palace. It is the Royal Army's turn
- 924 "To alert the people everywhere of this matter,
"And warn them of the necessary consequences.
"The King's reputation must remain spotless.
"We must assume the responsibility to protect it against wrongdoing.
- 925 "I won't be gone for very long.
"I will return quickly, too. Don't doubt this.
"Since I am the reigning King,
"You must remain here as the august First Queen."
- 926 After instructing the Queen, King Rea-mea,
Who had power over the land

And domain of Indra and Vishnu,
Started off and departed.

- 927 They marched around the Palace together three times.
All the infantry troops displayed aloft
The King's regalia as they paraded along the road
Almost to the royal vessel in the village.
- 928 Exactly in synch, the army fired their weapons,
As the King boarded the vessel.
Into the royal vessel intended for his Majesty,
The troops boarded and joined together to back-paddle the boat to leave.
- 929 The fancy, curved boats pulled away in formation.
Straight ahead, they surged forward one after the other.
Keeping close to the royal vessel, the oarsmen proceeded straight ahead,
And the laiñ fish churned through
- 930 The river. Aboard the King's vessel,
The Army Orchestra prepared
To entertain the handsome King.
The clever singers broke into song.
- 931 "Oh, *sakavh!* Great Siva,
"Who is the refuge in every direction of the world!
"King Rea-mea is strong and brave!
"His power is incomparable!
- 932 "*Sakavh!* Noble Wind, scudding the clouds!
"They hover and come to block the sunlight.
"It is cool as though someone fanned our bodies.
"The King relaxes. Nothing worries him.
- 933 "*Sakavh!* We are young.
"Our voices are not developed, Master!"
Since it was night, the King was sleepy. It was pitch dark.
Laying down his head, the King got comfortable.
- 934 The King began to fall sleep.
He reclined quietly, unable to relax. Thoughts turned in his mind.
The thoughts would not subside. He was choked with emotion
He stirred and bolted up.
- 935 Troubled, the King thought about Tum.
His death tore him away from the Monarch.
Feeling abandoned, the King fell silent.
Fixedly, he kept thinking about Tum.

- 936 The air was getting cool.
The sun eclipsed the moon.
The sky turned almost dark as people waved to greet the King.
They saluted him, raising their hands extended together.
- 937 They respectfully asked the King to dine with them.
A number of the wedding party gathered together along the shore.
A mother pushed eight young girls so to be seen by the King.
Despite all the commotion, the King slept the entire time.
- 938 Seeking an audience with the Monarch,
The All-Powerful and Supreme One,
The people approached him with their hands carefully joined.
The voices of the attractive young girls called out.
- 939 *"Sakavh! We ask to have an audience!
"We ask to come near Your Grace!"*
But the King seemed distant.
He was beside himself with regret for Tum.
- 940 The King was regretful, distant and unhappy.
He lay down but could not sleep. His face looked sad.
He continuously thought of Tum. He nearly collapsed.
It was not right that Tum lost his life without reason.
- 941 Horrible remorse beset him.
Then the King recovered and tried to be brave.
The various army troops that had to work
Tried to contain their worries, for they were in the service of the King.
- 942 They rowed the royal vessel while calling out to one another.
Announcing they were not far from their destination, the boats quickly
spread out.
One after the other, they formed a line.
Through the shallow water, they sped and reached some islands.
- 943 They arranged the boats in a neat row and informed the King,
Who was the protector of the world. He greatly missed Tum.
Each of the commanding officers then counted off all of the islands
To the best of his knowledge.
- 944 The King asked, "This island, what is its name?"
"Pardon me, I don't know. As I remember,
"The River Ta Ek, the River Ta Em
"And Roka follow converging directions."
- 945 The King questioned the official politely. "What else?"
The official, hearing the question, moved closer and answered quickly.

Bowing, he informed the King that the shore to the north had been subdued
By the army a long time ago.

- 946 They conversed until the head of the army answered.
“Dear, Sir!” He prostrated himself before the King.
Bowing, he spoke making comparisons
And associations relating to the names of the places.
- 947 He addressed the King politely, going on at risk
Of exile. “That is the River Kuy, Your Excellency.
“We will go beyond there, without deviating from our course.
“Straight ahead now is
- 948 “A place called Srok Tlok Chrow. After a while,
“We will come to Port Chi.” The army officer informed the King
completely,
Listing the places ahead without reluctance.
“The next region is Taer Chi Hai. Then,
- 949 “Further on, we will soon reach Port Pkay M’raech.”
Just then, the King got up from his bed feeling relieved.
He thoroughly washed himself. Not long afterwards,
He questioned Pech, who responded in turn.
- 950 Pech turned toward the King whose face seemed angry.
He crept straight up to him and bowed.
“Forgive my hesitancy. Have mercy on me.”
In a while it would be evening, and they would not be able to travel.
- 951 Then all the troops of the King’s army assembled.
Attendants prepared the food and white, polished plates.
They polished the glasses and various utensils.
They set out the things at bathing time, then the King sat to eat.
- 952 They summoned the young *pinpeat* orchestra
And selected an attractive person to be brought
To join the group.
Sitting comfortably, she projected her voice to accompany the music.
- 953 “*Sakavh!* August and all-powerful Rea-mea!
“Over your life, there are disturbed feelings.
“Give us to understand your feelings. Make us current with them.
“Your beauty and grace are perpetual.
- 954 “*Sakavh!* Oh, the flower of the wild *kravan* tree!
“The afternoon arrives, and it is fragrant still.
“The fragrant smells waft deep into the night.
“Now, Your Highness wants to move on.

- 955 "Oh, Master! You have tremendous merit!
 "Your journey will proceed tomorrow at dawn.
 "The sun will shine through the intermittent rain.
 "Your body is trim, fit and attractive.
- 956 "You could be confused with a god descended
 "From Heaven and just come here."
 Then the King spoke to his advisers. "If we
 "Consider carefully and quickly,
- 957 "Which course of action shall we take here?"
 The advisers stopped to think, then described their strategy in detail.
 "If you please, don't rush this.
 "Your Highness should adjourn to the Royal Pavilion.
- 958 "Wait as official word is dispatched,
 "And the people inform each other of your arrival.
 "A royal envoy has departed with utmost speed
 "To the home of Orh-Chhuon already."
- 959 "Mobilize all the troops and people
 "To build a roadway quickly.
 "If anyone refuses to cooperate, we will take him away
 "To be killed without giving him a chance."
- 960 The King listened as all the military advisers
 Addressed him. Then he spoke,
 "Ah, dispatch a message to Orh-Chhuon quickly. Don't worry.
 "Organize it as soon as possible."
- 961 The team of advisers raised joined hands
 To salute the King. They wrote the message
 Then stamped it with the Royal Seal and gave orders that it be delivered
 Straightaway by royal decree.
- 962 The messenger delivered the missive to its destination.
 He personally climbed the stairs up to the house and spoke forth.
 "Orh-Chhuon! A prepared letter
 "Stamped with the Royal Seal of His Excellency!"
- 963 Governor Orh-Chhuon, his son and wife,
 Heard the messenger. They were nearly feverish as they shook head to toe.
 Terrified, their mouths trembled. They were scared to death.
 They had ghostly expressions, charred black.
- 964 Orh-Chhuon's wife and son roused themselves and hurried inside the
 house.
 They took out a *taok* table and waited.

Keeping still, they endured all five senses,
Remembering with fear the King's power.

- 965 They raised joined hands in salute.
They prostrated themselves on the ground while positioning their hands,
Putting them above their heads.
Then they prayed keeping themselves prostrate.
- 966 Orh-Chhuon carefully listened to the message.
It told them to have a road built.
It told them to make the road elevated and appropriate for
The King to travel along and view the village.
- 967 The servant who delivered the King's message
To Orh-Chhuon finished and turned back directly.
We will stop and digress
To describe Orh-Chhuon upon knowing the situation.
- 968 Obsessive thoughts turned inside him.
His guess was that the King would not pity him.
Being upset, he swooned.
"Oh, me! It seems the end has come!"
- 969 He spoke to his son and wife.
"Oh, child! Your father is bitterly angry!
"It seems we will die all together!
"Misery will beset us soon!
- 970 "It seems His Highness
"Will sentence me to death since he
"Had given a letter to Tum as well
"Saying I am not devoted to the Monarch."
- 971 Orh-Chhuon feared the Monarch's power.
The King would punish not only him.
He consulted his family. Although he thought they should hide
From the King, there was no hiding place.
- 972 Orh-Chhuon was in fear for his life.
With mounting worries, he gave orders to start
Making the elevated road to his armed forces
Who began shoveling, cutting and clearing the land.
- 973 After giving orders, Orh-Chhuon led his son to walk
Among the soldiers while giving commands. There wasn't anyone
Who dared refuse to comply with the Royal Edict,
For fear of the mighty King.

- 974 Nearly everyone held a hatchet, reaping hook or knife
To dig and pry out every last stick of bamboo.
Anyone without a son summoned their daughter
To lug earth upon her head or shoulders or in sacks with a raek-saeng.
- 975 Intimidated by the power of Orh-Chhuon's high rank,
The people listened to him, trembling with fear and respect.
Orh-Chhuon returned home
And decorated everyone, then went to greet
- 976 And prostrate himself before the King.
He was careful to prepare offerings of every type,
Including sugar palm, coconuts, betel nut, bananas, pineapple, jackfruit and
mango.
He scrambled to find every type of animal, such as white ibis,
- 977 Peacocks, turtledoves, pigeons and wild deer.
The meat, tendons and blood vessels were used as a base for soup.
He killed and took the horn of a rhinoceros as a lucky charm.
He fought off his worries and did not take a break.
- 978 Having found the offerings, he displayed them upon tables.
The smoked meats and grilled meats and deer jerky
Were arranged according to type. He divided everything among the
attendants,
And called for the village chiefs and their wives.
- 979 Gathering together the women and men of the delegation, Orh-Chhuon
Cautioned them to take care. For good results they were not
To bring their children along in case they cried
While the King was sleeping. This would not be tolerated.
- 980 After they arranged everything, they didn't stop to rest.
The men and women crowded around to load the offerings on their heads
and shoulders
Or use raek saing to carry them in baskets and trays.
An ox cart transported the seeds of the *beng* tree
- 981 To offer all the attendants of the First Queen.
Preparing and rolling cigarettes, the young girls
Boasted shamelessly and stupidly about gambling.
Everyone bustled together and divided the cigarettes among themselves.
- 982 They left the house and arrived at the King's camp.
The King was in the Royal Pavilion.
Various dignitaries and a team of advisors
Were having an audience with King Rea-mea who was the Supreme Leader.

- 983 In attendance were the Royal Ministers
Of the glorious Sovereign. It was a bad time for Orh-Chhuon to meet
The powerful and Great One,
Who governed victoriously over the four branches of the Army.
- 984 Governor Orh-Chhuon led the delegation,
Along with his son and wife, to present themselves before the King.
Coming closer, he saw His Grace,
The King, was meeting with his advisors.
- 985 The chief ministers and advisors
Were gathered before the King in close ranks.
Orh-Chhuon delivered the offerings,
Supposing that the King would show mercy on him.
- 986 After he presented all the offerings,
Orh-Chhuon raised his hands in salute over his head
And kept them properly positioned. During the meeting,
The King had no pity or respect for Orh-Chhuon.
- 987 King Rea-mea, the powerful and meritorious,
Who protected the people and was the overseer
Of all places and villages, including the Buddha's remains,
Listened, rumbling, ready to smash the offerings at any moment.
- 988 The Monarch glared at him, clearly displeased.
Unnerved, Orh-Chhuon's tears flowed, staining his face.
Seething with anger,
The King's intentions were still
- 989 Twisted and black. He was uneasy. He felt unclean.
He didn't want to let Orh-Chhuon go back.
He could not abate his anger.
He summoned The Royal Armed Forces.
- 990 "Now, all ministers! Gather to consider this crime!
"See that you do not show pity on this enemy thief!
"The ghostly derelict came here with his bundles of grilled meats!
"Take up the books and record his detainment."
- 991 The King told his advisers
And army commanders to confer.
The various ministers came to meet,
Prostrating themselves under the Monarch's gaze.
- 992 The King said, "All advisers,
"Confer and seek judgment according to your function.
"Whoever is guilty will be shackled and chained.

"He must be put in a dark prison to think about his crime.

993 "Don't have mercy! Use the women and men of Tbong Khmom
"To go forth to chop and drag
"The bamboo and wood. Have them cut, shovel and sweep the area
"Bare. Have them clean it up completely!

994 "The area will be used to dig a pit,
"A large hole. Then take a wide, long container
"And pound it into crossed lines bent backwards
"So it conforms to the shape of the pit."

995 The chief ministers listened to the King tell them
Angrily and loudly not to be too long in their deliberations.
The military commanders responded,
But the King could not relax or assuage his torment.

996 One advisor who had a brilliance
For understanding every kind of legal matter said,
"The corps of city guards should be divided up for a surprise attack
"And shackle or detain the provincial legal chief."

997 A minister responded,
"The jurisdiction of Orh-Chhuon is not legitimate any longer.
"This rascal secretly plotted against the King.
"The scoundrel dared to arrange the marriage of his son against the King's
orders."

998 Another military chief responded,
"Oh, dear sirs! Hold on, my brothers!
"Something else is true also, not for nothing
"Is the saying from our great-great grandparents' generation,

999 'There are hind legs because of the front legs.'
"The crime had to have been spread among his associates.
"Orh-Chhuon, Teav's mother, as well as their nephews and uncles,
"Their entire families are all implicated in this crime."

1000 The ministers conferred according to their function.
They made judgments using their understanding of good behavior
And the exact requirements of all laws. They stopped deliberating
And discussing in fine detail their thoughts.

1001 The legal advisors had not yet come to an agreement.
One responded saying, "We've had enough for now.
"No one should give judgment if we are not in complete
"Agreement with each other over the crime of each individual."

- 1002 The Army Chief concluded,
 "Tomorrow, we must meet until making
 "A decision." They assembled to debate the case back at the hall.
 "Sirs, don't make calculations based on opinion."
- 1003 An advisor took everything into consideration without any restraint,
 "Sirs, don't be surprised by any of these crimes.
 "As for the people who came and contributed to the unrest,
 "They came following the scheme of Orh-Chhuon himself.
- 1004 "They could not refuse for fear of his power.
 "He beat them. He cursed them. He harassed them.
 "For the crimes of all those people, I say
 "To arrange for their inclusion as hereditary slaves.
- 1005 "As for the crime of Orh-Chhuon, his son and wife,
 "And all the wealth of the entire family line,
 "The brothers, sisters and grandparents of that scoundrel,
 "Along with Teav's mother, they were all of one mind.
- 1006 "For their crime, they must be harrowed or plowed over!
 "They must be boiled alive in a frying pan and left to dissolve
 "Away to nothing!" The ministers
 Rendered judgment quickly and went to tell the King at once.
- 1007 They documented the time, day and month of their judgment,
 And passed the word along to the others.
 Then they called everyone to gather together
 To inform the King.
- 1008 They raised their hands holding the judgment of the Assembly.
 They placed it in small metal trays held above their heads.
 "On behalf of all of us,
 "I, Your Majesty, have rendered judgment."
- 1009 The august King glanced at the judgment approvingly.
 He replied immediately.
 "Ah! Quite correct, ministers.
 "The truth was not lost on you."
- 1010 The King told them, "Hurry!
 "Tomorrow at dawn, do not delay.
 "Select an elephant that is docile,
 "Because the children and women will want to parade along with me."
- 1011 The ministers of the Royal Court understood the situation.
 The Minister of War of the Supreme Commander,
 The Sovereign, did not sit still.

He called the groups of Royal Escorts to assemble.

- 1012 When they had gathered together, he told them to greet
The people's beloved Monarch.
"The procession will begin now. We must get in formation."
They fastened the howdah and positioned the mounting ladder.
- 1013 They sheathed the ivory tusks in front of the howdah,
And fastened the howdah frame to the elephant's tail.
They piled pillows inside and wrapped rugs around it to block the wind,
Then prepared a place for the Buddha image.
- 1014 They prepared the Royal Vehicle and decorated it
With an elegant motif.
Into the Royal Vehicle was placed the Buddha image before all else,
Decorated according to the traditional style.
- 1015 At that time, as for the august
Rea-mea – powerful and aesthetic, beloved
And awe inspiring – the King boarded the Royal Vehicle
As army troops followed in step, their hands holding weapons.
- 1016 The Royal Servants spread out in order.
Before and after, the forces were braced for action.
The King rode the elephant glowing with adornments.
The effulgence inspired fear and awe.
- 1017 The entire harem of concubines
Rode elephants gloriously decorated.
They rode behind the King in all his splendor,
Beaming confidence and fearing no one.
- 1018 The Chief Ministers and Royal Troops
Then mounted their elephants to escort the King.
Some rode white horses and galloped vigorously
Holding precious items, crossbows and firearms.
- 1019 The escort blocked the sun with parasols joyously.
They spread out in a neat circle gloriously happy.
The invading army proudly
Paraded up along the road to the Royal Pavillion.
- 1020 Having arrived, the troops formed close ranks to escort the King.
In departing,
The King looked around at the village and people
Forbidding anyone to remain.
- 1021 The Army's commanding officers

Had arranged themselves by rank and were waiting for
The ministers' wives and children to fall in line.
They were told to bow to receive the King.

- 1022 The orchestra played a tune exactly in step with the procession.
It was impressive how they kept the beat.
The musicians answered each other with exclamations and pauses,
Adroitly following the voices of the women.
- 1023 *"Sakavh!* Oh, sorrowful heart!
"Our faces can't help but show our pity.
"Our Master has traveled here with a troubled mind.
"Out of love for them, he is distracted.
- 1024 *"He has closely viewed the world on the way to Tbong Khmom.*
"He deeply mourns the loss of Tum.
"Tum used to please completely the powerful King.
"One should regret a life so incomprehensible.
- 1025 *"Sakavh!* Oh, wild komphleng flower!
"Quiet is the august Monarch.
"Although he has indomitable strength,
"He is confused, distant and extremely melancholy.
- 1026 *"Sakavh!* Oh, frangipani flower.
"The Sovereign stumbles out of worry.
"He strives to get there. What act separated them?
"Everyone here is so worried.
- 1027 *"Oh, loss! Your Highness, have mercy on us!*
"We beseech you, Master, to go away!
"Seek relief awhile as it is stifling hot!
"Then call everyone to carry you away."
- 1028 The august and supreme King did not relax.
He ordered to have the music stopped.
As for the group of young women singers,
The King said to have them leave.
- 1029 In an intimidating voice, he issued a decree,
Stating that only Satan could correct the situation.
He conferred with the ministers to get the punishment right,
Then called the Royal Guards directly.
- 1030 The Guards, compelled by the King,
Were told to go immediately and prepare for carrying out the punishment.
In accordance with their evil wrongdoing,
The guilty were gathered around the pit.

- 1031 The guards dug into the earth deep and wide,
Just neck-high. After, they summoned
Seven families, pushing aside the children.
Their relatives were overcome with misery.
- 1032 The guards then took the water buffaloes and yoked them to a metal
harrow.
They led them to rake over the guilty one pass.
The guards split open their heads without hesitation.
With that malicious act, the shoulders of the prisoners had disappeared.
- 1033 The guards assembled the big offenders,
And brought them forth without delay
To be boiled alive. "Now, guilty ones,
Don't you have anything to say for yourselves?"
- 1034 The guards lit a fire to bring the huge vat of water to a boil.
They piled the wood up high.
When the fire lowered, and the tongues of flame ceased in the furnace,
They threw in the bodies, and in an instant, they were consumed.
- 1035 They went up in smoke.
How pitiful! Who could help them now!
Their lives were reduced to ashes, one after the other!
This misery was because of acts that led them astray!
- 1036 We turn perplexed in the wheel of rebirth.
Every being, whether old or young,
Should accept misery and compose his thoughts.
That uncertainty, you cannot control.
- 1037 Because the Doctrine of Non-Self says, there is only void.
If we don't learn the Shore and Island, we will pass away in misery.
Anyone who commits sin inevitably
Falls deep down into hell.
- 1038 Now, all people! Women and men!
We are born as people in the world.
You have seen and heard this new composition.
Now, take heed and learn.
- 1039 Establish a direction. Don't guess when it comes to knowledge.
You must meditate on the causes of a problem.
Get to know everything until you are no longer confused.
Don't let anything stop you.
- 1040 Let's speak about the great Monarch.
Finished with his task, the King started back quickly

To return to the Royal Capital.
The officials of every group assembled together

1041 And escorted the King down from the Royal Carriage.
The soldiers all rowed their boats
Vigorously in formation, without faltering.
Everyone was excited upon arriving.

1042 His Majesty entered the Royal Palace
To the home where he normally stayed
In happiness and comfort.
The fortunate Sovereign was well pleased.

1043 The story of Tum Teav ends here.
Now, people, reflect on the story's plot
And every event. Don't shy away.
If you are confused about something, don't keep it to yourself.

1044 This story, the Venerable,
Who resides at the temple in Kamprau,
Has composed and given to future generations
To let all young people know.

CHAPTER 3:
Tum Teav
in
Cambodian Literary Criticism



The importance of *Tum Teav* in Cambodian literature and society has made it a popular topic of literary criticism, especially in the study guides produced in the 1960s and early 1970s, following Cambodia's independence from the French. This criticism largely focused on the authorship of the text, and the characters and events of the story, especially with regard to traditional codes of conduct and notions of power.

This chapter first looks at the context in which the critical texts on *Tum Teav* were written, with a focus on the nationalistic sentiment that followed independence. It then examines how Cambodian responses to French assessments of Khmer literature provided an impetus for the emergence of modern Cambodian literary institutions.

The Emergence of Cambodian Literary Criticism

Along with the development of a national curriculum of Khmer literature in the late 1950s came the first texts of Cambodian literary criticism and pedagogical manuals. These texts, written by influential scholars such as Nhok Thaem, Ly Theam Teng and Leang Hap An, defined and commented on the works that constituted the Cambodian literary canon.¹ They were also part of a nationalistic sentiment that came to a head after independence.

In this highly politicized atmosphere, there was a rush of activity to define Cambodian national and cultural identity. Written and spoken language were examined in order to replace French loan words with Khmer. A commission was established at the Buddhist Institute to collect and document traditional folk stories.² The University of Fine Arts began to choreograph a repertoire of folk dances that depicted the daily lives of different Cambodian ethnic groups.³ Along with the Angkor Wat and Cambodian classical or court dance, the texts that comprised the literary canon, including *Tum Teav*, were an important feature of Cambodia's new cultural identity as an independent and modern nation.⁴

After a hundred years of French influence, the debate over the texts comprising the literary canon was often framed in terms of Western conventions and in response to French assessments, for the most part negative, of Cambodian literature.⁵ Throughout the colonial period French academics found little they considered “literary” about Khmer writing. The repeated use of stock heroes, familiar settings, and story lines based on the lives of the Buddha led French scholars to conclude that Khmer literature lacked the brilliance and originality they found in the temple architecture. In the words of the French abbot and scholar, Joseph Guesdon, “toute la littérature khmère n’étant qu’une suite des poèmes sur les vies du Buddha” [all Khmer literature is only a sequence of poems about the life of the Buddha].⁶

Guesdon’s dismissive comment, made in 1906, was one of the earliest Western assessments of the literary value of Khmer writing.⁷ As the inventor of the first Khmer type and avid reader and publisher of Khmer religious and didactic texts, Guesdon was well qualified to critique Cambodian literature. In doing so, however, he was confronted with an unfamiliar aesthetic. Guesdon’s Christian sensibilities were repulsed by scenes of the future Buddha giving away his children or engaging in promiscuity. Guesdon concluded that “si le brahmanisme a créé des chefs-d’oeuvre d’architecture au Cambodge, le buddhisme a tué la littérature” [if Brahmanism created the major works of Cambodian architecture, Buddhism killed literature].⁸

The Cambodian response to French assessments of Cambodian literature was expressed in the many nationalistic Khmer language journals and newspapers that appeared after independence. The introduction to Khim Sam Or’s 1961 text, *The History of Cambodian Literature*, exemplifies this view:

Under the iron yoke of imperial colonialism of the last 100 years, our people have been far removed from our culture. The French colonialists made us study and use their language and swallow the culture of their corrupt imperialism. Thus, many of us became stricken by their contempt and forgot the legacy of work of the Khmer people who have always had their own literature.⁹

The emergence of modern Cambodian literary institutions was due in part to a nationalistic response to negative French assessments of Khmer literature. Using *Kambuja Suriya*, the periodical of the Buddhist Institute, as a primary reference, the sections below identify events that reflect the desire for both independence and Western recognition of Cambodian national identity.

Kambuja Suriya

For a number of reasons, *Kambuja Suriya* offers a unique opportunity for studying the emergence of modern Cambodian literary institutions. The magazine was a publication of the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh for a continuous period of almost fifty years, beginning in 1927. Furthermore, it was one of the most prominent Khmer forums for serious scholarship in Cambodia during that time. Also, unlike so many other important resources destroyed by the Khmer Rouge, the complete collection is still intact and available for study.

Because the Buddhist Institute (initially called the Royal Library of Cambodia) was created by the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), the French were directly involved in the production of *Kambuja Suriya*, especially during the early years. For example, Suzanne Karpelès was "conservateur de la Bibliothèque Royale," and articles by the French scholar Louis Finot, director of EFEO, appear in a number of the early issues. Thus, *Kambuja Suriya* provides valuable information on the two key relationships for studying the emergence of modern Cambodian literary institutions. The first is the relation between French and Khmer language and scholarship, and the second is the relation between religion and literature.

To begin, consider the 1943 revision of *Kambuja Suriya's* bilingual table of contents. Prior to 1943, all of the items presented there were listed in a single undifferentiated group, with the Khmer version on one page and the French translation on the next. Beginning with the first issue of 1943, however, the items contained in the table of contents are divided into two groups under the headings *phnaek aksar sastr* [literary part] and *phnaek sasana* [religious part] on the Khmer page, and "Partie littéraire" and "Partie religieuse" on the French page. This event is significant because it indicates a deliberate intention to designate the identity of an article as being either primarily religious or literary.¹⁰

Two earlier events point to the emerging distinction between "literary" and "religious" texts in Cambodia: Kim Hak's introduction to his novel *The Waters of the Tonle Sap* published by *Kambuja Suriya* in 1939, and *Kambuja Suriya's* 1942 Khmer translation of the article "La littérature cambodgienne" by the eminent French scholar George Coedès.¹¹ Here, the Khmer term *aksar sastr* [literature] was used to translate the title of Coedès' article. It also appears in Kim Hak's introduction to his novel and in the first Khmer dictionary published in 1938 by the Buddhist Institute under the direction of Venerable Chuon Nath. However, there is no entry for *aksar sastr* in either Guesdon's 1930 or Tandard's 1935 Khmer-French dictionaries.

This would indicate that this Khmer term for “literature” was just coming into use in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Furthermore, its appearance in Kambuja Suriya’s table of contents, initially in 1939 and subsequently in 1942, seems to anticipate the literary dimension to the publication formalized by the revision of the table of contents in 1943.

A comparison of Coedès’ article, which was written in French with its Khmer translation published by *Kambuja Suriya* in 1942, is useful in highlighting the attempt to assert the value of Khmer literature in response to negative French assessments of Khmer writing, particularly in relation to Thai literature.

Coedès’ article begins by applying the term “littérature” in its widest sense in order to assess the literary value of Cambodian writing, beginning with the first known inscriptions of the 7th century. In each case, however, Coedès finds little evidence of literary value in Khmer writing. He discounts the classical inscriptions written in Sanskrit because of the possible involvement of Indian scholars in their composition. As for the classical inscriptions written in Khmer, Coedès states that their limited subject matter and uninspired style make them primarily of linguistic value.

Despite the apparent absence of Khmer literary writing during this period, Coedès does try to make a case for the existence of an ancient Khmer literature. He argues that the culture which produced the remarkable architectural accomplishments of the Angkor period, including the temple bas-reliefs depicting scenes from Indian legends, must have produced other writing besides these Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions. Coedès concludes that there must have been Khmer vernacular versions of the Indian legends written on animal skins that were subsequently destroyed by time and weather. Consequently, according to Coedès, we are ignorant of the Cambodian literary accomplishments that must have accompanied the splendors of the Angkor Empire.

Turning to the modern inscriptions that date from the invasion of Angkor by the Thais in the 15th century, Coedès once again finds a lack of originality and inspiration. He attributes this to the radical change in Cambodian religion and culture following the decline of the Khmer civilization under Thai domination. Coedès reasons that the post-Angkor rulers would have been too preoccupied with defending themselves against further Thai invasions to support literary production. Reminiscent of Guesdon, he goes on to say that the Theravadan Buddhism that replaced the Mahayanan Buddhism and Brahmanism of the Angkor period discouraged personal expression and moreover was an “enemy of art.” Finally, Coedès

suggests that Khmer literary expression during the modern period was overshadowed by Thai influence, which, ironically, was a transformation of the previous influence of ancient Khmer culture on the Thais.

It appears that Coedès' appraisal of Cambodian literature goes out of its way to find correspondences between the literary quality of the writing and historical circumstances. Accordingly, he argues for the existence of valuable Khmer literary texts which reflect the culture of the ancient Angkor aristocracy but have been lost to time and weather; then he dismisses the extant writing of the subsequent period of decline as uninspired or the product of Thai influence. More interesting than the accuracy of Coedès' appraisal of Cambodian literature, however, is the response to his article by *Kambuja Suriya* as expressed in its 1942 Khmer translation.

While *Kambuja Suriya* certainly recognized the authority, and to some extent, validity of Coedès' argument, it also attempted to resist it in order to assert the literary value of Khmer writing. A comparison of the French original and Khmer translation reveals the omission of significant passages of the original that describe Khmer literature as inferior to or dependent on Thai literature. For example, referring to the literary value of the ancient inscriptions written in Khmer discussed above, Coedès writes:

L'intérêt des inscriptions khmères est considérable en ce sens qu'elles nous révèlent un bon nombre des anciennes institutions du pays, mais du point de vue de la "littérature," elles valent presque uniquement par ce qu'elles nous font connaître de l'état ancien du langage; c'est en vain qu'on y chercherait comme dans les inscriptions siamoises de Sukhothai (XIIIe-XIVe siècles) un cachet tant soit peu littéraire. (italics added)¹²

[The interest of the Khmer inscriptions is considerable in the sense that they reveal to us a good number of the ancient institutions of the country, but from the point of view of "literature" their worth is almost only in what they make known to us of the previous state of the language; *it is in vain that one will search there, as in the Siamese inscriptions of Sukhothai (XIIIth-XIVth centuries), for a {literary} character, so little of it is literary.*]

The Khmer translation deletes the final statement, in which the literary value of the Khmer inscriptions is seen by Coedès as inferior to that of the Thais. Then on the next page, where Coedès discusses the loss of Khmer literature written on animal skins, the Khmer translation omits the entire paragraph in which the following statement appears:

Cette ignorance ne se rapporte pas seulement à la période qui s'étend du XIIIe au XIVe siècle et qui vit fleurir l'ancienne civilisation khmère.

Elle s'étend aux siècles suivants. Si malgré ses revers, le Cambodge a connu quelque production littéraire, elle a disparu de la même façon et l'on ne peut s'en faire une idée approchée que par ce qui reste de la littérature siamoise de l'époque d'Ayuthya (1350-1767).¹³

[This ignorance doesn't concern only the period which extends from the XIIIth to the XIVth centuries and which saw the flourishing of the ancient Khmer civilization. It extends to the following centuries. If, despite its setbacks, Cambodia experienced some literary production, it disappeared in the same way and one can only get an approximate idea of it through what remains of the Siamese literature of the Ayuthya period (1350-1767).]

A third instance of the omission of negative comparisons with Thai literature in the Khmer translation can be seen in the concluding paragraph of the first section of the article, which omits the phrase "*vis-à-vis de la siamoise*" from the following sentence:

Telle semble être l'explication plus vraisemblable du marasme de la littérature cambodgienne et de son infériorité *vis-à-vis de la siamoise*, dont le premier monument est cette magnifique inscription du roi Râma Khamhèng, cri de victoire et d'orgueil qui fait déjà pressentir dès la fin du XIIIe siècle le déclin du vieil empire khmèr.¹⁴ (*italics added*)

[Such seems to be the most reasonable explanation of the miasma of Cambodian literature and its inferiority *in relation to the Siamese*, whose first (literary) achievement is this magnificent inscription of Râma Khamhèng, a cry of victory and pride which anticipated, as soon as the end of XIIIth century, the decline of the old Khmer empire.]

Besides the omission of "*vis-à-vis de la siamoise*," which mitigates the unfavorable comparison with the Thais, Coedès' concluding statement is further softened in its Khmer translation, which I translate as follows:

All of those things should supply the reasons that made Khmer literature not have any improvement into the following period, during which time the Siamese built their first temple whose brilliant inscription of King Rama Khamheng is a cry of victory and glory and lets it be known that the ancient Khmer Kingdom had begun to decline from then on (the end of the 13th century).

These three excerpts demonstrate the magazine's attempt to defend the literary value of Khmer writing and anticipate the formal inclusion of a literary section in its table of contents beginning in 1943.

Another example of the attempt to assert the literary value of Khmer

writing can be seen in *Kambuja Suriya's* 1939 publication of Kim Hak's introduction to his novel *The Waters of the Tonle Sap*, four years prior to the revision of its table of contents. The story was serialized in three issues that year, the first of which was preceded by an introduction in which Kim Hak states his reasons for writing the story. The introduction begins with his own negative assessment of Khmer literature, intellectuals and esteem for French and Western influence.

This story, "Waters of the Tonle Sap," came to be from my feelings of disappointment and concern about our Khmer literature which is not very advanced. These days the ignorance which had (previously) overcome all Cambodians has progressively lessened due to the goodwill of the great French nation that has brought intellectual works of every kind to all the people of Cambodia.¹⁵

While the example of Western culture is apparently praised in the opening paragraphs of the introduction, the French negative assessment of Khmer literature is refuted in the next paragraph, where Kim Hak seems to revise his position and suggest that his reason for writing the story was to assert the existence of Khmer literature:

As for my efforts to write this story, (they) come from two kinds of wishes:

- 1) To end the talk of those who represent the country who only know our Khmer language slightly and say the Khmer don't have any books or stories that are easy to read. (They say) there are many books but they are only about Buddhism or the life of the Buddha. Many are composed in verse that makes someone who knows a little Khmer read without understanding.¹⁶

Given the fact that Kim Hak's introduction was written in 1939, during French rule of Cambodia, his criticism of the French, however subtle, was nevertheless a bold act. Not only was *The Waters of the Tonle Sap* the first Cambodian modern novel, but was also one of the earliest attempts to assert the value of Khmer writing and culture in opposition to the French.¹⁷

There are some other interesting events that signal the emergence of *Kambuja Suriya* as one of Cambodia's first modern literary institutions and most important locations for articulating Cambodian cultural and national identity. Beginning in 1962, for example, the literary section of *Kambuja Suriya* is introduced with the following epigram:

Khmer literature, the Khmer should care for it.
Let it be long lasting, well-maintained and pure,

Because a nation's writing is that nation's true mark.
If its writing disappears, the nation vanishes.¹⁸

As the first and most prominent forum for the discussion of Cambodian literature, *Kambuja Suriya* published some of the earliest examples of modern Cambodian literary criticism. In 1956, it published the article "Aksar sastr khmaer sankhep" [Khmer literature] by Ray-Buc. This article was followed by the work of other Khmer scholars such as Ly Theam Teng, whose "Problems of literary diffusion" appeared in 1962; Tek Keam, whose work on Khmer-language literature, particularly the *Reamker*, began to appear in the same year; and Leang Hap An, whose text on the history of Khmer literature was serialized from 1968 to 1971.¹⁹

Along with these early articles of literary criticism came the increased importance of the writer's identity. Biographical sketches and photographs of writers began to appear in *Kambuja Suriya* in 1966. Biographies of monks accompanied with pictures continued to appear in successive issues throughout 1966 and 1967. Then, at the end of 1967, biographical sketches of Khmer writers began to appear.²⁰

With the appearance of the 1969 article "The Writer's Task in Building up the Nation," the identity of the writer takes on an explicitly political dimension. If the writer's identity was previously subsumed by the monarchical and religious institutions within which he functioned, with the emergence of modern Cambodian institutions of literature, the writer took on a more independent role as social critic and activist.

Literary Criticism on *Tum Teav*

This section presents examples of Cambodian literary criticism on *Tum Teav*. The first part deals with the issue of the story's authorship, and the second discusses its major themes.

The Authorship Controversy

The question of *Tum Teav's* authorship was a matter of contentious debate in the 1960s. Ouk Saman, whose extensive research on *Tum Teav*, along with his interesting philosophy of justice, argued that while it is likely that Santhor Mok composed a version of the story, there was insufficient evidence to assert that he is the text's legitimate author.²¹ Others, such as Leang Hap An, acknowledge the controversy briefly and explain why Santhor Mok could not have written the version of the story in 7-syllable

meter. He concludes, however, that Venerable Botumthera Som's manuscript was not an original work. In contrast, Kong Somphea, in a strongly nationalistic tone, argues that Venerable Som is not only the text's legitimate author but also a national hero.

Leang Hap An (1962)

In 1962, the Khmer Writers Association (KWA) published a critical text on *Tum Teav* by Leang Hap An, a teacher of Khmer language and literature, and KWA member.²² The text was written as a study guide for baccalauréat students in the third – and first – year classes in which *Tum Teav* was taught. It was also part of an effort by Cambodian literature scholars and the KWA to affirm the value of Khmer literature and compensate for the lack of critical texts on important literary works. KWA's president Hel Somphea wrote a short foreword to the text, which states:

The Khmer Writers Association decided to publish this useful text for students of literature because we have noticed that our country lacks theoretical analysis for understanding important ideas of various stories in the Cambodian literature curriculum. That it is also a means to raise the value of our national literature during this time is another reason.²³

Leang Hap An's analysis of *Tum Teav* begins by addressing the question of authorship. His position on the issue is clear: the version of the story in 7-syllable meter is by Venerable Botumthera Som. This position was based on information in the introduction to *Tum Teav* where Venerable Som identifies himself by spelling out the letters of his name.²⁴ In his response to the argument that *Tum Teav* was originally written by Santhor Mok in 1859, Leang Hap An points out that Santhor Mok would have been too young to produce that text: "They say Santhor Mok composed this story in 1859, that is, when he was only thirteen years old. The above idea couldn't be right, because at the age of thirteen, no one could have written a story full of such elegant verse and involved trickery like that."²⁵

Leang Hap An gives a second reason disputing Santhor Mok's authorship based on the poetic conventions during the period when he lived and wrote. He states that during that time the 7-syllable meter was not used for composing works of entertainment. Instead, other classical meters such as *kakateh* were used. He concludes that "*Tum Teav* in 7-syllable meter is definitely not the work of Santhor Mok."²⁶ That said, Leang Hap An is still willing to concede that there might exist a version of *Tum Teav* written by Santhor Mok: "Perhaps it's true that there really is a *Tum Teav* by Santhor Mok, but in a classical meter. However, that text has not survived, or if it has, it has not been found."²⁷

Furthermore, he concedes it is possible that Venerable Som referred to this hypothetical version of the story by Santhor Mok written in a classical meter when he wrote his 7-syllable version. However, in the final analysis, he argues that the 7-syllable version of *Tum Teav* published by the Buddhist Institute and used in the national schools is a unique work written by Venerable Botumthera Som.

Ouk Saman (1966)

In 1966, Cambodian scholar Ouk Saman published *A Study of Tum Teav*. Ouk Saman was among the first wave of young intellectuals writing scholarly analyses on Khmer literature following Cambodia's independence from the French in 1953. As with Leang Hap An, Ouk Saman's textual analysis of *Tum Teav* begins with the question of authorship. Using a very interesting logic, Ouk Saman implies that to accuse Venerable Botumthera Som of plagiarizing Santhor Mok's text without conclusive evidence would be to commit a greater crime than if the accusations were valid: "It is better to let a guilty man go free than to accuse an innocent man of a crime he did not commit."²⁸

Ouk Saman explains that his analysis of the authorship question was made in response to the Ministry of Education's mandate that the text of *Tum Teav* based on a palm leaf manuscript be studied in the national curriculum:

In the educational curriculum, the Ministry of Education has explained that the text of *Tum Teav* that should be included as an educational material is the story on the palm leaf manuscript.

To only say "*Tum Teav* on the palm leaf manuscript" in this way is not sufficient because according to current research two or three palm leaf manuscripts of the story have been identified, excluding *Teav Ek* by Nou Kan.²⁹

Of the three palm leaf manuscripts, the two written in 7-syllable meter were of primary interest because it is the meter used in the version of the story published by the Buddhist Institute in 1962 under the name of Venerable Botumthera Som. The title page of that text simply says the story was "copied from the palm leaf manuscript." It does not give the name of the author. However, the preface, which is signed "The Buddhist Institute," does identify the palm leaf manuscript used to produce the text as the one inscribed by Venerable Botumthera Som in 1915 using the 7-syllable meter. It also mentions that *Teav Ek*, the version of the story written in 1942 by Nu Kon, uses 8-syllable meter. It does not mention Santhor Mok, which would lead the reader to believe that Venerable Som's version is the first poetical

composition of the story.

Som's introduction, which follows the Buddhist Institute's preface, refers to another version of the story that preceded his text. However, it is not entirely clear whether he is referring to a written or oral version. Ouk Saman argues that the version referred to by Venerable Som was an older manuscript of *Tum Teav* which, like Venerable Som's text, was also transcribed on palm leaf manuscripts using 7-syllable meter, but whose author is unknown. In addition to this older text, Ouk Saman states that there is yet a third text written in various meters and in a Khmer style that would place it chronologically before the two texts written in 7-syllable meter.

Ouk Saman's attempt to resolve the question of the story's authorship is governed by the philosophy of justice noted above. He invokes this philosophy explicitly in his criticism of the group of Cambodian scholars who have asserted that the original palm leaf manuscript written in 7-syllable meter is by the 19th century writer Santhor Mok.

Regarding the text which all the scholars of one camp have identified and guaranteed to be by Santhor Mok: In this matter, as we have indicated from the beginning, it is our understanding that it cannot be firmly concluded that the text in 7-syllable meter of an unknown author is by Mok, because if one looks only at the body of the text itself without having an original copy which shows the date of inscription or the author, how can one say the text is by Mok? As we have explained from the beginning as well, that if one just considers the language or sound of the writing and says it is by Mok, it doesn't work since there could have been other writers of the same or similar capability. Thus, according to our conclusion, we understand that if one claims the text to be by Mok, it would only be a calculated guess because when dealing with something that does not have conclusive evidence, one should be careful as the court custom states: it is better to let a criminal go free than to blame a good person of a crime.³⁰

The older palm leaf manuscript that these scholars attribute to Santhor Mok did not survive the passage of time intact. It is missing its beginning and end, including the part that would have contained the name of the author. Saman states that any attempt to determine its author can only rely on considerations of the meter and style of the writing. Accordingly, he presents various viewpoints that try to attribute a particular place and time to the two palm leaf manuscripts that precede Venerable Som's version.

According to one viewpoint, the manuscript written in various classical meters (MS 1) is the oldest and based on the style of Khmer that

dates before King Norodom's reign (1860-1904), while the manuscript written in 7-syllable meter (MS 2) would have been written during King Norodom's reign when this meter first appeared. Based on the style of Khmer used, the scholars who ascribe to this viewpoint attribute the text to Santhor Mok, who lived during the reign of King Norodom. An opposing viewpoint argues that while the 7-syllable meter was indeed developed during this period, it was not used for stories meant to entertain, such as *Tum Teav*. This viewpoint would therefore place the date of MS 2 after Norodom's reign.

In response to these two conflicting viewpoints, Saman argues first that the virtuosity of the writing style of MS 2 need not be attributed exclusively to Santhor Mok, saying: "... in truth, if Santhor Mok were able to write so beautifully and well, there could have been others who could have written as well or comparably well, since Mok was not uniquely marvelous nor a god."³¹

Next, Saman presents excerpts of poetical texts written during Norodom's reign that use both classical meters and the 7-syllable meter to demonstrate that contrary to the first two viewpoints, both meters were popular and used with stories meant to entertain. While Ouk Saman agrees that it is reasonable to assume that MS 2 is by Santhor Mok, he argues that the scholars who insist on that viewpoint cannot do so with full assurance. Despite their analysis of the poetical features of MS 2, without the presence of the name itself clearly attached to the text's title, ownership remains uncertain. In the end, however, Ouk Saman is able to resolve this dilemma by placing Santhor Mok's name between quotations:

Thus, according to our viewpoint, we respectfully declare to all our friends the readers that from now on if anyone sees us use the phrase "the story by Mok" it refers only to *Tum Teav* that is speculated to be by Mok but is not really by Mok in the full sense. If in the future, some researcher comes upon proof that clearly shows that the text is by Mok, we will offer our congratulations because we greatly regret that such an important text in literature as "the story by Mok" continues to need evidence as to its author without finding it.³²

Thus, by using quotation marks, Ouk Saman is able to "staple" the name of "Mok" to the first version of *Tum Teav* written in 7-syllable meter. By virtue of Saman's literary "surgery," the text now has an author whose name is "Mok," and Saman can continue his investigation of the legitimate author of *Tum Teav*. That is, "Mok's text" can now be held up and questioned in terms of its relation with the other text of *Tum Teav* by Venerable Som. By transforming "Mok" into a pseudonym, Saman cleverly

provides himself with a means to comply with his philosophy of justice and thus avoid the greater crime of making accusations against someone without conclusive evidence.

As with Leang Hap An, Ouk Saman bases his conclusion regarding the origin of the text on Venerable Som's introduction to the story. For Ouk Saman, the first three stanzas of the introduction provide the necessary proof for accusing Venerable Som of purposefully misrepresenting himself as the true author of the text. Ouk Saman delivers his judgment on behalf of himself and his "friend" the reader after considering the opposing view:

Currently there are two opposite viewpoints as we have already explained above. The first viewpoint claims that Venerable Som's text is truly his own and that he has composed the text in a way that is creative as we have analyzed before.

This viewpoint is based on the evidence of Som's introduction that states:

- 1 This will be the telling of a story composed
In an entertaining verse-form.
Ever since former times the story has been
Told, and over the years sentences have been lost.
- 2 It is inexact, uneven, and unclear, and sentences are missing.
Striving to check and double check the meter of the discourse
We corrected it to be new so that this world
Could preserve it and continue to pass it on.
- 3 We tried hard to keep it intact and corrected it with the thought of
fixing it. Afraid of going too far we committed ourselves to the task,
So not to have anyone say that we threw away what was important
we only adjusted it to conform to the times in which the story takes
place.

From among the stanzas of poetry excerpted together here, the holders of the first viewpoint become very excited with regard to the phrase that says: "Told, and over the years sentences have been lost." They try to claim that the thing that Venerable Som meant by the words "Told, and over the years" was that the story had been retold from one person to the next over a very long time and so had some gaps and inconsistencies due to the element of time. Seeing this, Venerable Som tried to take the story that he remembered from hearing people tell it, with both its faults and virtues, and prepared it anew into this text. In order to preserve its legacy for the future, he prepared, mixed, saved and repaired it as he thought necessary. Thus, according to this

viewpoint it is not true that Venerable Som saw some other previous text that belonged to someone else or that he took what belonged to someone else and merely edited and revised it.

In this way Som's text of *Tum Teav* should be taken as the true creation of Venerable Som, according to this first viewpoint.

However, according to our viewpoint, which is the second viewpoint, we understand that in truth it is not necessary to look elsewhere. The truth that says that Venerable Som saw a previous text belonging to someone else and that he took it, edited and revised it anew exists in the words and sentences of Som's introduction itself. When Venerable Som says that "It is inexact, uneven, and unclear, and sentences are missing" the words "sentences are missing" has the idea that there was a previous text belonging to someone else and in that text there were some incorrect meters and incorrect sentences. If the story were spoken in the usual sense one would not have to say "sentences are missing" like this because with the act of telling it is understood already that it is for being heard only.³³

Based on his interpretation of the introduction, Saman concludes that Venerable Som's text is not an original work:

Thus, according to this analysis, by taking the writer's introduction as a basis we are led to conclude that the text that has Venerable Som's name and was published by the Buddhist Institute cannot be taken to be an achievement belonging to Venerable Som. Conversely, it is a text which belongs to another writer whose name we do not yet know and which Venerable Som only took to edit and revise ...³⁴

then: "Venerable Som ... has changed around what belongs to someone else, deceptively burying it away from view, adding here and taking away there to make those who wouldn't know it understand that [the text] belongs entirely to him."³⁵

Why is the question of the text's origin so important to Ouk Saman? Why isn't the endorsement by the Buddhist Institute sufficient for him to accept Venerable Som as the text's legitimate author? What does Ouk Saman have to gain by accusing Venerable Som, as well as this prominent cultural institution, of false representation?

For Ouk Saman, what's at stake is perhaps more than just the question of the text's authorship. It directly involves the authenticity of Cambodian culture, along with his function as one who safeguards that culture. In terms of literature, the future credibility of Cambodian culture

would depend on the authenticity of the literary texts that are believed to constitute part of that culture and what it means to be Cambodian. If the origin of these texts is questionable, so is the basis of the culture and the identity it represents.

Kong Somphea (1971)

In 1971, Kong Somphea, a writer and literary scholar, published his study on *Tum Teav* by Venerable Botumthera Som.³⁶ He became a member of the Khmer Writers Association in 1968, the same year he published his first novel. This was also the time when the Vietnam War was spilling over into Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge was waging its guerrilla war, which by 1970 had escalated into a full-scale civil war against the U.S.-backed government of General Lon Nol.³⁷ Cambodia's political situation strongly affected Kong Somphea, and he expresses his belligerence toward the Vietnamese in the dedication page of his analysis of *Tum Teav*:

This is dedicated to:

The spirit of my beloved father and mother

The young men and women and all the Khmer who died in the defense of the culture, civilization and ancient territory of Cambodia so not to let the invading Yuon [Vietnamese] steal them away.

Please let their spirits be happy and prosperous and guide the minds of those rotten Cambodians so they wake up and love their country and not be so deluded.³⁸

In his introduction, Kong Somphea defines the objectives of literature in terms of the political context. For him, in the newly instated Khmer Republic, the reason for studying literature must change from the superficial desire to obtain a diploma. Using nationalistic rhetoric, he calls for a new breed of leadership and philosophy of self-reliance.³⁹

Our country has become a republic... Our hope and struggle continue in order to find happiness and bring stability.

Therefore, the educational organizations of the Khmer Republic must change in accordance with democratic ideas also. We study just to get a diploma and forget the future welfare of the community. That is not the objective of literature. Where is the objective of literature heading?

The study of literature makes us become one body so we don't let other people walk all over us unjustly. This means that it gives responsibility for the society to intellectuals and stops making delinquent criminals the masters of our lives and country. Because we are already our own master. "You should depend on yourself" until you find happiness.

Whereas depending on someone else will never lead to true happiness...⁴⁰

In this highly charged political context, the study of literature and the life of writers, in this case Venerable Botumthera Som, is part of the struggle to defend Cambodian culture from the enemy. To this end, Kong Somphea's analysis of *Tum Teav* begins with an extensive account of the Venerable Som's life that includes the background of his accomplishments as a writer and his achievements as the abbot of Wat Kamprau. He states his intentions thus:

My intention for this book is to let students know about the writer Venerable Botumthera Som, to know his works of literature and his method of composition. I don't want to deliver any grandiose ideas. Please remember that "the study of the life of a writer is valuable" because our hearts are always searching for him whenever we are reading a meaningful text.

May our battle be successful against our enemy the Yuon Viet Cong that is invading our homeland, as well as the hordes of criminals stealing our country and destroying it right now. Let us take the hands of our brothers and sisters and join our blood to know the light of happiness like other civilized countries.⁴¹

Indeed, Kong Somphea endows Venerable Som with all the virtues befitting a national and cultural hero. He describes him as a monk who greatly loved and respected Buddhism. When he was finished with his daily studies, for example, he would help maintain and improve the temple. He guided the laity to build a monastery, and he cared for the temple grounds "like a mother caring for her children."⁴²

Kong Somphea certainly champions the virtues of Venerable Som, not only as a monk and writer but a patriot as well who manifested the knowledge, character and courage of one who protects and perpetuates Cambodian culture. Regarding the controversy over the authorship of *Tum Teav* and the threat it poses to Venerable Som's reputation, Kong Somphea is unequivocal in his position that Venerable Som is the sole and legitimate author of *Tum Teav* and that students of the text should regard him as such. According to Kong Somphea, Venerable Som based his composition exclusively on oral versions of the story.

Regarding *Tum Teav*, Venerable Som wrote the story from hearing a female singer and chapei player named Sai Pour. She would travel around singing throughout Srok Sithor Kandal and many other provinces... Therefore, the *Tum Teav* that we currently study isn't a

story that someone created. It's a folk story. The story actually took place in Cambodian society. The writer only put it into verse, no different than writers of historical novels or what a patriot would do. There was no [previous] document, only peasants who passed on the story up to now as Venerable explains in his introduction:

"This is the telling of a story composed
In an entertaining verse form.
Ever since former times, the story has been
Told, and over the years sentences have been lost.

It is inexact, uneven, and unclear, and sentences are
missing.
Striving to check and double check the meter of the
discourse
We corrected it to be new so that the world
Could preserve it and continue to pass it on..."⁴³

He concludes his discussion of the text's authorship by saying that the accusations that Venerable Som stole the story from Santhor Mok constitute a regrettable error for which there is no evidence:

It is not as some people claim that Venerable Som stole the story from the writer Santhor Mok. Actually, there isn't a single person who has seen the text [of *Tum Teav*] by Santhor Mok that Venerable Som supposedly stole and filled-in as he needed.

Regarding this issue, we regret tremendously such a misunderstanding.

The reason we explain this is because we hope that all students will believe clearly that *Tum Teav* is truly a work by Venerable Som.⁴⁴

Ministry of Education (1989)

In 1989, the Cambodian Ministry of Education published a study on *Tum Teav*. By this time, the Vietnamese-installed government in Phnom Penh had held power for ten years, despite an international embargo and an ongoing civil war against the Khmer Rouge that was loosely allied with royalist and nationalist forces supported by the West. However, with the demise of the Soviet Union and the inability of the Vietnamese to provide material support for Cambodia, the government of Hun Sen had begun to revise its political strategy and enter into United Nations-sponsored negotiations with its opponents.⁴⁵

The introduction to *Tum Teav* presents the government's new political line that diverged from the strictly Marxist-Leninist policies of its original

Soviet sponsors. The government's new policy showed greater acceptance of things from Cambodia's past, including literature, and greater independence from Soviet political philosophy.

For a while now, we have mistakenly thought that under the socialist government we don't have to study classical stories. Or, if we study classical stories, we have to revise and infuse them with Marxist-Leninist theory. This misunderstanding has caused our studies to lose their scientific approach and the stories to lose their integrity and original value.

Revising society doesn't mean disowning everything from the past. We only revise the things that are outdated. Whereas the good things, we support so they may flourish again.⁴⁶

The introduction explains that the authors closely analyzed previous critical texts on Cambodian literature in order to use what is valuable and discard what is not so that "the current society does not repeat the same mistakes as the past." With the Ministry of Education under Norodom Sihanouk's *Sangkum* government, there was an attempt by the government to define Cambodian culture in order to assert its national identity following independence. Here, the government sees its role quite differently. In the aftermath of the genocide and the devastating legacy of the Khmer Rouge's failed revolution, the Hun Sen government presented itself as the savior of Cambodian society and the only one capable of correctly implementing socialist values. Unlike the past, the current Ministry of Education would refer to all of the versions of *Tum Teav* because "by doing this we can find and evaluate the understanding of the authors regarding society."

In these circumstances, it was not as important to determine who is the legitimate author of *Tum Teav*. This is quite different from the period following independence, when the study of literature was part of the attempt to define and safeguard Cambodian cultural identity. Under those circumstances, establishing the legitimate author of the story was critical. Here, however, the purported objective of literary criticism is to learn from the past in order to correct the mistakes of former regimes and define the true path to socialism. In the process of doing this, all texts are useful.

Today, besides the work of Venerable Som, we also have *Tum Teav* by Santhor Mok. Regarding this work, there may be some comrades who ask, "Can they compare the work of Venerable Som with someone else's work when they don't know for sure the author? Because they don't know yet if the other text of *Tum Teav* is really the work of Santhor Mok."

The comrade students already know that the important task is to compare. If we can't compare [Venerable Som's text] with Santhor Mok's text, then we can compare it with the work of Writer X. Because nevertheless, the other work does exist.⁴⁷

The authors of the Ministry's critical text go on to explain that the issue of a lack of an identifiable author is true for many works in Cambodian literature. The Ministry also points to the same problem with other literature. They say, for example, that the same problem exists in Greek literature with the case of Homer and the *Odyssey* and in English literature with some works attributed to Shakespeare. However, in each case, an author was attributed to the work because "they couldn't find evidence that it wasn't or they found there were other similar works as the one in question by that author."⁴⁸

They suggest a number of reasons why the authors of Cambodian classical texts did not sign their names to their work. Many writers, they explain, did not want to reveal their identity because they wanted to "safeguard their happiness." Others did not identify themselves out of modesty or because the text was their first work. On the other hand, they explain, many writers did inscribe their names on the palm leaf manuscripts so there would not be any confusion among future readers regarding the identity of the author. Finally, many writers inscribed their names so that future writers, upon seeing the name of the author, would not plagiarize their text. They conclude that having no clear name of the author on the manuscript doesn't mean that Santhor Mok could not have written it:

We don't know clearly to which group Santhor Mok belonged. However, regarding the existence of *Tum Teav* by Santhor Mok, a large number of Khmer students need not give up just because he did not clearly inscribe "written by Santhor Mok" as with the version by Venerable Som.⁴⁹

While the authors of the Ministry of Education's 1989 critical text on *Tum Teav* make an effort to justify their decision to attribute the authorship of the other text to Santhor Mok, at its basis their argument is very different from the others discussed in this section. They are not concerned with identifying the original author of *Tum Teav* as were some of the literary critics from the 1960s. In addition, the political context is very different. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the literary criticism concerning the controversy over who wrote *Tum Teav* reflects the nationalism inspired by independence. In this case, there is a political agenda and propaganda according to which the issue of the text's authorship is secondary to the primary concern of using the study of literature to learn about and "correct

the mistakes of the past.”

Major Themes

Various viewpoints have been expressed regarding traditional codes of conduct and relations of power in Cambodian society. Our understanding of traditional codes of conduct for both Tum and Teav is based on certain assumptions. Being a novice monk, we assume that Tum received moral instruction at the temple where his daily activities would have been governed by Buddhist precepts and doctrine. For Teav, our assumption is that she received instruction at home from her mother with the help of Nor based on, among other things, the body of texts called the *chbap* or “Codes of Conduct,” a genre of Cambodian didactic poetry concerned with issues of right and wrong and proper conduct.

The theme of abuse of power is most relevant with regard to Teav’s mother, who, in order to marry her daughter to the rich governor’s son, is willing to use any means possible. The most powerful weapon at her disposal is the assumed authority of the parent over the child, along with the expectation that the child will comply without question with the parent’s decision. This traditional relationship comes into play most directly in the story with regard to the custom of arranged marriage.

The viewpoints of literary critics on these themes range from the strongly nationalist opinions of Kim Sam Or, a former official at the periodical *Samaki*, to the Western-influenced theories of Vandy Ka-onn that attempt to trace the source of Cambodia’s sociological problems prior to the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh in 1975. This discussion is supplemented with examples from Cambodian literature, such as the folk stories of *Sopheha Tunsay* (Judge Rabbit) and *Thmenh Chey*.

Kim Set (1959)

In 1959 Kim Set published *The Knowledge of Khmer Writers*.⁵⁰ His assessment of the characters and events in *Tum Teav* reflect the confusion and difficulty of defining Cambodian cultural identity after independence, when the attempt to modernize and transform Cambodian society pulled the country in opposing directions. On the one hand, there was the desire to adopt modern technology and methods that would enable Cambodia to take its place beside the newly developed countries of Southeast Asia, such as Thailand and Indonesia. On the other, there was the attempt to rediscover and validate the traditional culture that was devalued during a century of French cultural domination. This confusion can be seen in Kim Set’s analysis of the characters in *Tum Teav* and the way he attempts to recast traditional

codes of conduct as “modern.”

Kim Set’s text was written as a study guide for lycée students and follows the typical format of question and answer. The majority of study questions in *The Knowledge of Khmer Writers* concern the characters and events from the novel *Phka Sraporn* [*Wilted Flower*] by Nou Hach, while the end of the text deals briefly with the classical text *Sophasit*.⁵¹ One of the study questions asks the student to make a comparison of Tum from *Tum Teav* and Bunthoeun, the main male character from *Wilted Flower*.⁵²

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are many similarities between the plots of *Tum Teav* and *Wilted Flower*. Briefly, in *Wilted Flower* the parents of Vitheavy, a young woman, and Bunthoeun, a student at Lycée Sisowath, arrange for them to be married when they are children. However, when Bunthoeun’s father becomes poor, Vitheavy’s mother (her father has since died) breaks off the engagement and arranges for Vitheavy to marry Ny Sot, the son of a rich merchant. Although Vitheavy does not accept the new arrangement and remains true to Bunthoeun, she does not voice her opposition to her mother. Instead, she maintains the traditional role of the dutifully silent daughter. When Bunthoeun receives a letter from Vitheavy explaining the situation and assuring him of her steadfast devotion, he replies telling her that she should forget about him because he is poor and marry Ny Sot, who has the means to make her happy. Nevertheless, Vitheavy remains committed to Bunthoeun. She subsequently becomes sick from depression and dies from heartbreak just prior to her marriage to Ny Sot.

The study question from Kim Set’s text reads: “Compare the personality of Bunthoeun, the character in *Wilted Flower*, with the personality of Tum, the character in *Tum Teav*, regarding the issue of love.”⁵³

In response to the question, Kim Set explains that both texts provide insights into the life of Cambodian people during different times, *Tum Teav* during the Lovek period, and *Wilted Flower* during modern times. Comparing Tum and Bunthoeun, Kim Set states that, “Bunthoeun has a better character than Tum regarding the issue of love. He has an admirable and progressive attitude.” Kim Set attributes Bunthoeun’s model behavior to the modern times in which he lives and concludes his remarks on this question saying: “Bunthoeun has a better character than Tum because Bunthoeun was born and grew up in modern times, a scientific age, a time of advancement!”

It is difficult, however, to understand the logic that leads Kim Set to

conclude that the characters of Bunthoeun and Tum reflect the time periods in which they live. Kim Set rightly observes that it is to Bunthoeun's credit that he is so concerned for Vitheavy's reputation and future happiness. However, it is not clear why Bunthoeun feels that she would be happier with Ny Sot, a man she despises, than with him. Bunthoeun bases his decision not to pursue Vitheavy on traditional values regarding reputation and social status that are not in her best interests. Although Ny Sot is wealthy, he is a womanizer and abhorred by Vitheavy. She tells Bunthoeun as much in her letter. So why doesn't Bunthoeun act on his feelings and attempt to win Vitheavy back instead of passively acquiesce? Wouldn't this be the more modern response?

On the other hand, Kim Set understandably finds fault with Tum's behavior. Tum is rash and impetuous, and compromises Teav's reputation because he is unable to control his emotions. The fact that Tum is a monk makes him all the more accountable for his misdeeds. As foolish as Tum may be, his actions are nonetheless extraordinary given the time period in which he lives. Unlike modern times, during the Lovek period it was unheard of for anyone to challenge the power of someone in governor Orh-Chhuon's position.⁵⁴

Kim Set's 1959 analysis, however, reflects a very different perspective. Accordingly, Bunthoeun is "good" because, rather than challenge the authority of Vitheavy's mother, he submissively accepts her decision that she would be happier with a rich husband than a poor one. He suppresses his feelings and advises Vitheavy to do the same, despite the greater freedom supposedly afforded them by living in modern times. For Kim Set, Bunthoeun's respect for parental authority exemplifies what "modern" Cambodia should be, while Tum's rejection of traditional codes of conduct epitomizes the failure of meeting those expectations. By recasting traditional codes of conduct as "modern," Kim Set's assessment reflects the general confusion and difficulty of defining modern Cambodian cultural identity after independence.

Kim Sam Or (1961)

Kim Sam Or was an official at *Samaki* [*Solidarity*], a nationalistic periodical that opposed Norodom Sihanouk.⁵⁵ In 1961, he published *The History of Cambodian Literature*, a compilation of material from *Samaki*. In keeping with the strong nationalistic tenor of the periodical, he states in his introduction that his book was produced to aid Cambodians in the study of their own national literature after one hundred years "under the iron yoke of the imperialistic colonialists."

The nationalistic enthusiasm for freedom and opposition to abuse of power can be clearly seen in Kim Sam Or's interpretation of the characters and events in the story. In his discussion of *Yeay* (grandmother) Phan, he criticizes the authority that parents had over their children in arranging their marriages during the Lovek period. For example, when Teav tries unsuccessfully to express her refusal to marry Moeurn Nguon, her mother asserts her authority over her:

- 388 The mother waited to hear Teav have speak, then responded,
 "Oh, Teav! You should calm down
 "And control your emotions. You are not looking ahead.
 "Calm down first. Don't argue me into a corner.
- 389 "Be careful you don't destroy everything with your recklessness.
 "A chicken's egg will come to have worries
 "As it rolls straight for a stone and breaks into a million pieces.
 "If you persist in cornering me, you will push me over the edge!
- 390 "In our tradition you would be compared to
 "The child who doesn't listen and is obstinate.
 "You are a perfect example
 "Of those who are stubborn and become outcasts.
- 391 "It never ever happens, Teav, that the cake
 "Can be bigger than its mold.
 "The baby water buffalo that refuses to follow its mother
 through the jungle
 "When it is on fire will meet its death."

Kim Sam Or concludes:

Yeay Phan uses her power to gain wealth. She coerces her daughter as expressed by the saying, "the cake is never bigger than the mold." This custom made some girls take men they did not love to be their husbands. Some of the girls who didn't agree to the arrangement would run away or kill themselves. The story of Teav is proof of this.⁵⁶

Once again, we find the reference to the saying "the cake is never bigger than the mold" that has come to define the prerogative parents assume over their children in Cambodian society. Other expressions used in *Tum Teav*, such as "don't try to hug a mountain with short arms" or "a chicken egg cannot become a rock," pertain to similar relations of power between the classes. For Kim Sam Or, the character of Orh-Chhuon epitomizes the abuse of power by government officials who rule with impunity: "The conduct of Orh-Chhuon shows how officials during that time were vicious and had power like one of the King's ministers. He seized

and beat the people. He separated Teav from Tum."⁵⁷

Kim Sam Or has the same objection to the absolute power enjoyed by the king in dispensing justice. At the conclusion of the story, the king gathers his ministers and instructs them to deliberate on the case and determine the proper punishment. In the king's mind, Orh-Chhuon has committed the worst crime possible by challenging his authority. He instructs his ministers to deliver the most serious punishment possible and orders them to have no pity for Orh-Chhuon:

- 992 The King said, "All advisers,
 "Confer and seek judgment according to your function.
 "Whoever is guilty will be shackled and chained.
 "He must be put in a dark prison to think about his crime.
- 993 "Don't have mercy! Have the women and men of Tbong Khmom
 "Go forth to chop and drag
 "Bamboo and wood. Have them cut, shovel and sweep the area
 "Bare. Have them clean it up completely!
- 994 "The area will be used to dig a pit,
 "A large hole. Then take a wide, long container
 "And pound it into crossed lines bent backwards
 "So it conforms to the shape of the pit."
- 995 The chief ministers listened to the King tell them
 Angrily and loudly not to be too long in their deliberations.
 The military commanders responded,
 But the King could not relax or control his torment.

Kim Sam Or concludes: "The way of judging cases is another example. There was no law greater than King Rea-mea's own judgment, as in the way he sentenced the family of Orh-Chhuon and reduced the people to being hereditary slaves."⁵⁸

Given the political position of *Samaki*, it is not unreasonable to read the political criticism directed at Norodom Sihanouk in Kim Sam Or's negative depiction of King Rea-mea. Indeed, Kim Sam Or's critical text is a clear example of the use of literature in general and *Tum Teav* in particular for voicing political viewpoints after independence.

Criticism of abuse of power has a long history in Cambodian literature. One example worth mentioning here is the folk story *Thmenh Chey*.⁵⁹ In the story, the young rascal Thmenh Chey uses trickery and deceit to outwit and exact revenge on a *setthei* (a rich merchant) who initially tricks

Thmenh Chey into taking a lesser amount of rice as a reward for returning the *setthei's* wife's shuttle that had fallen. Although we might feel that Thmenh Chey is being a nuisance and deserves to be reprimanded for insisting on more rice than he deserves, the *setthei* is also at fault for taking advantage of the young Thmenh Chey. As his patron, it is up to the rich and powerful *setthei* to demonstrate his capacity and willingness to protect the poor Thmenh Chey. Instead, he loses the trust of Thmenh Chey and instigates his quest for revenge.

Thmenh Chey's revenge against the *setthei* can be interpreted as an attack against the merchant class of Cambodian feudal society. In his relations with the *setthei*, Thmenh Chey makes a mockery of the show of respect and loyalty that is expected of the peasant toward his feudal master. (Thmenh Chey is in fact the slave of the *setthei*.) When the *setthei* orders him to do something, Thmenh Chey paradoxically opposes him by obeying him to the letter. In fact, it is the literal use of language that is Thmenh Chey's most effective weapon against the *setthei's* political power over him.

While the *setthei* could easily destroy Thmenh Chey if he chooses, he wants to be seen as a good patron by the other mandarins. He goes to great lengths to impress them and demonstrate his worthiness. It would be seen as wrong if he were to beat Thmenh Chey without justification. The clients of the other patrons would see this as an injustice and a betrayal of the patrons as a class. The *setthei* does not want this to happen, so he must act within the rules. He cannot punish his client for doing what he was told. He can justifiably punish Thmenh Chey only if he has disobeyed him.

This strategy completely disarms the *setthei*, who cannot fault Thmenh Chey or legitimately punish him on the grounds that he has been disobedient. Of course, both Thmenh Chey and the *setthei* are fully aware of the charade that is being played. However, Thmenh Chey has cleverly used the rules to his advantage. He has used his place as the subordinate in their relationship to his advantage and there is nothing that the *setthei* can do other than pass on his problem to the King as a "gift."

Popular Cambodian folkstories like *Thmenh Chey*, while full of humor, also convey important messages of survival and social justice. *Thmenh Chey* is full of social satire and criticism of Cambodia's hierarchical society. By outwitting his rich master without ever directly confronting him, the character Thmenh Chey champions the cause of the powerless against the privileged class. Despite his tragic death, Tum is often seen as a folk hero for similar reasons.

Leang Hap An (1962)

After the conclusion of Leang Hap An's 1962 critical text on *Tum Teav*, there is a final section that poses fifty study questions, some of which were taken from previous baccalauréat exams on Cambodian literature.⁶⁰ The basis for the answers to the questions is found in the central section of Leang Hap An's text, where he discusses the story's meaning. The central section is organized into three parts that correspond to the three parts of the story identified in the previous section of his analysis:

- * Tum and Teav marry secretly
- * Tum and Teav are separated then reunited at the Palace
- * Tum and Teav separate in death.

For each of the three parts, Leang Hap An poses various questions and suggests answers.⁶¹ Given that Leang Hap An's text was intended as a study guide for lycée students, it provides an interesting insight into the prevailing viewpoints on some of the major themes in the story, namely Buddhist morality, traditional codes of conduct and relations of power.

For example, the first study question is: "If you were a monk, should you behave like Tum? Why? Explain." The answer to the question is found in Leang Hap An's discussion of the meaning of the first part of the story, i.e., Tum and Teav secretly marry, where he asks, "In what ways is Tum's behavior in this part of the story right and in what ways is it wrong?"⁶²

Leang Hap An provides the student with various ideas that address this question on the one hand in terms of Tum's role and responsibilities as a monk, and on the other in terms of his blind resolve to disrobe in order to pursue his love for Teav. From the story, we know that Tum's mother (presumably Tum has no father) brought him to the Buddhist temple to be ordained as a novice monk under the supervision of its abbot.⁶³ As part of the ordination ceremony, Tum would have been required to comply with the rules regarding the receiving and returning of his monk's robes and begging bowl to the abbot.⁶⁴ Later in the story, when Tum refuses to obey the abbot's instructions to wait until the end of the year before disrobing, he undermines the abbot's authority and sanctity of the Buddhist doctrine. Moreover, rather than earning merit for his mother, Tum does quite the opposite.

Leang Hap An does not condemn Tum for his actions, nor does he excuse them. Using excerpts from Venerable Botumthera Som's text, he describes Tum as a handsome and talented man whose emotions are in conflict with the rules of the monkhood. His desire to experience life outside

the temple overpowers him and blinds him to the inevitable consequences of his actions. For example, at the beginning of the story, Tum returns to the temple after falling in love with Teav in Tbong Khmom. He is determined to disrobe and return to Tbong Khmom and be with Teav. However, the abbot is not fooled by Tum's false stories; he is fully aware of what has happened and Tum's motives for wanting to disrobe. When the abbot insists that he wait until the end of the year before he disrobes, Tum goes to his mother and asks for her help. He lies to her as well, saying he is very sick and that she must convince the abbot to change his mind and allow him to disrobe. Tum's mother, unaware of the truth, presents Tum's request to the abbot, who informs her of the real reason for Tum's "sickness" and explains in no uncertain terms that Tum must not disrobe:

- 230 The abbot, not long afterwards, spoke.
 "No, the young novice Tum
 "Went away to sell *taok*. After selling all of them,
 "He returned lovesick over a girl.
- 232 "We must not allow Tum to disrobe.
 "I've calculated the numbers and seen that he would be met by
 death.⁶⁵
 "Tum's fortune is full of bad luck.
 "He must be prevented from disrobing until the end of this year."

When Tum's mother speaks with Tum after her meeting with the abbot, she warns him not to challenge the abbot's authority.⁶⁶ Using motherly advice, she tries to convince Tum to return to his studies. Despite his mother's warnings and advice, Tum cannot be dissuaded and decides to disrobe without permission, thereby committing a most serious offense against the rules of conduct. Rather than controlling his emotions, Tum is controlled by them and repeatedly lies to the abbot and his mother in order to pursue his desires. Tum does not fulfill the customary role expected of Buddhist monks, and the narrator foretells of the misfortune that awaits him for the transgressions he has committed:

- 243 Tum decided to get away from the temple straight away.
 Distraught from frustration, he ripped his *kroma* and pinned the end,
 making a pocket.
 Then he grabbed his monk's clothes, folded them and inserted them
 into the pocket.
 He carried the bundle on his hip and walked to the forest.
- 244 He asked the forest's spirits to hide and shelter him. Then he took out
 all
 The braided flowers, votive candles, incense and food

To offer the spirits.
Then Tum Joined and lifted his hands to pray.

245 Tum chanted saying, "*Okasateh*
"Kamom kamey now daen oeuy
"Chrobay bomnong kay
"Karasek sray min sdey soh."

246 Tum prayed to the spirits not to hinder him,
As he changed out of the last of his monk's clothes without regret.
Then he put on a fine, clean silk sarong and lifted all of his monk's
garments and hung them from a branch.

247 The forked branch sagged close to the ground.
The young monk Tum who had dared to perform his own disrobing
then continued on his way.
Yet, his conduct, sneaky and improper, was not finished with him.

Regarding whether Tum can control his actions or if he is controlled
by his karma, Leang Hap An states:

Tum's secret disrobing is truly wrong. Wrong according to civil laws
as well as Buddhist precepts. But if we speak in terms of sentiment, it's
not so unusual, because want to or not, or whether he had ten mothers
and ten Abbots trying to stop him, he is determined to disrobe, and
there is nothing that can stop him or make him understand that it is
wrong.⁶⁷

The conflict between human emotions and the Buddhist doctrine that
teaches self-discipline and the cessation of desire is a primary source of the
story's compelling pathos.⁶⁸ In this regard, Tum is comparable to Judge
Rabbit, the popular character from Cambodian folklore, in terms of the
cunning tactics each uses to survive despite the moral transgressions they
commit in the process. In the folk story, Judge Rabbit will feign death (as in
the first episode to get the old woman's bananas) or falsely claim special
knowledge (as in the episodes with the alligator and the toad) in order to
obtain food and water. Like Tum, however, he is never able to take control
of his life. Although he is able to temporarily evade his present difficulties,
each episode only leads to further hardships. For example, although Judge
Rabbit is able to outwit the old woman in order to steal her bananas, the
snails subsequently outsmart him when he tries to drink the water from
their pond. Throughout the story, Judge Rabbit is a tragic anti-hero whose
cunning enables him to escape one disaster only to get into some new
trouble.⁶⁹

In many ways Tum and Judge Rabbit are cut from the same cloth. Despite his personal failings, Tum's struggle to be with Teav, whatever the cost, has earned him a special place in the hearts of Cambodian readers. For this reason Tum is a source of inspiration to people like Pech Tum Kravel, one of Cambodia's most prominent dramatists. It is Tum's steadfast devotion for Teav and his willingness to oppose anyone, including the powerful temple abbot and provincial governor, to be with her that makes Tum such an endearing character. However, like Judge Rabbit, Tum's efforts come up short. While Judge Rabbit's fatal flaw may be his arrogance, with Tum his excessive desire and immaturity entrap him in a cycle of suffering. Tum is able to defy the abbot and rejoin Teav, but their reunion is short lived. New difficulties soon arise that force their separation and culminate with their deaths.⁷⁰

Although Tum's persistent pursuit of Teav may be admirable, Leang Hap An's last word on the issue is that Tum must take final responsibility for his actions. Accordingly, he takes Tum to task for his inability to control his emotions that he knows will lead to his and Teav's demise:

The feelings that lead Tum to say, 'She depends on me. How I Miss her!⁷¹ show Tum's emotional weakness that causes the love for a girl to change him, a monk, into a layman and a slave of love. Tum is a person with knowledge, full of ability, a bright young man, but when he falls in love, he becomes miserable. Can we say he is strong and brave emotionally or that he is the master of his feelings?⁷²

Leang Hap An continues his analysis of the conflict between desire and traditional codes of conduct in the section entitled "The Force of Tum's and Teav's Love."⁷³ As a novice monk and an adolescent girl "in the shade," respectively, both Tum and Teav are expected to comply with the traditional codes of conduct that govern their roles in Cambodian society.⁷⁴ As mentioned above, Tum would have received this instruction at the Buddhist temple. Being a girl, Teav was not eligible to enter the monkhood. Instead, she would have been instructed at home by her mother with the help of Nor and would have been expected to comport herself according to the traditional codes of conduct described, for example, in the body of texts called the *chbap* or "Codes of Conduct," a genre of Cambodian didactic poetry concerned with issues of right and wrong and proper conduct.⁷⁵

Opposed to these codes of conduct, however, is the force of love. Recall that when Tum and Pech return to Tbong Khmom after disrobing, Tum is eager to seek out Teav. Despite Pech's warnings to be careful, Tum cannot restrain himself and goes to Teav's house alone. When Tum arrives at Teav's house, Teav's mother is not at home, and Teav has been left under

the care of Nor.⁷⁶ However, Nor allows Tum and Teav to be left alone, and after a playful exchange of witticisms they consummate their love. This is a serious violation of the traditional expectation that couples do not have sex before marriage. In addition, by leaving Tum and Teav alone, Nor fails in her responsibility to serve as Teav's guardian. This is an especially important scene of the story, and one that very much resembles the balcony scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

- 413 Tum said, "What kind of person would be so easily fooled
 "Into going back and what's more allow himself to become separated
 "Before having his sweetheart. Don't wave me away.
 "Let's join together as one, not be broken apart."
- 414 Teav said, "You compare me to a flower,
 "While you are like a bumble bee
 "That flies around and spotting the flower enters straight away.
 "Afterwards, it doesn't delay and is soon on its way again."
- 415 Tum said, "I am like the lion king,
 "While Miss. Teav is like a large cave.
 "If the lion king has a place to live,
 "He will never allow himself to leave."
- 416 Teav said, "I am like a dock,
 "While you, so charming, are like a boat.
 "You are quick to park a while, precious one,
 "Then hurry away without a second thought."
- 417 Tum said, "Oh, I am like a large fish,
 "While you, young Teav, are like a river.
 "The fish that has deep water swims leisurely from side to side.
 "Don't, dear! Don't reject me or be suspicious."
- 418 Teav said, "I am like a tree,
 "While you are like a *sarika* bird that perches there every day.
 "You stop to perch and take shelter,
 "Then fly off at great speed to go to some other place."
- 422 Teav said, "Oh, dear sir!
 "Who would not be suspicious
 "Of the words of a man trying to show off his intelligence?
 "So don't tell me not to be suspicious."
- 423 As Teav spoke wisely,
 Tum had no fear at all. He grabbed Teav's hand.
 And kissed her saying, "Oh, my dear,
 "Do you still doubt me? Do you still not believe how I feel?"

- 424 Teav was furious that Tum should be so disrespectful
As to grab her hand and harass her without consideration.
“Think of it! You should be ashamed of yourself! How could I
“Admire someone who would dare to barge in here this way?”
- 425 “How dare you come here and kiss my cheek and even touch my
breast!
“Someone who is not afraid of anything does not please me!”
Tum said, “I’m sorry if I was wrong! Please let me, my dear,
“Love you forever and ever!”
- 426 Miss. Nor, Teav’s nanny, knowing the situation,
Left quickly without a word,
Afraid Teav would be embarrassed by her presence.
Teav was ready to give her love to Tum.
- 427 Tum hugged Teav in his arms playfully.
Neither of them was afraid to consummate their love.
Inside a comfortable house like that,
The young woman became easily aroused with passion.⁷⁷

Afterwards, Teav’s mother returns home completely unaware of what has just taken place. She invites Tum to stay at her house, an action that adds comedy and irony to this otherwise dramatic scene. Tum accepts Teav’s mother’s invitation to stay at her house and continues his romance with Teav. Tum’s capacity to deceive seems to know no bounds. He has completely compromised Teav’s reputation.

Regarding this episode, Leang Hap An states: “Love makes Tum forget his duties as a monk.”⁷⁸ As for Teav, he concludes: “She lets herself be ruled by love, forget right and wrong, good and bad, the tradition and admirable conduct for a young Khmer girl.”⁷⁹

In his discussion of Teav’s mother *Yeay* Phan and Orh-Chhuon, Leang Hap An takes up the issue of abuse of power in Cambodian society. In the story, Orh-Chhuon and his wife plan to arrange for Teav to marry their son, Moeurn Nguon. They send representatives laden with fine gifts to meet with Teav’s mother and discuss their proposition. Teav’s mother greets them warmly, but pretends to be reluctant to accept their offer, saying she must consult Teav and her family members before making any decision. In reality, however, she is overjoyed at the prospect of her daughter marrying into the family of the governor and fulfilling her dreams of wealth and status. She calls Teav to deliver the good news, unaware that she has fallen in love with Tum:

- 383 Then she addressed her child saying, "My dear,
 "We should be happy!" she said, her face aglow.
 "I am giving you in marriage to the Governor's son,
 "So we can have the happiness that rank and wealth afford!
- 384 "We will have daunting power! We will have status!
 "Accordingly, your rank will rise!
 "I am talking to you! Don't be proud
 "And impudent! Show that you value your mother!"

Regarding the question of Teav's mother's wrongdoing, Leang Hap An presents the viewpoint that at that point in the story she is not aware of Teav's love for Tum, so she cannot be blamed for wanting her daughter to marry the son of the rich and powerful governor. However, she is wrong to force her daughter to marry someone against her will: "The fault of *Yeay Phan* is the way she forces her daughter by using her authority, by not giving Teav the freedom to choose her happiness at all, saying that her mother and father bore her and took care of her."⁸⁰

Leang Hap An states that the use of force by parents in order to get their child to comply with their choice of marriage partner persists in modern Cambodia. Given Tum's poor status, even if Teav had told her mother of her relationship with Tum, *Yeay Phan* would not have changed her mind.

Many people say that *Yeay Phan* is bad because even if she knew that Teav loved Tum, she would not have liked it because Tum does not have power. This is a valid point, because even today *Yeay Phan*'s kind of desire continues in the same way. This kind of wrongdoing is not only true for *Yeay Phan*. It is an issue with many mothers in the past, present and future of the Cambodian people. This is why *Tum Teav* is called a true Cambodian story. It is a story that shows the Khmer heart and soul.⁸¹

In another section of his analysis, Leang Hap An presents a perspective regarding *Yeay Phan*'s use of force over her daughter that introduces another aspect of the relations of power at work in the story. According to this perspective, although *Yeay Phan* may want her daughter to marry Moeurn Nguon because of his wealth and status, at the same time, she is compelled to force Teav to marry the governor's son out fear of Orh-Chhuon's power:

In addition, *Yeay Phan* is a commoner without any status. She must respect and fear the power of Orh-Chhuon who is like a king and had tremendous authority during that time. (As *Yeay Phan* said on page 43:

“Ouk-nha Orh-Chhuon is too important! Under the sky, everything is lower than the mountain. Those with power don’t ask! They just cut, stab and beat without mercy!”).⁸²

Leang Hap An reminds us that *Tum Teav* takes place during the feudal period of Cambodian history when a provincial governor’s power was second only to that of the king. In the first part of the story, Orh-Chhuon does not know about Teav’s relationship with Tum and is therefore well within his rights as a parent to take steps to consider her as a possible marriage partner for his son. However, Leang Hap An points out that even if he had known about their relationship, Orh-Chhuon’s position would have given him the prerogative to use his power to his liking. While this behavior may not be acceptable in modern Cambodia, Leang Hap An notes that abuse of power is still an issue in arranged marriages:

Even if he knew that Teav was already engaged and he went ahead with arranging Teav’s marriage to Moeurn Nguon, this would have been wrong. Just because Orh-Chhuon had power, he could do as he pleased during feudal times...All of this is a problem among Khmer families. That is, Orh-Chhuon’s kind of conduct exists a lot. Some families will go as far as bribing the parents of the girl to break off relations with a poor boy in order to get the girl for themselves whether by flaunting their power or showing off their wealth.⁸³

Ouk Saman (1966)

As mentioned above, Ouk Saman’s 1966 critical text *A Study of Tum Teav* was intended as a study guide for third - and first - year lycée students. Saman’s analysis of the story is arguably the most in-depth and thorough of all the critical texts written on *Tum Teav*.

As Saman conducts his investigation into the culpability of each character for the tragic events in the story, he acknowledges the complexity of the different situations and characters. He takes into account the context of a given event and challenges some of the more mainstream perspectives. For example, in his discussion of Orh-Chhuon’s killing of Tum, he rationalizes the governor’s actions, despite the risk of appearing to support the abuses associated with feudalism:

People who do not fully consider this will think that I support and protect vicious people like Orh-Chhuon that have become symbols of the feudal period! ... But we say this not because we want to blame one side or the other. We only want to determine what is justice.⁸⁴

Saman’s discussion of whether King Rea-mea’s vicious punishment of Orh-Chhuon is justified is controversial as well. According to Saman, if

the punishment is excessive, then the king is at fault since he bears ultimate responsibility for the final decision. Saman defines the criteria for his analysis as follows:

We understand that normally a king who is respected and venerated by the people should not be disobeyed by anyone. The king should be angry with anyone who disobeys him. Thus, the king must inflict punishment on the person equal to his crime and equal to the king's anger so that the person will be disgraced.⁸⁵

In order to assess whether the king's punishment is just, Saman asks if his anger at Orh-Chhuon and the resulting punishment are commensurate with the crime. Saman begins by pointing out that the king has shown himself to be a compassionate and moral person when, after learning of their previous relationship, he gives up Teav and officially marries her to Tum. If the king is a good and compassionate leader, Saman asks, what happened to make him so angry? Recall the scene when Tum goes before King Rea-mea to ask for his help after he learns of Teav's impending marriage to Moeurn Nguon. Enraged, the king uses a popular metaphor of the rock and the egg to describe the consequences for Orh-Chhuon for challenging his supreme power:

707 The King listened to every word.
He issued his decree forthwith.
"That rascal thief Orh-Chhuon will break like a chicken egg!⁸⁶
"He's deluded to presume himself deserving of my support!

708 "He doesn't know wrong from right, rice from weeds!
"That thief is like a dog eating beef!
"He dares to challenge me! That is a crime for which he must be
boiled alive!
"I will haul him in then boil him alive in an iron skillet.

709 "That thief will try to hide in the forest watching out for my attack.
"He's used to being on the run like the *kvaek* bird.
"That monkey doesn't know my big stick will crack his skull!
"The rascal's head... tomorrow... tomorrow... will roll!"

Saman argues that the king's anger at Orh-Chhuon is caused by his belief that Orh-Chhuon betrayed his orders (contained in the letter carried by Tum) and killed Tum for personal gain without regard for his authority. However, Saman says the king was wrong to assume that someone in Tum's condition of emotional stress would successfully deliver his edict. Thus, the king's anger is excessive and the punishment of Orh-Chhuon and *Yeay Phan* unjust: "Doesn't the King realize that 'Moeurn Ek' [Tum] is filled with grief

and seized with pain and despite having the royal edict would be crazed and not deliver it? For this reason, the King's anger is beyond the limit for this case."⁸⁷

Saman then provides additional reasons that mitigate the severity of Orh-Chhuon's wrongdoing, making the case that Orh-Chhuon does in fact respect King Rea-mea. Using the analogy of a cat and mouse, Saman argues that like a mouse, Orh-Chhuon is prone to being mischievous when the king is away. However, that does not mean that "the mouse" does not continue to fear "the cat." Orh-Chhuon is willing to participate in *Yeay Phan's* plan to separate Teav from Tum because the king is far away. However, according to Saman, Orh-Chhuon still fears and therefore respects the authority of the king, as evidenced by his panic after finding the letter on Tum's body and again when the king arrived with his entourage in Tbong Khmom to punish him.

In the closing scene of the story, the king arrives in Tbong Khmom with his army to punish those responsible for the deaths of Tum and Teav. Earlier, Orh-Chhuon had found the king's edict on Tum's body and realized that he has defied the king's word. When the king arrives in Tbong Khmom, Orh-Chhuon prepares elaborate offerings and goes with his family to present them to the monarch. He hopes for mercy, but fears the worst:

- 984 Governor Orh-Chhuon led the delegation,
 Along with his son and wife, to present themselves before the King.
 Coming closer, he saw that His Grace,
 The King, was meeting with his advisors.
- 985 The chief ministers and advisors
 Were gathered before the King in close ranks.
 Orh-Chhuon delivered the offerings,
 Supposing that the King would show mercy on him.
- 986 After he presented all the offerings,
 Orh-Chhuon raised his hands in salute over his head
 And kept them properly positioned. During the meeting,
 The King had no pity or respect for Orh-Chhuon.
- 987 King Rea-mea, the powerful and meritorious,
 Who protected the people and was the overseer
 Of all places and villages, including the Buddha's remains,
 Listened, rumbling, ready to smash the offerings at any moment.
- 988 The monarch glared at him, clearly displeased.
 Unnerved, Orh-Chhuon's tears flowed, staining his face.

Seething with anger,
The King's intentions were still

- 989 Twisted and black. He was uneasy. He felt unclean.
He didn't want to let Orh-Chhuon go back.
Unable to abate his anger
He summoned the Royal Armed Forces.

The imperfect character of King Rea-mea in *Tum Teav* stands in contrast to the Preah Ream in the *Reamker* or *Ramakerti*, the Cambodian version of the Indian epic the *Ramayana*, the classic tale of good and evil in Cambodian literature.⁸⁸ In the *Reamker*, Preah Ream is the model of virtue. In a long series of battles, Ream and his brother, along with the white monkey general, Hanuman, wage war on the evil giant Ravana and his army. Ravana is finally defeated when Ream pierces his heart with a magic arrow, proving that good ultimately prevails over evil. By killing Ravana, Preah Ream fulfills his responsibility to protect his kingdom and maintain peace and order.⁸⁹

While Preah Ream is of divine origin and consistently virtuous, King Rea-mea in *Tum Teav* has human flaws and imperfections. This is another feature that sets *Tum Teav* apart from classical Cambodian texts where the virtue of heroes and the evil of villains are straightforward and clear. As a transitional work between traditional and modern Cambodian literature, *Tum Teav* is full of characters and events that describe the conflicts and tragedies of daily life. The question of King Rea-mea's abuse of power is an example of this. Indeed, the behavior of all the characters in the story is far from the idealized characters that populate traditional Cambodian literature.

Saman acknowledges Orh-Chhuon's abuse of power when he kills Tim; however, he rationalizes Orh-Chhuon's actions saying that he was provoked by Tum's arrogance. The fact that Tum never showed Orh-Chhuon the King's royal edict leads Saman to ask: "Thus, isn't Tum the one who causes the King to lose his sense of morality and humanity and causes Yeay Phan and Orh-Chhuon to be subjected to such vicious and excessive torture?"⁹⁰

Of particular interest, however, is the reasoning behind Saman's argument. The association between respect and fear is a key element in his logic.⁹¹ According to Saman, Orh-Chhuon is innocent because he fears the King and thus respects him. That is, Orh-Chhuon's fear of the King demonstrates his respect for him and his authority. Because Orh-Chhuon does not see himself as being above the King or superior in power, the

King's vicious punishment is excessive. In Tum's case, the opposite appears to be true. Tum shows no fear of Orh-Chhuon. According to Saman, Tum's insolence and complete lack of respect for Orh-Chhuon's rank and power justifiably provoke his violent response. Saman's logic is based conditions of feudal society according to which the underclass must show due respect, i.e., fear, for the ruling class in all situations. Not showing respect as required makes one justifiably subject to the harshest of punishments.

Turning to the question of Tum's wrongdoing, Saman begins by defining the context of Tum's actions in terms of the prescribed codes of conduct for a Buddhist monk. Saman states that Tum's repeated violations of the Buddhist precepts are initially triggered by his restlessness that instigates his leaving the temple in order to sell *taok* prayer tables with Pech in the surrounding villages. After meeting Teav in Tbong Khmom, he violates the discipline by adorning himself and using his beautiful voice in order to attract her. His transgressions continue with his lying to his mother and the abbot, and culminate with his disrobing without permission and subsequent sexual relations with Teav: "The power of love pushed Tum to lie to the Abbot and his mother in order to disrobe and pursue a woman."⁹²

As with his analysis of Orh-Chhuon's wrongdoing vis-à-vis the King, Saman argues that there are extenuating circumstances that mitigate the severity of Tum's otherwise serious offenses. That is, although Tum violates prescribed codes of conduct, he realizes that his actions are wrong, and he is willing to ask forgiveness. Saman points out that after he disrobes in the forest, Tum goes with Pech to the abbot's quarters with offerings of incense and candles to confess his crimes:

It's rare for someone to face up to his errors, but Tum does this. Tum goes to ask forgiveness from the Abbot after he disrobes. This shows his sincere devotion:

"I was wrong and improper in everything I did.
Please, I ask of you Venerable to save me.
Being just a student, I was made ignorant
By desires of the flesh."⁹³

Saman continues his discussion of Tum's wrongdoing by presenting other extenuating circumstances. While Tum acts immaturely and is unable to check his emotions, he is also subject to forces beyond his control. Saman tells us that although Tum lets his feelings and passion for Teav get the better of him to the point that he compromises her virtue, he is still young and "does not yet have the power to be the master of his feelings."⁹⁴ If youth and immaturity are not reason enough to excuse Tum's actions, Saman

reminds us that Tum is also under the spell of the scented scarf given to him by Teav: "He has insufficient powers of reason and is always under the spell of the *pha-hom*, the symbol of Teav's love."⁹⁵

Finally, despite all of his failings, Tum does demonstrate real courage (albeit lacking in discretion) when he sings about his love for Teav after she arrives at the king's palace to take her place with the royal concubines:

Love created a courage that was out of place in the presence of King Rea-mea of Lovek...Tum sang of his love for Teav who during that time was made a concubine of the King. But what luck, chance or fate that the King decided to give them the gift of justice and make Teav the wife of Tum.⁹⁶

However, Saman does not make Tum into a tragic hero. Despite Tum's display of courage before the King and extreme love for Teav, he is not able to summon the strength and presence of mind to rescue Teav after he learns of her imminent marriage to Moeurn Nguon at the end of the story. Rather than use the King's edict and stop the marriage, Tum falls into despair and begins to doubt Teav's faithfulness to him. Saman quotes the following stanzas that describe Tum's sense of defeat "as though the King's edict has no value":⁹⁷

742 Tum exclaimed, "Oh, wind which blows!
"Oh, Teav! Taken away! The scent of your perfume!
"I can hold only the wafts of fragrance!
"Teav! The greedy thieves took you from me!

743 "They left you and me all alone!
"Teav does not Miss. me! Beware of the heart of a woman!
"A charming heart without consideration or pity!
"Having Nguon to be her husband, she drops Tum!"⁹⁸

Saman concludes that, "Tum's hopelessness made him lose his courage. Tum was weak and could only think of his own imminent demise."⁹⁹ For Saman, Tum does not have the qualities befitting a heroic character. As the moment nears when Tum will have to confront the power of Orh-Chhuon, he loses hope, despite being armed with the King's edict: "It is true that Orh-Chhuon is a vicious person who abuses his power and disregards people's rights... but if Tum had courage, had fortitude and determination, he would have kept in mind the words: 'As long as you are alive, you should always have hope.'"

For Saman, Tum clearly does not fulfill the role of a hero. Instead, in his confused desperation Tum gets drunk, fails to deliver the King's letter

and provokes Orh-Chhuon to take drastic measures and have him killed. Saman concludes that Tum “died like a snake and lived like a frog.”¹⁰⁰

As with his analysis of Tum, Saman identifies both good and bad qualities in Teav that make it difficult to excuse or to condemn her completely. According to traditional codes of conduct, she is clearly in the wrong to fall in love with a monk and to go so far as to encourage him with the gift of the perfumed *pha-hom*. Saman also finds fault with her stubbornness and disrespect for her mother’s wishes: “Teav doesn’t comply with her mother who has offered her to Moeurn Nguon. This shows that she is stubborn, and her disrespect of her mother’s instructions are against the ancient tradition.”¹⁰¹

Saman goes on to identify extenuating circumstances that excuse Teav’s wrongdoing. First of all, Teav is a beautiful young woman with all the attributes that make her “the envy of everyone.”¹⁰² It is more difficult for her not to become attracted to someone and preserve her reputation than it is for another girl who is not as sought after. In addition, regarding her rejection of Moeurn Nguon, Saman points out that, “happiness cannot arise against one’s wishes,” making Teav’s refusal to comply with her mother’s wishes not unreasonable.¹⁰³

Finally, Saman states that Teav, like Tum, shows admirable courage when she confirms her love for Tum to the King after arriving at the royal palace as described in the following stanzas:

615 At that time, Tum was terrified of the King.
He listened closely and quickly raised his joined hands respectfully.
Tum addressed the King truthfully.
“Please have mercy on me Your Majesty.

616 “Have me killed for my serious crime.
“Condemn me to live as a slave of Your Highness.
“I respectfully say as a slave and without deception
“That Teav is in fact my fiancé.”

617 The King then questioned Miss. Teav.
“Teav! I have given your situation close attention.
“Speak truthfully. Don’t be afraid.
“Have you and Tum laid together, or is this untrue?”

618 Teav addressed the august King.
“Your Majesty, please have mercy on me.
“Tum and I are exactly
“As Your Majesty has already been informed.”¹⁰⁴

Their courage and respect for the King lead to their marriage with the King's blessing. However, Teav, again like Tum, is young and immature. Saman argues that Teav's naiveté, along with her concern for her mother, allows her to be fooled by her mother's letter telling her to return. Saman also depicts Teav as a victim of her mother's machinations. When Tum returns to Tbong Khmom and finds Teav, Saman describes their momentary happiness as follows: "But the love was not the heavenly love as before. This was happiness in a tiger's cage such that all the fierce animals were glaring at them showing their claws and fangs ready for the kill."¹⁰⁵

In the final analysis, however, Saman concludes that Teav, even more than Tum, lacked the courage and strength necessary to effectively oppose her mother and those whose abuse of power finally led to her destruction.

While Saman has been fairly generous in his appraisal of the other characters, he is less forgiving in the case of *Yeay* Phan. With King Rea-mea, Orh-Chhuon, Tum and Teav, Saman identifies extenuating circumstances that to varying degrees justify their actions and mitigate their responsibility for the tragic events in the story. With *Yeay* Phan, however, this is not the case. Although Saman acknowledges that she wants the best for her child, he argues that this is to be expected of any parent and is not really a sign of virtue: "As Teav's mother, she only wants happiness and security for her child. But is there a parent that doesn't want to give their child happiness and prosperity?"

Like most readers, Saman is skeptical of *Yeay* Phan's underlying intentions. He suggests that her eagerness to accept Orh-Chhuon's proposal reveals her obsession for wealth and status. Although *Yeay* Phan consults Teav regarding the offer of marriage, Saman argues that it is not in earnest. She does not expect Teav to object since she has always "listened to her mother." This is verified by the fact that after Teav refused, *Yeay* Phan did her best to coerce her with appeals to *thoa* [holy moral principles].

According to Saman, *Yeay* Phan's wrongdoing and responsibility for the tragic events become more serious later in the story. First of all, being a mature woman with worldly experience, Saman argues that *Yeay* Phan should have known that bringing Teav and Tum together in their house would lead to trouble. Saman describes it as putting sugar in front of an ant. According to the laws of nature, the ant cannot resist the sugar: "She is an older person with a lot of life experience. Should she have so blithely put her trust in them [Tum and Teav] to the point that she would let the ant be with the sugar like that?"¹⁰⁶

Later, *Yeay* Phan's actions show that she is not really motivated by her concern for her daughter's welfare. Rather, it is her obsession for wealth and status that controls her behavior and blinds her to the consequences of her actions. According to Saman, this is evidenced by the decisions *Yeay* Phan makes following Orh-Chhuon's proposal. As mentioned above, *Yeay* Phan becomes angry when Teav objects to the arranged marriage with Moeurn Nguon. However, when Teav is chosen to be the King's concubine, *Yeay* Phan forgets about the arranged marriage, content that she and Teav would enjoy the security and comfort of life in the royal palace: "When she sees that the King has decided to choose Teav to be his concubine, *Yeay* Phan becomes very happy once again and forgets all about Orh-Chhuon. She forgets the arrangement between her and Orh-Chhuon without the least regret."¹⁰⁷

She quickly changes her mind again when the King marries Teav to Tum, who is poor and without rank. Desperate, *Yeay* Phan returns to Orh-Chhuon and convinces him to revive their previous plans. At each turn, *Yeay* Phan's decision is based on material gain and not Teav's best interests: "But when she knows that her status as the mother-in-law of the King has turned into the mother-in-law of the destitute "Moeurn Ek," she quickly changes her mind and seeks out Orh-Chhuon."¹⁰⁸

Yeay Phan's treachery and deceit reaches its worst point at the end of the story. First, she tricks Teav into returning to Tbong Khmom with the letter telling her she is very ill. Then she urges Orh-Chhuon to kill Tum when he arrives at the wedding ceremony:

- 633 "I had already decided to give her to Mister Orh-Chhuon!
 "Moeurn Nguon, his son, had even offered his hand!
 "He has wealth and high rank!"
 In anger, Teav's mother plotted her revenge for many days.
- 634 As twilight fell, Teav's mother furiously dashed off a letter.
 She was willing to lose everything she had known and
 bring on death just to follow thoughtless flights of fancy.
- 635 Then Teav's mother started off.
 She arrived at the Governor's residence.
 They had become like relatives to each other, because of their mutual
 trust.
 Being a true friend like that, she would tell him her plan.
- 636 She entered and sat down composing herself.
 Raising her hands in greeting, she said,
 "I'm only a woman. Because we had already made arrangements
 "I'm afraid of doing wrong by taking back my marriage agreement

with you.

- 637 “I’m so angry, Governor, with that rascal Tum.
 “He has brought disgrace to my reputation.
 “He is arrogant and has no respect for anyone.
 “Now, I must ask you
- 638 “To find a way to prepare the desserts and food,
 “The pork, chicken, duck, fish and rice wine,
 “As well as vegetables of all kinds from all over.
 “I have prepared a letter and arranged for its delivery
- 639 “To Teav my child to have her come back home quickly.
 “The letter says that her mother who lives
 “Far away is seriously ill and feverish.
 “It instructs her to come, as her mother’s flesh and blood.
- 640 ‘Return quickly before it’s too late,’ I repeated.
 ‘I’m anxiously waiting, fearful
 ‘My strength is very little... not enough to sustain me...
 ‘If I don’t see you, there will be a tragedy.’
- 641 “When Teav arrives,
 “Interrupt whatever you may be doing to set our trap.
 “She will be given to Nguon to be his wife
 “As we previously arranged together already.”

In his assessment of *Yeay Phan*’s character, Saman concludes:

[*Yeay Phan*] lowers herself this time to the point of being “the go between” and convinces Orh-Chhuon to quickly prepare for Teav’s marriage. Through her machinations, she has Teav leave Tum and return to Tbong Khmom... Her malice and spite are not over yet. *Yeay Phan* yells and forces Orh-Chhuon to seize and kill Tum who has followed his wife to take her back to the royal Palace.¹⁰⁹

With the exception of *Yeay Phan*, Saman’s analysis of wrongdoing in the story does not reach a definite conclusion in each case as with other critical texts on *Tum Teav*. It can be argued that the expectation to arrive at a final determination as to whether a character is wholly “good” or “bad” is related to the all-important didactic function of Cambodian literature. A primary objective of the critical texts is to teach the reader, typically a lycée student, right from wrong. Sometimes this is done explicitly. Other times, as with the *question-and-answer* format, the student is asked to “think about” the study question, but in the end the student is directed to the correct answer in the supplied response to the question. While Saman’s analysis of

Tum Teav fulfills the didactic function of Cambodian literary texts, his assessment of the characters and events allows for greater complexity and ambiguity than the other analyses discussed here.

Sem Sour (1970)

Sem Sour's critical text entitled *Special Commentaries* was published in 1970. The text analyzes and compares four works of traditional Cambodian literature: *Tum Teav*, *Reamker*, *Mahavessatarajatak*, and *Phauk Kol Kumar*. Sem Sour's text follows the same format as the other literary study guides, whereby a question is posed and followed by a response from various perspectives.

One of the study questions in Sem Sour's text considers the conflicts that eventually lead to the deaths of Tum and Teav. His response identifies two conflicts in the story and presents opposing points of view for each case. He begins with the conflict caused by Teav's refusal to comply with her mother's wish to accept the offer of marriage from Governor Orh-Chhuon and his wife on behalf of their son Moeurn Nguon. Sem Sour responds to this question from two perspectives. The first is that traditional codes of conduct for Cambodian young women, according to which Teav would be expected to comply with her mother's decision that marrying Moeurn Nguon is in her best interests. The second perspective is the modern viewpoint regarding personal rights and freedoms. According to this perspective, Teav's mother exceeds the limits of her parental authority by imposing her will on her daughter.

From a traditional point of view, Sem Sour places the blame for the conflict on Teav concluding, "Thus, Teav is the source of the conflict. She causes her own destruction."

According to this perspective, Teav's mother is doing what any mother in her situation would do. As far as Teav's mother knows, Teav has had no other suitors, so there is no reason for her to refuse such a propitious marriage offer. Teav, on the other hand, is unreasonable and obstinate, and her use of harsh language toward her mother is disrespectful and unnecessary. As a widow who wants to assure her daughter's future well-being, Teav's mother is fully justified in getting angry and reminding Teav that "the cake is never bigger than the mold."

According to the opposing perspective, Teav's mother is at fault for abusing her traditional authority in order to achieve her own objectives. Sem Sour points out that Teav's mother reminds her daughter that "the cake is never bigger than the mold" primarily out of self-interest.¹¹⁰ He argues that

she would not have brought the power of traditional expectations to bear if the offer of marriage had not come from someone with the wealth and power of Orh-Chhuon:

She invokes traditional codes of conduct saying “the cake is never bigger than the mold” and uses it to control the life of her daughter. If someone other than Orh-Chhuon had made the offer of marriage, she may not have agreed... When Orh-Chhuon’s go-between leaves, she is so overjoyed and excited that she tells Teav the news until she is out of breath, which shows how obsessed she is. When Teav objects, she uses traditional moral codes to stifle Teav quickly. Teav’s opposition is the primary cause that leads her mother to hold onto her malevolence until Teav’s death. Thus, *Yeay Phan* is a mother who misuses tradition. She abuses her authority over her daughter and doesn’t give her the right or freedom to choose a husband she likes.¹¹¹

After considering both points of view, Sem Sour concludes that the traditional argument is more convincing, and thus Teav is the primary cause of the conflict that eventually leads to her death. Although Teav’s mother may have abused her authority over her daughter, for Sem Sour the end justifies the means. That is, the kind of wealth and status that marrying into the family of Orh-Chhuon would bring “are the source of happiness for people.”¹¹² Thus, wanting this for her daughter justifies *Yeay Phan*’s authoritarian tactics.

This is a somewhat surprising conclusion given the date of Saem Sur’s text. One would expect Sem Sour to side with the modern perspective and have more empathy for Teav as she struggles in the name of love to assert her personal freedom and independence. In keeping with the notion that the perspectives presented in literary criticism texts reflect current political circumstances, one wonders to what extent and in what ways the war in Vietnam and the fall of Sihanouk’s *Sangkum* government led to a conservative backlash as expressed in Seam Sur’s conclusion on this conflict in *Tum Teav*.

The second conflict Sem Sour takes up concerns Tum’s decision to disrobe without the permission of the abbot. In this case, Tum defies the protocol that governs the actions of Buddhist monks. While Tum and Teav both oppose traditional cultural institutions, Tum’s defiance is perhaps more drastic given the importance of Buddhism in Cambodian society. Regarding Tum’s wrongdoing, Sem Sour writes:

This kind of behavior is a great wrongdoing that is against the tradition of religion, against the tradition of customs and beliefs of that time.

Despite the fact that the date was not auspicious and that he did not have permission, Tum was stubborn and unruly.¹¹³

In the previous case, the conflict is set up by the go-between who conveys Orh-Chhuon's offer of marriage on behalf of Moeurn Nguon. In this case, it is set up by the abbot's astrological calculations, according to which Tum must wait four or five months before he disrobes. There are two possible responses: Tum can comply with the results of the abbot's calculations or he can oppose them. Tum's decision to oppose the abbot leads to his return to Tbong Khmom and his sexual relations with Teav, and eventually results in their deaths. On the other hand, the tragic ending would have been avoided if Tum had followed the abbot's instructions, just as in the first case if Teav had obeyed her mother's wishes.

In his discussion of this conflict, Sem Sour considers the possibility that the abbot is to blame for not fully appreciating the extent of Tum's distress and imposing an unreasonable obstacle in his way: "If when Tum went to ask permission to disrobe, the Abbot had given it to him, Tum wouldn't have done such a thing. But the Abbot doesn't fully understand Tum's feelings that make him delirious for Teav. Preventing him to see her makes Tum commit this wrongdoing."¹¹⁴

However, Sem Sour dismisses this argument saying that the abbot has only good intentions for Tum and does not want to prohibit his love for Teav. In addition, the imposition of a specific waiting period of four or five months is not unreasonably long given the possible dangers. Thus, the abbot cannot be held accountable for Tum's wrongdoing. According to Sem Sour, in each case, respectively, Tum and Teav are primarily responsible for the failure to resolve the two primary conflicts that set off the events leading to the story's tragic conclusion.

Vandy Ka-onn (1973)

In 1973, Vandy Ka-onn's text *Realisme et Romantisme* was published in Phnom Penh. Ka-onn is one of Cambodia's best known modern intellectuals and his text provides a provocative example of the use of literature in general and *Tum Teav* in particular for expressing socio-political viewpoints. At the time of the text's publication, Cambodia was in turmoil. Corruption in the Lon Nol regime, fueled with US dollars, had reached endemic proportions, and the civil war with the Khmer Rouge was becoming a losing battle. Within two years, Pol Pot's forces would take Phnom Penh and begin their reign of terror. In 1973, Vandy Ka-onn was pursuing a sociology degree in France and trying to make sense of the chaos engulfing his country.¹¹⁵ *Realisme et Romantisme* presents some intriguing ideas about the

source of Cambodia's problems at that time and the need to distinguish between what is real and what is romantic delusion in Cambodian culture and society.

Of particular interest is Ka-onn's viewpoint on the opposition between realism and romanticism as it relates to the application of Buddhist morality. For Ka-onn, the Buddhist law of karma as expressed by the phrase "Do good, get good; do bad get bad" cannot be taken on blind faith. It must be applied critically with due consideration of the circumstances. To illustrate his point, Ka-onn refers to an episode in the folk story *Judge Rabbit*. When asked for help by the crocodile that has been caught in a trap, Judge Rabbit refuses, even though Buddhist ethics would supposedly require him to show compassion. Ka-onn points out, however, that it would be a romantic delusion to believe that by "doing good" and freeing his enemy the crocodile that Judge Rabbit would subsequently "get good." Judge Rabbit demonstrates good judgment and is not swayed by the crocodile's false promises. However, this is often not the case in Cambodian society where a misunderstanding of Buddhist ethics can distort realistic thinking: "We can conclude that Judge Rabbit's refusal to help the crocodile comes from his refusal to believe the ideal (do good, get good) because he clearly understands natural law. For this reason, we can conclude that Judge Rabbit is a character that depicts realism."¹¹⁶

Ka-onn continues his argument using the example of Madame Bovary in Gustave Flaubert's novel in order to illustrate the difference between realism and romanticism in terms of personal emotions. Ka-onn argues that although Emma Bovary's emotions are powerful and overwhelming, her appraisal of her circumstances and rejection of her honest yet ineffectual husband is realistic.¹¹⁷ Romanticism is therefore not necessarily at odds with realism. He makes the same case for Tum and Teav. Although they are overcome with emotion, the love they feel for each other is real:

In *Tum Teav*, Tum and Teav are characters who exemplify romanticism, who believe that there is nothing in the world that is greater than love. In addition, that love is "the boss" of the destiny of people. Thus, one must make love great (*absolu dans l'amour*). As we have already seen, Tum and Teav can't enjoy their perfect love and would rather die. For, if one is committed to one's love, and it is not to be had, what else can give meaning or support their lives? ... Love can be devastating. It can be real.¹¹⁸

Conversely, supposedly rational behavior becomes unrealistic when it causes a deluded response to one's situation. According to Ka-onn, this is the case with Teav's mother. After the offer of marriage from Moeurn

Nguon's parents on behalf of their son, *Yeay* Phan becomes infatuated with delusions of wealth and rank that are irrational. *Yeay* Phan's materialistic ambition in the name of doing what is best for her daughter is a deluded distortion of the Buddhist notion of "doing good." Her excessive desire prohibits natural and realistic behavior.¹¹⁹ Thus, Ka-onn interestingly deconstructs the opposition between realistic and romantic behavior to show that the excessive and romantic emotions of Emma Bovary, Teav and Tum are realistic responses to their circumstances, while the supposedly realistic motives of *Yeay* Phan are actually romantic delusions.

Ka-onn develops his argument by showing that the source of *Yeay* Phan's romantic delusions is the relations of power in Cambodian feudal society. Using Marxist-like class theory, Ka-onn argues that Cambodia's traditional codes of conduct and systems of education are designed to allow the elite to maintain power and dominance over the underclass. Traditional systems of education maintain the feudal social system through expressions such as "The cake is never bigger than the mold," "Someone with short arms shouldn't try to hug a mountain" and "A chicken's egg cannot become a stone." This method of instruction perpetuates the belief in the elite's supposed superiority and the underclass's dependence on them. The terms of the relationship are defined as well in administrative titles such as "Owner of my life over my head."¹²⁰ Ka-onn argues that Buddhist notions of karma and reincarnation have been improperly incorporated into these teachings to convince people that the wealth and status of the elite are due to merit and good actions performed in previous lives. Accordingly, one's social status can only be improved in a subsequent life or in some cases through connections with the elite, through marriage, for example.

While *Yeay* Phan may believe that she is acting out of love for her and has only her best interests in mind, in reality she is intent on joining the elite ranks of Cambodia's feudal hierarchy. She is well aware that as a middle class widow her aspirations are out of reach, and the only way for her to achieve this status is by using her authority over her beautiful daughter to arrange her marriage as advantageously as possible. Thus, according to Ka-onn, the source of *Yeay* Phan's romantic jubilation is the prospect for advancement in a social structure that offers few other opportunities. Likewise, feudal society causes her to become hysterical and irrational in response to Teav's opposition to the marriage with Moeurn Nguon. Referring to the teachings of the Buddha, Ka-onn advises parents not to impose their will on their children, if it means inflicting torture on them:

Can we say that *Yeay* Phan is stupid for thinking that Teav's happiness depends on acquiring wealth? Could she have known beforehand that Teav would kill herself along with Tum? I fully believe that she could

not have known beforehand. *Therefore, Yeay Phan's biggest fault (as with all Cambodian mothers) has to do with imposing her own view on Teav in order to solve her problems once and for all.* In doing this, Yeay Phan violates Teav's freedom to choose. It is quite true that Yeay Phan foresees that if Teav marries Tum she would not be as well off as she would be by marrying Moeurn Nguon... *But Yeay Phan should realize that that kind of excessive realism would turn out to be meaningless.* Our lives are our own, not someone else's, no matter if you are the other person's mother, father, aunt, uncle or grandparent. This is the philosophy of the Buddha our teacher. If Teav becomes miserable because of Tum's lack of resources, it is Tum's and Teav's life. It is normal for a mother (or a father) to feel sorry for their child if she is lovesick and try to help her. But don't be too overbearing because feeling passion is part of being human. Regarding Yeay Phan, if her daughter has fallen in love like this, she should think, "Tearing her away won't work. Better to let her go." I believe that doing that is both realistic and humane. What are we alive to do? If we live to inflict torture, this kind of torture will not bring happiness. Does Yeay Phan realize this? Do Khmer mothers realize this?¹²¹

Ka-onn's solution to Cambodia's social problems is based on a correct understanding and application of the Buddha's teachings, which are the basis of Cambodian morality and traditional culture. In the Buddha's teachings, he says, aphorisms such as "the cake is never bigger than the mold" do not exist. To the contrary "the Buddha taught us not to love wealth and rank because they are nothing but illusions." Finally, Ka-onn points out the hypocrisy of Yeay Phan calling herself a Buddhist: "How can Yeay Phan in the name of being a Buddhist turn around and act contrary to its morality? Why isn't this considered a scandal?"¹²²

Endnotes

- ¹ See, for example, Nhok Thaem's "A Study of Khmer Literature" (1959), Leang Hap An's *Opinions on the Kolap Pailin* (1959), and Ly Theam Teng's *Khmer Literature* (1960).
- ² In the 1960s, Cambodian folk stories were published in a series of volumes under the title *Collection of Khmer Folkstories*. A total of 216 traditional Cambodian stories and legends are included in the collection published by the Buddhist Institute in collaboration with the Commission of Mores and Customs (established under Norodom Sihanouk's government) between 1965 and 1972 (Thierry, 1978:99-103).
- ³ Among these groups were the *Khmer Leur* or "upland Khmer," the Muslim Cham, and peasant farmers. (See Sam-Ang Sam and Chan Moly Sam, 1987, for descriptions of these folk dances.)
- ⁴ In this context, the debate over *Tum Teav's* authorship took on an importance that would probably not have existed in the past, when the identity of the author and date of composition were not necessarily important features of a text. Previously, Khmer writing had been primarily linked to religious and monarchical institutions. For the most part, monks or members of the Royal Court translated Pali religious texts or composed original texts based on Buddhist themes, particularly the life of the Buddha, to articulate Khmer Buddhist concepts. The monarchy supported the religious institutions, which in turn served to affirm the monarch's status as god-king. By producing texts for or about the monarch, a monk simultaneously praised the life of the Buddha or "Great Teacher," with whom the monarch was identified. In this way, the religious, historical and literary functions of writing were interrelated and interdependent. However, with the emergence of 20th century literary institutions and the role of literature in affirming Cambodia's national identity, the identity of the author took on new importance.
- ⁵ French academic study of Khmer culture and civilization was formalized in Cambodia with the establishment of the *École Française d'Extrême-Orient* in 1901.
- ⁶ Guesdon, Joseph, 1906:94.
- ⁷ Earlier published studies of Khmer literature by the French were made by Aymonier (1878), Moura (1883), Taupin (1886), Leclère (1895) and Pavie (1898).
- ⁸ Guesdon, 1906:94. Nevertheless, the Cambodian literary aesthetic that incorporates Brahman deities and cosmology in the telling of predictable tales of the Buddha's previous lives provided a standard framework for Khmer writers well into the 20th century. Indeed, Buddhist themes are still considered to be a defining feature of Khmer literature by prominent scholars such as the French-trained Cambodian linguist *Peouv Saverous*. In "Études Ramakertiennes," for example, Peouv analyzes the character of the epic's hero King Rea-mea and various events in the story in terms of Buddhist concepts. She argues that the influence of Rea-mea in Cambodian culture is comparable to that of the Buddha.

For Peouv, the text illustrates the popular belief that Rea-mea's renown is a result of his exemplary conduct in previous lives, and the glorification of his reputation follows the Buddhist practice of praising right action.

- ⁹ Khim Sam Or, 1961:Introduction. Khim Sam Or was a former official at the periodical *Samaki* [Solidarity], and this text is a compilation of material taken from the periodical.
- ¹⁰ This differentiation also raises the question of the criteria used in assigning a text to a particular section. It is interesting to note that the literary section appears on the page physically above the religious section. When one considers the importance given to showing respect for the Buddha by placing Buddhist representations physically higher than whatever or whomever occupies the same space, this choice of layout is somewhat surprising. Indeed, the subsequent reversal of the two sections beginning in 1951, when the religious part was placed above the literary one, would indicate that their relative arrangement on the page was in fact a consideration. The apparent priority given to the religious section by this reversal is not borne out, however, when one considers the disparity between the number of items in the religious section compared to the literary. The number of items in the literary section always exceeds the number in the religious by about a factor of three. Typical issues would have seven or eight items in the literary section and only two or three in the religious. In any case, this event marks the beginning of a definitive place for literature as such in the Buddhist Institute's publication.
- ¹¹ Coedès, George, 1931:180-91 and 1942, No. 2:39.
- ¹² Coedès, 1942:180.
- ¹³ Coedès, 1942:181-2.
- ¹⁴ Coedès, 1942:183-4.
- ¹⁵ Kim Hak. *Tik Tonle Sap in Kambuja Suriya*, 1939 No. 1:7.
- ¹⁶ Kim Hak, 1939:8.
- ¹⁷ For more on the emergence of the modern Cambodian novel, see Amratisha Klairung, 1998.
- ¹⁸ The Khmer word *chaet*, translated here as "nation," could also mean "people" or "race." Thus, the term could be interpreted as referring to either national or ethnic identity or both.
- ¹⁹ The establishment of the Khmer Writers Association in 1956 was another important event in formalizing the study and appreciation of Khmer literature.
- ²⁰ It is interesting to note that the attention given to the identity of the writer seems to follow a hierarchical progression that begins with Prince Norodom Sihanouk and continues to monks before reaching the modern Khmer writer. After a series of photographic essays portraying Sihanouk, published between 1963 and 1965, biographies of monks begin to appear in 1966, starting with Venerable Chuon Nath and Venerable Huot Tath.

Under Norodom Sihanouk, primary and secondary education, along with

extensive literacy programs, was expanded, and the study of Cambodian literature became available nationwide. For more on this, see: Amratisha, 1998:50-63.

- 21 Saman's argument was in response to a group of scholars – Hang Thun Hak, Eng Soth, Neang Ho and Sam Thang (former professors of Khmer literature at Lycée Sisowath in Phnom Penh), who asserted that the legitimate author of the text was the famous 19th century poet Santhor Mok.
- 22 In 1966, a new edition of the book was printed by the publishing house Seng Nguon Huot.
- 23 Leang Hap An, 1962.
- 24 The Buddhist Institute's publication of *Tum Teav* by Venerable Botumthera Som appeared in 1962, the same year as the publication of Leang Hap An's critical text. Apparently, Leang Hap An had access to the Buddhist Institute's publication when he wrote his analysis.
- 25 Leang Hap An, 1962:5-6.
- 26 Leang Hap An, 1962:6.
- 27 Leang Hap An, 1962:7.
- 28 Ouk Saman, 1966:43. His logic reflects the importance given to one's reputation and the irrevocable damage done to that reputation by accusations of wrongdoing, even if they are later determined to be invalid. Once spoken, the effect of the accusation cannot be reversed, and the taint to one's reputation, so highly prized in Cambodian culture, remains.
- 29 Ouk Saman, 1966:29-30. The implication here is that the Ministry of Education instigated the inquiry into which palm leaf manuscript of *Tum Teav* should be used in the national curriculum. Ouk Saman's statement also implies that the Ministry had not adequately clarified the issue. That is, it had not fulfilled its responsibility as the government institution charged with the task of defining the literary texts to be included in the national curriculum.
- 30 Ouk Saman, 1966:42-43. By definitively attributing the ownership of this manuscript to Mok, this group of scholars would supposedly have the necessary evidence to indict Venerable Som with the crime of plagiarism. However, there is inconclusive evidence, and according to his principle of justice, Saman suggests they are committing the worse crime of slander. Saman responds by presenting a detailed analysis of the three palm leaf manuscripts of the story. This analysis demonstrates Saman's compliance with the philosophy of justice to which he also holds the other scholars accountable but with which they have failed to comply.
- 31 Ouk Saman, 1966:36
- 32 Ouk Saman, 1966:43-44.
- 33 Ouk Saman, 1966:79-82.
- 34 Ouk Saman, 1966:86.

- ³⁵ Ouk Saman, 1966:87.
- ³⁶ Kong Somphea's novels include *The Life of an Orphan* (1968), *This Strange Existence* (1970?), *The General Pheakday Pen* (1971), and *The Achar Hem Chiev* (1972). Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:110.
- ³⁷ In 1970, General Lon Nol took power from Prince Norodom Sihanouk's *Sangkum* government in a bloodless coup when the Prince was out of the country.
- ³⁸ Kong Somphea, 1971:dedication page.
- ³⁹ The implication here is that the *Sangkum* government perpetuated the feudal mentality of dependence and superficial status symbols.
- ⁴⁰ Kong Somphea, 1971:introduction.
- ⁴¹ Kong Somphea, 1971:introduction.
- ⁴² Kong Somphea, 1971:22.
- ⁴³ Kong Somphea, 1971:16.
- ⁴⁴ Kong Somphea, 1971:18-19.
- ⁴⁵ In May 1993, U.N.-sponsored elections were held in Cambodia. It was the most expensive election process conducted by the U.N. to date.
- ⁴⁶ Cambodian Ministry of Education, 1989:7.
- ⁴⁷ Cambodian Ministry of Education, 1989:8-9.
- ⁴⁸ Cambodian Ministry of Education, 1989:10.
- ⁴⁹ Cambodian Ministry of Education, 1989:9-10.
- ⁵⁰ According to Khin Hoc Dy, Kim Set was born around 1930 in Cochinchina and presumably died in 1975 at the outset of the genocide. He taught Khmer in a private school in Phnom Penh, but his position was unstable and poorly paid. He wrote many novels and scholarly texts in order to live in the capital city. Khin Hoc Dy lists twenty-two novels by Kim Set beginning with his 1951 work *The Shadow of the Thief* and four scholarly texts including *The Knowledge of Khmer Writers*. Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:88-89.
- ⁵¹ *Phka Sraporn* was first published in serial form in 1947 in Kambuja then in book form in 1949.
- ⁵² Since Kim Set's text predates the publications of the 1960 version of the story by Santhor Mok and the 1962 version by Venerable Som, it is not clear which version of *Tum Teav* he is referring to in his text.
- ⁵³ Kim Set, 1959:30.
- ⁵⁴ As Chapter 4 discusses, many contemporary readers have made Tum a heroic symbol for the modern struggle against those who abuse their power and authority.
- ⁵⁵ In 1955, *Samaki*, edited by Saloth Chhay, the brother of Saloth Sar aka Pol Pot,

was banned by Sihanouk because it dated Cambodian independence from 1954, the date of the Geneva Conference, instead of 1953, the date associated with Sihanouk (see David Chandler 1991:77).

⁵⁶ Kim Sam Or, 1961:43.

⁵⁷ Kim Sam Or, 1961:43.

⁵⁸ Kim Sam Or, 1961:44.

⁵⁹ Like *Judge Rabbit*, *Thmenh Chey* is one of the most popular stories in Cambodian folk literature. The story's importance is shown by the fact that it was one of the first folk stories published by the Buddhist Institute. In addition, French scholars interested in documenting Cambodian history and culture recorded and translated the story.

Étienne Aymonier (1844-1929) is exemplary of the early French scholars who undertook the difficult task of studying and interpreting Cambodian culture, notably his 1878 lithograph of Cambodian folk stories *Textes Khmers*. It was the first publication of Cambodian folk stories and it included among others *Judge Rabbit* and *Thmenh Chey*. Aymonier also had a profound influence on some of the Cambodian intellectuals who were beginning to conceptualize Cambodian national identity vis-à-vis the West. Among them was Son Diep, a ranking functionary in the colonial service who prepared Aymonier's lithographed book of Cambodian folk stories for publication. In 1900, Son Diep attended the World Exposition in France and recorded his observations in his *Voyage en France pendant l'exposition universelle de 1900 à Paris*, published by Plon-Nourrit in 1902. In 1906, he accompanied King Sisowath and the royal dance troupe to France to perform at the International Colonial Exposition. This was a particularly important event because it was the first time that Cambodian classical dance was performed in the West.

Another French scholar who exerted a strong influence on young Cambodian intellectuals was Auguste Pavie. Like Aymonier, Pavie was a prodigious writer who produced much of the groundbreaking work on Cambodian language and ethnography for the French. In 1881, his *Excursions dans le Cambodge et le royaume de Siam* was published. In 1898, he published his *Recherches sur la littérature du Cambodge, du Laos, et du Siam*. In 1885, Pavie founded the École Cambodgienne in Paris that was attended by promising young Cambodian students who later rose through the ranks of the colonial administration.

Like Aymonier, Pavie took a special interest in Cambodian folk stories, and in 1921 he published *Contes du Cambodge*, a collection of stories translated into French by Thiounn Sambath, a protégé of Pavie. Thiounn rose through the colonial administration and was the minister of the royal palace between 1902 and 1941. During that time he also wrote French language pamphlets that described Cambodian traditions and culture. He also contributed to Khmer language journals that helped to establish a literary forum for articulating ideas about Cambodian national and cultural identity. Along with Son Diep, he was involved with the unprecedented trip of the royal ballet to France to perform at the 1906 International Colonial Exposition at Marseille.

Along with classic texts such as *Reamker*, *Katilork* and *Mahabharata*, folk stories from Cambodia and elsewhere were a regular feature in the monthly issues of *Kambuja Suriya*. (In 1957, 1958 and 1959 Japanese folk stories were published in successive editions. In 1963 and 1964, the French fables of La Fontaine appear along with various Chinese folk stories.) All of these folk stories were researched and edited by Tek Keam. Ly Theam Teng, another Cambodian literary scholar, contributed some Khmer folk stories with introductions. In 1932, for example, some of the folk stories previously collected by Aymonier began to appear. *The Story of the Tiger* was published in the first issue of that year. It was followed in subsequent issues by other stories from Aymonier's collection. In 1935, other Cambodian folk stories appeared, and in 1938 *Judge Rabbit* and *Thmenh Chey* were serialized. However, it was not until the 1960s, following Cambodian independence, that the various Cambodian folk stories published by *Kambuja Suriya* were published as a collection in Khmer.

⁶⁰ It appears that the Khmer Writers Association added these questions to the text.

⁶¹ This method of question and answer is typical of Cambodian instructional texts. The format is very organized and logical, with the answers further broken down into smaller sections. This method of instruction closely resembles the format of Buddhist texts, where disciples pose questions to the Buddha whose answers are organized into lists that follow a clear logic.

⁶² Leang Hap An, 1962:19.

⁶³ Until the introduction of Western-style education at the end of the 19th century, Cambodian boys would typically become ordained as novice monks and receive formal instruction at a local temple. In Theravadan Buddhism, there is no minimum amount of time a male must remain a monk, and it is common for young boys to enter the monkhood for a single rainy season. According to popular belief, the act of "giving away" one's son to the Buddhist *sangha* is one of the most important ways for parents to earn merit and thereby enhance their prospects for a favorable rebirth. Likewise, entering the monkhood is an important way for the son to show respect and gratitude for his parents.

⁶⁴ As a novice monk, Tum would have been taught to read and write by older monks and given instruction in Buddhist morality, self-discipline and philosophy. His daily activities – from begging for rice to eat to the wearing of his saffron robes – would have been governed by strict rules of conduct enforced by the temple abbot.

⁶⁵ The abbot has made calculations using astrological charts used for making predictions about the future.

⁶⁶ There is a political dimension to Tum's opposition to the abbot who refuses him permission to disrobe. In Stanza 234 Tum's mother compares the abbot to the French, saying: "Dear child, don't argue./ "How can you oppose the abbot? It would be comparable to a war./ "He is like the French when they show off their guns."

⁶⁷ Leang Hap An, 1962:22.

⁶⁸ Buddhist philosophy is based on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Through meditation and the practice of mindfulness, one learns to understand the nature of suffering and the path leading to Enlightenment.

⁶⁹ Judge Rabbit's behavior would normally be condemned. Yet, his wrong actions are excused because they are necessary for his survival. Consider the episode where Judge Rabbit steals cucumbers from the old man's farm. After doing this repeatedly, he becomes caught in the trap the old man has set for him. To get free from the trap Judge Rabbit makes the same false promises to the toad that he made to the alligator when he wanted to cross the river. When the toad finally helps him, Judge Rabbit ridicules the toad saying his *chlaing* is not curable. This time, however, Judge Rabbit immediately pays for his arrogance and gets caught in the trap again after he succumbs to his desire to eat more cucumbers.

What enables him to escape the trap and survive is his cunning. When the toad finds Judge Rabbit caught in the farmer's trap a second time, he is happy to see him paying a price for tricking him previously. But Judge Rabbit is able to dupe the toad again by playing to its desire for girls. Judge Rabbit is certainly not a good Buddhist, but he is clever. Because of his cunning, we are willing to forgive Judge Rabbit's wrongdoing. At the end of the day, what makes Judge Rabbit a heroic figure is his successful struggle to survive despite his flaws.

In the final episode of the folk story, Judge Rabbit gets caught a second time in yet another farmer's trap after he cannot resist his desire to eat his field of tasty green seedlings bare. Although he was able to escape the first time by pretending to be dead, Judge Rabbit repeats the same error and is caught again. This time, the farmer is weary of Judge Rabbit's tricks and places him in a fish trap near his house to make sure he does not escape. But the next day when the farmer catches a fish and places it in a jar beside Judge Rabbit, the scene is set for Judge Rabbit to demonstrate his clever survival skills. He instructs the fish to play dead, knowing the farmer will try to revive him by placing him in the river to keep him fresh to eat later. But the fish immediately swims away, causing the farmer to panic. He calls his wife to grab the fish trap quickly so he can catch it. When she does so, she inadvertently releases Judge Rabbit who runs away. And in the confusion, the fish plunges into the water and escapes as well. Not only does Judge Rabbit save himself and the fish, he also proves the Buddhist monk right who earlier predicted to the farmer's disbelief that he would have nothing to eat that morning.

⁷⁰ The theme of separation and reunion is another major motif of Cambodian literature. It is found in the modern novels, as well as in classic texts such as the *Reamker* with Rea-mea and his wife Sitha.

⁷¹ This quote is the second line from stanza 132 of Venerable Botumthera Som's text. The complete stanza reads: "Oh *teal* tree. My body is broken. /Teav depends on me. Thinking of her I feel such regret./*Ph-diek* tree, I was wrong to leave her at all./*Ko Koh* tree! I can't think! There is no relief!"

⁷² Leang Hap An, 1962:31.

- ⁷³ Leang Hap An, 1962:48.
- ⁷⁴ The expression “in the shade” refers to the period of time when a girl reached puberty and was confined to the home under close supervision as the parents sought out a suitable marriage partner. During this period of seclusion, the girl was taught the domestic skills necessary for fulfilling her future role as a housewife, such as cooking, needlework, etc., and dyed her skin yellow with saffron root. In addition, the girl was taught how to comport herself in a submissive and subservient way. For example, when in the presence of men, a woman was expected to avoid eye contact and avert her gaze. She should speak in a soft and gentle voice, etc. These would be the attributes of the ideal Cambodian woman referred to by the term *krup laek*, meaning “all the marks” of virtue [a perfect woman]. Accordingly, the degree to which a woman had the marks of a virtuous woman determined her marriage prospects.
- ⁷⁵ The *chpap* have been composed continuously in Cambodia for about four hundred years, and they are considered the authoritative source of ethical advice concerning one’s personal responsibilities as a member of Cambodian society. The didactic function of the *chpap* was traditionally communicated to students through a rigid method of rote learning whereby the student repeated, memorized and recited the verses of each poem. Rote memorization is made easier by the fact that the *chpap* are not only written in verse according to a strict rhyme and meter but also have a specific rhythm and melody to accompany each rhyme pattern. Thus, students studied the verse with both their eyes and ears, and equal value is given to both the aural and visual aspects of the poems. Before the institution of the French educational system in the late 19th century, this would have been part of a boy’s traditional education in the temple schools under the direction of the monks, or a girl’s education at home. Although the *chpap* were incorporated into the study of literature under the French school system, the traditional temple-based system continued simultaneously, especially in rural areas. Teav would have been expected to model her behavior on the moral code described in the *chpap*. Her sexual relations with Tum are clearly in violation of these expectations.
- ⁷⁶ Nor has an important role to play in Teav’s moral upbringing. Nor is the one responsible for attending to Teav’s daily needs and most importantly safeguarding her reputation. Since it was assumed that a girl would be a virgin before getting married, Nor’s most important function was to guarantee that Teav had no interaction with the opposite sex. However, Nor fails to fulfill her responsibilities, and in fact directly enables Teav’s sexual relations with Tum. Nor’s complicity begins before the scene described here when Tum first came to Teav’s house to chant at Teav’s mother’s invitation. It is Nor who delivers the perfumed scarf to Tum on Teav’s behalf. When Tum returns to the temple, the *pha-hom* scarf constantly reminds him of Teav and serves as a symbol of her love for him.
- ⁷⁷ Venerable Botumthera Som, 1962.
- ⁷⁸ Leang Hap An, 1962:48.
- ⁷⁹ Leang Hap An, 1962:51

- ⁸⁰ Leang Hap An, 1962:54.
- ⁸¹ Leang Hap An, 1962:56.
- ⁸² Leang Hap An, 1962:53-4.
- ⁸³ Leang Hap An, 1962:59-60.
- ⁸⁴ Ouk Saman, 1966:159-160.
- ⁸⁵ Ouk Saman, 1966:155.
- ⁸⁶ That is, Orh-Chhuon's challenge is comparable to an egg hitting a rock.
- ⁸⁷ Ouk Saman, 1966:157-158.
- ⁸⁸ While Preah Ream in the *Ramayana* is an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, in the Cambodian version, Preah Ream is more closely associated with the Buddha. Prominent scholars such as the French-trained Cambodian linguist *Peouv Saverous* consider the influence of Buddhism as a defining feature of Khmer literature. In "Études Ramakertiennes," for example, Peouv analyzes the character of the epic's hero and various events in the story in terms of Buddhist concepts. In keeping with the Buddhist concept of karma, Preah Ream's virtue is a result of his exemplary conduct in previous lives. Peouv points out that the suffix *kerti* of the epic's title, *Ramakerti*, means "glory" or "reputation." The glorification of his reputation follows the Buddhist practice of praising right action as exemplified by the life of the Buddha.
- ⁸⁹ More than any other literary text, the characters and events from the *Reamker* have been used as the basis for the other major Cambodian art forms, including classical dance; sculpture; the various forms of Cambodian masked theater; story telling to the accompaniment of the *chapei*, a two-stringed lute; and shadow theater. In his description of a shadow theater performance, Pech Tum Kravel notes that the performance represents the eternal battle between good and evil. For example, the fire that projects the light against the sheet that produces the shadows of the leather hand puppets is full of symbolism. The lighting of the fire represents the creation of the world and the birth of opposites: light and dark, hot and cold, good and evil, etc. Prior to the beginning of the first scene of the story, there is a kind of prologue in which the White Monkey and the Black Monkey, representing good and evil respectively, do battle. The White Monkey is victorious and takes the Black Monkey to the Ascetic to be judged. The Ascetic concludes that the White and Black Monkey should learn to help each other and that the Black Monkey should be released. After this introduction, the story of Preah Ream begins.
- ⁹⁰ Ouk Saman, 1966:198.
- ⁹¹ The relation between respect and fear is discussed again in greater depth in Chapter 4.
- ⁹² Ouk Saman, 1966:166.
- ⁹³ Ouk Saman, 1966:167. The quote is from stanza 264 of *Tum Teav* by Botumthera Som.

- 94 Ouk Saman, 1966:167.
- 95 Ouk Saman, 1966:168.
- 96 Ouk Saman, 1966:169-170.
- 97 Ouk Saman, 1966:172.
- 98 Botumthera Som, 1986:94.
- 99 Ouk Saman, 1966:172.
- 100 Ouk Saman, 1966:175. The expression refers to someone who has committed dishonorable acts and was cowardly when it came time to face the consequences.
- 101 Ouk Saman, 1966:176.
- 102 Ouk Saman, 1966:176. See the work of Judy Ledgerwood for descriptions of *srey krup leak* [the girl with all the attributes] or “the ideal girl.”
- 103 Ouk Saman, 1966:177.
- 104 Botumthera Som, 1962:stanzas 615-618.
- 105 Ouk Saman, 1966:179.
- 106 Ouk Saman, 1966:101.
- 107 Ouk Saman, 1966:202.
- 108 Ouk Saman, 1966:202.
- 109 Ouk Saman, 1966:202-203.
- 110 As Chapter 4 notes, many Cambodian readers hold this perspective.
- 111 Sem Sour, 1970:122-3.
- 112 Sem Sour, 1970:126.
- 113 Sem Sour, *Special Commentaries*, 1970:129.
- 114 Sem Sour, 1970:230-231.
- 115 ***Vandy Ka-onn (1942-) returned to Cambodia in 1974 to conduct research and was there at the time of the Khmer Rouge victory. Miraculously, he survived the regime. After 1979, Ka-onn stayed in Cambodia and became involved in the Vietnamese-installed government. In 1981, he founded an institute of sociology for scientific and political research and served as its director. In 1989, he was detected from the communist party and government and returned to France seeking political asylum (Khin Hoc Dy, 1993:118).***
- 116 Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:7
- 117 Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:9-11
- 118 Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:30-31
- 119 Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:90-91: 100-101

¹²⁰ Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:71-72

¹²¹ Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:99-100

¹²² Vandy Ka-onn, 1973:101

CHAPTER 4:

Tum Teav

Today



In July and August 1999, I visited Cambodia in order to conduct research on *Tum Teav*. I had two main objectives. The first was to visit the town of Tbong Khmom in Kampong Cham province and speak with local residents about the story. The second was to conduct interviews about *Tum Teav* with writers and scholars in Phnom Penh, including Pech Tum Kravel, the famous actor and playwright associated with dramatizations of the story, and writers at the Khmer Writers Association.



Figure 7: *Pracheaprey*, No. 105, April 199

Soon after my arrival in Phnom Penh, it became clear that *Tum Teav* continues to be an important part of Cambodian culture and society. On my first day in the capital, I read in the *Cambodia Daily* that a *yi-ké* version of the story was being performed at the Chatomuk Theater.¹ A few days later, in the April 1999 issue of the popular magazine *Pracheaprey*, I found an article describing a previous *yi-ké* performance of *Tum Teav* at the Chatomuk Theater in March. The article praises the talents of Sok Tong, the actor who played Tum, and comments on the difficulties faced by performers of traditional arts in Cambodia.² For example, Sok Tong's wife was unable to attend her husband's performance because it was necessary for her to be at the local market to sell desserts to help

support their family. Finally, the article quotes Hang Soth, the director of the Institute of Performing Arts and Culture, as saying that one of the problems confronting Cambodian arts "comes from foreign culture that is taking over Cambodian culture."

Indeed, the legacy of *Tum Teav* and the relation of the events in the story to actual people and places in Cambodian history continue to be of interest today. During a day trip to the village of Tbong Khmom, I was escorted to the *bodhi* tree where Teav had supposedly killed herself, and I spoke with a local family about the story. Coincidentally, two articles that discuss the locations where Tum and Teav died were published in a Phnom Penh newspaper and magazine around the time of my visit.³ These articles, along with a brief description of my visit to Tbong Khmom, are discussed in the first part of this chapter.

The second part of the chapter contains excerpts from the interviews I conducted with members of the Khmer Writers Association and others. As in Chapter 3, viewpoints on morality, abuse of power, and notions of justice as they relate to the story are of particular interest. Here, the viewpoints range from those of Pech Tum Kravel, for whom the character of Tum has been a profound source of inspiration, to those of Youk Chhang, the director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, who relates the story to his pursuit of justice for the victims of the Cambodian genocide.

Tbong Khmom

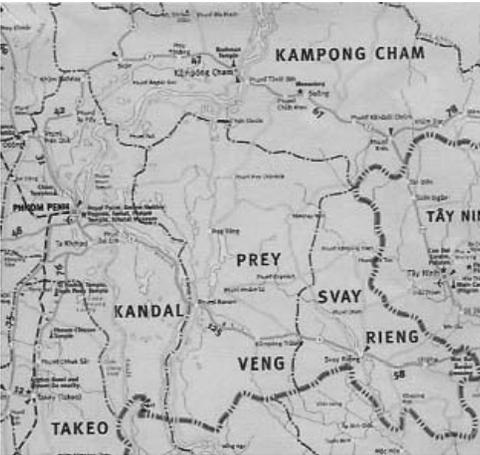


Figure 8: Route to Tbong Khmom

On July 25, 1999, I traveled to Tbong Khmom by jeep. The driver and I, along with a third passenger, departed Phnom Penh at 6 a.m. and returned the same day before dark.⁴ From Phnom Penh, we traveled along Highway 5, turned east onto Highway 6, then continued along Highway 7 to Kampong Cham, where we crossed the Mekong River aboard a large ferry boat. The village of Tbong Khmom is just past the town of Suong along Highway 7.⁵

Figure 9 shows the ferryboat that carried us, along with our vehicle, across the Mekong River. In the distance are the large pilings of a bridge that was under construction with Japanese aid.



Figure 9: Ferry boat crossing the Mekong at Kampong Cham



Figure 10: *Bodhi* Tree where Teav is believed to have killed herself

When we arrived in Tbong Khmom in the early afternoon, we stopped at a roadside restaurant to find someone who might guide us to some of the places mentioned in the story. A few minutes later, a 10 – or 11 – year old girl came to escort us around the village. She took us first to a large *bodhi* tree across a field of watercress where she said Teav had killed herself. Unlike the written version of the story, according to which Tum and Teav both died under the same tree, the girl told us that they had died in different locations.

The girl then led us to the *bo* tree where, she said, Tum was killed.⁶ This large tree is located on the other side of the village down an ox cart path that leads to a large open space filled with rice fields. It stands at the edge of one of the rice fields, not far from a small hut where an older man lives alone. When the man saw us approach the *bodhi* tree, he came out to greet us. He explained that a local spirit, known as a *neak ta*, occupies the tree, and to propitiate the spirit, he makes regular offerings of incense sticks (Figure 11).



Figure 11: *Bodhi* Tree where Tum is believed to have been killed

Our last stop in Tbong Khmom was at the house of the girl's family (Figure 12). We were kindly welcomed into the traditional house built on stilts and offered cold drinks. Although everyone stated they were aware of

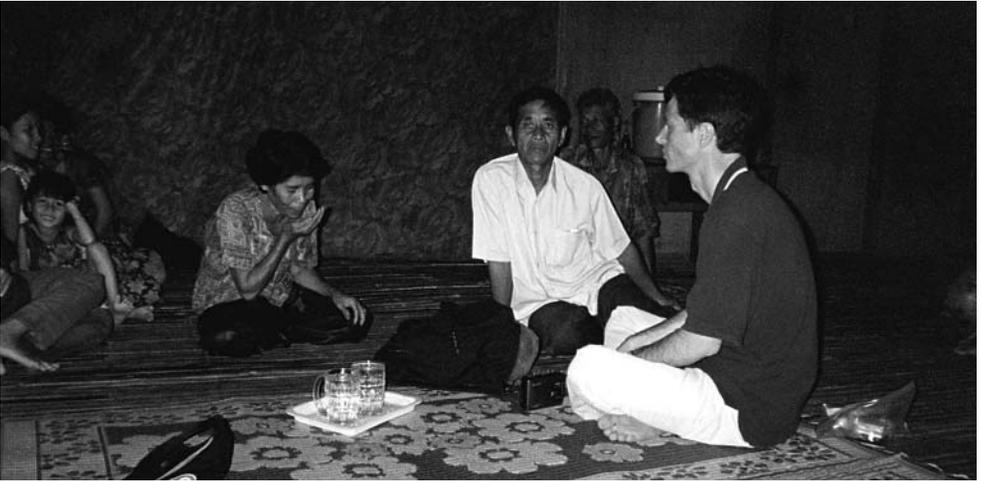


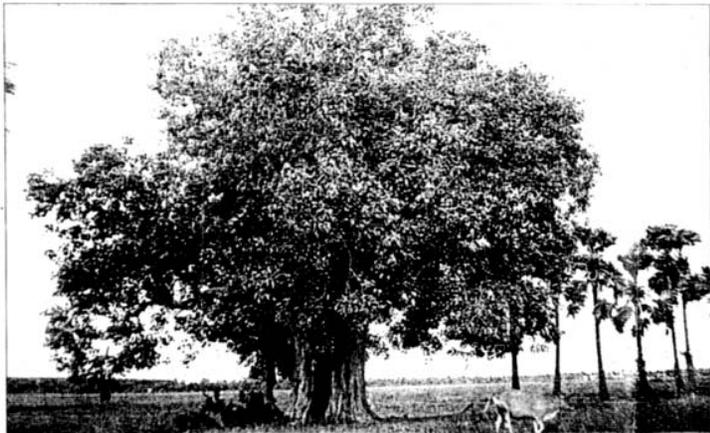
Figure 12: Visit with our guide's family in Tbong Khmom

the story, our discussion soon turned to the more pressing problems confronted by the people of the village. Apparently, theft committed by armed gangs of former soldiers was a common occurrence. In this case, the family's motor scooter had been stolen a few months before my visit. The scooter was bought on credit and used to transport the watercress they grew to the market in Suong. The theft of the scooter placed them in serious financial difficulty, and they claimed that there was no legal recourse available to them since the police force was not willing to listen to their case.⁷

While our short visit to Tbong Khmom was interesting for many reasons, it did not provide many answers concerning the relation between the events in the story and historical truth. However, the question of the historical facts of the story continues to be a matter of debate. For example, the July 21, 1999 issue of *Rasmei Kampuchea*, Phnom Penh’s most popular daily, contains an article entitled “There are Differing Views Regarding the *Bodhi* Tree Where Tum Was Killed” (Figure 13). The article begins by identifying Preah Botumthera Som as the author of *Tum Teav* and stating that the story took place in the 16th century. It then presents three opinions regarding the location of the *bodhi* tree where Tum was supposedly killed: north of Highway 7, south of the highway, and in yet another location.

Another article, entitled “Going to See the Traces of *Tum Teav* in Tbong Khmom,” published in *Rasmei Kampuchea* on June 18, 1999, states that the *bodhi* tree where Tum and Teav died is located to the south of Highway 7. Its opening paragraph states:

មានអ្នកប្រឡងពីរឿងដើមពោធិ៍ដៃលើគេសម្លាប់ជំនុំ



ដើមពោធិ៍ដៃ អាជ្ញាធរអានថា ជាពោធិ៍ដៃលើគេសម្លាប់ជំនុំ នៅខាងត្បូងផ្លូវជាតិលេខ៧ ចម្ងាយ១២០ម៉ែត្រ ស្រុកថ្មបា:ស្រីសុទ្ធ)

រឿងទុំទារដែលទឹកឆ្មារឿងដោយ ព្រះភិក្ខុសោមហើយដែលព្រះភិក្ខុសោម អះអាងថារឿងទុំទារកើតឡើងនៅសតវត្សរ៍ទី១៦នោះថាជារឿងពិតឬមិនពិតនោះ គឺគ្មានអ្នកណាម្នាក់ហ៊ានអះអាងបានក្រៅពី ព្រះភិក្ខុសោមឡើង ។ ប៉ុន្តែសំណៅស្នាម ស្នាមជាច្រើនដែលមានគំនិតភាគដូចគ្នាដូច ទៅនឹងការប្រែប្រួលរបស់អ្នកនិយាយអានឱ្យ អ្នកផងទាំងក្នុងសង្គមថាជារឿងពិតដែល កើតឡើងនៅក្នុងរាជស្ថានខ្មែរ គឺព្រះបាទ រាមា រឿងពិតក្នុងសម័យ«និមិត្តជាង ខាងឡើង»។

តែហេតុអ្វីក៏ដល់សព្វថ្ងៃនេះ សំណៅស្នាមដើមពោធិ៍ដៃលើគេសម្លាប់ជំនុំ នោះមានមតិអះអាងពីកន្លែងខុសឆ្គងៗ ពិត្នាមតិទី១ អះអាងថានៅខាងជើងក្នុង ជាតិលេខ៧មួយជា២០០ម៉ែត្រកាលពី

Figure 13: *Rasmei Kampuchea*, July 21, 1999

Although *Tum Teav*, which took place in the 16th century during the reign of King Rea-mea and was composed by Venerable Botumthera Som, is very old, nowadays some people still prohibit their children from recounting the story. Nevertheless, until this day, the story of Tum and Teav has a place in the hearts of every Cambodian, especially the people of Tbong Khmom.⁸

The primary sources for the article are older residents of Tbong Khmom. A *74-year-old* man named Kan Son, who was told the story by his grandfather when he was around 12 years old, identified various locations where events in the story take place, such as the place where Tum and Pech

that the authorities of Tbong Khmom or Kampong Cham must preserve these places as historical tourist sites.”

Figures 15 and 16 are photographs of Tbong Khmom that were taken as we left the village to return to Phnom Penh.



Figure 16: Tbong Khmom Guest House

Interviews

In July and August of 1999, I conducted several interviews with writers and scholars in Phnom Penh regarding *Tum Teav*. All of the interviews with the members of the Khmer Writers Association were conducted at the Association’s office on the grounds of a small pagoda in Phnom Penh.⁹ The interviews with Pech Tum Kravel, Hang Soth and Youk Chhang were conducted at their respective offices. All of the interviews were recorded on audio tape and later transcribed.

Short Biographies of Interviewees

The short biographies that follow provide some general information about the lives of each interviewee, including their educational background, how and when they first read *Tum Teav*, as well their opinions about the author and historical basis of the story.

Not surprisingly, all of the interviewees had read *Tum Teav*, most of them in high school before 1975. For some, the story has had a strong influence on their life, particularly Pech Tum Kravel, Hang Soth and Youk Chhang. They also shared the experience of the genocide between 1975 and 1979 under the Khmer Rouge, during which most of them lost family members.

Finally, most of the interviewees endured the hardships of daily life under the Vietnamese-installed government of Hun Sen as it attempted to rebuild the country under an economic embargo by Western nations. The government propaganda during this period (see Chapter 3) also influenced the way some of the interviewees interpret the characters and events in the story.

Pech Tum Kravel

Pech Tum Kravel was born in 1943 in Kandal province. From 1960 to 1963, he attended the School of Pedagogy in Phnom Penh. In 1964 he enrolled at the National School of Theater and studied at the University of Fine Arts in the School of Choreographic Arts from 1965 to 1967, where he was also a teacher at the National Conservatory of Performing Arts.

He began his career as an actor in documentary and film productions in Phnom Penh. A highlight of his early career was his work with Ta Dep, a master of Cambodian shadow puppets. In 1968, the two men performed on tour in Malaysia and Singapore.

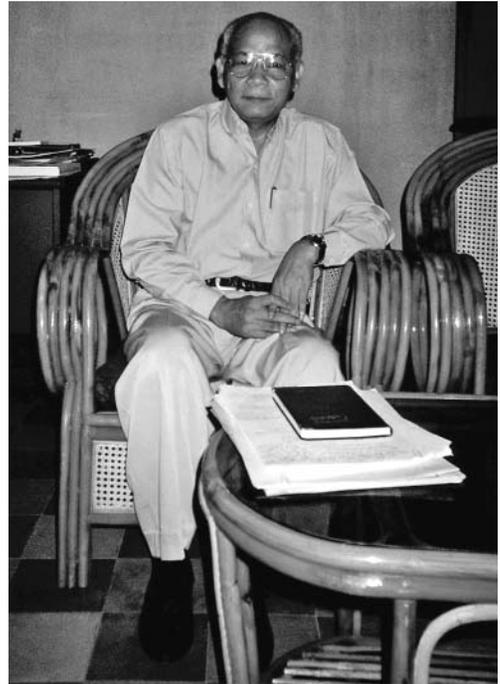


Figure 17: Pech Tum Kravel

After Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge in 1975, Pech Tum Kravel was forced to leave the city along with the rest of the population. He miraculously survived the Pol Pot regime, and in 1979 returned to his previous occupation. At this time he changed his name to Pech Tum Kravel.¹⁰ From 1979 to 1981, he was the deputy director of the National Department of Art and its director from 1982 until 1993. He worked at the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts from 1994 to 1997; in 1997 he

took a position with Radio Free Asia in Washington, DC. He returned to Cambodia in 1999, and is now the deputy minister of culture. In addition to his work and documentation of Cambodian theater, Pech Tum Kravel has written a book on Cambodian verse patterns.

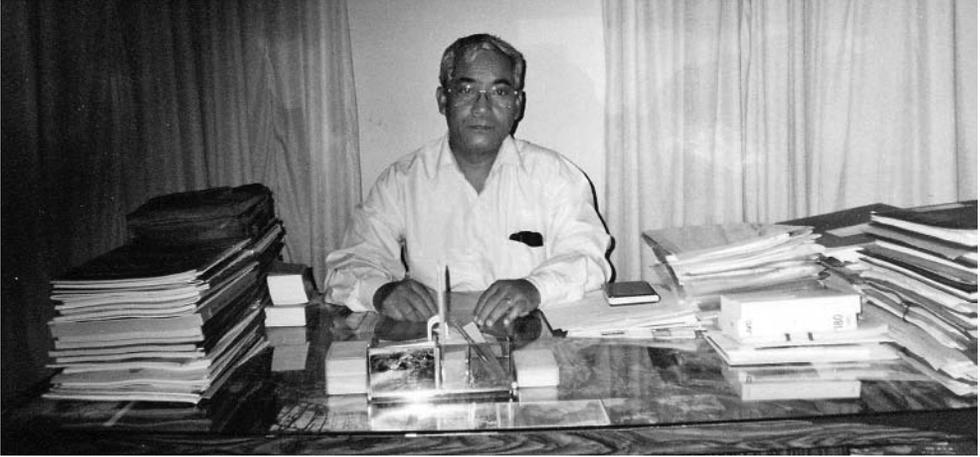


Figure 18: Hang Soth

When asked about the significance of *Tum Teav* in his life, Pech Tum Kravel responded:

I was an actor, and studying *Tum Teav* was necessary before playing the role of Tum. I loved the character of Tum because it is an epic story of tragic romance. We normally compare him to Romeo. *Tum Teav* is the same kind of story, except one is Khmer and the other is Western. The content and plot, which I dearly love, are very similar.

In addition, we were able to see ideas from the past in the story. For example, the power of the ruling class over poor and innocent people, and the conservative values of Khmer people. For example, to be a proper daughter, a girl must obey her parents or husband. However, Teav is a character that represents mainstream thinking because she represents some ideas that are opposite to conservative values. This is why we value *Tum Teav* as one of the most popular among a general audience. This is the reason why audiences love the play. *Tum Teav* has been performed in theatres very frequently since I was very young until the war broke out. The play often traveled around the country.

When asked how he first became aware of *Tum Teav*, he responded:

If I am not mistaken, it was first taught in the sixth or seventh grade. Also taught in those grades were other novels, such as *Sophat*, *Kolab Pailin*, *Phka Sraporn* and other classical texts such as *Sabasit*, *Kakei*,

Moranak Meada, *Sophimit*, etc., all of which were part of our public school curriculum. This is one reason why many Cambodians came to know the story.

In addition, I did some personal research on our history. The research concluded that the story was an actual event in our history, and that the story had been passed on orally through *chapei* singers. The monk Venerable Som, the author, listened to those *chapei* singers and retold the story in his manuscript. We understood that the story possibly occurred in the history of Cambodia, specifically during the reign of King Rea-mea Choeung Prey, who was the son of King Orh-Chhuon, between A.D. 1566 and 1576. But what we learned from Venerable Som's text is that the story occurred during the reign of King Rea-mea, which was after the reign of King Mohinda Reachea. Nevertheless, there is further evidence of the story's historical basis in *Mahaboros Khmer* [Eng Soth's, *Documents on Great Khmer Figures*, 1969] that is technically the national history of Cambodia after the Great Angkorian Empire until contemporary times.

Hang Soth

Born in 1947, Hang Soth's musical talents were apparent when he was very young, and he started his formal musical training at the age of ten. From 1957 to 1961, he attended the Institute of Performance Arts, during which time he also attended music school in China. In 1962, he sat for exams at Cambodia's National School of Music, and in 1963 became a teacher of music. In 1965, he joined with Vann Moulivann and Hang Thun Hak to start a school of modern arts in Cambodia. In 1968, he became a professor of music in the School of Education at the University of Phnom Penh, where he taught music theory, culture, art and piano until 1975. Hang Soth is currently the director of the Performing Arts and Cultural Institute in Phnom Penh.

When asked about the fate of Cambodian arts under the Khmer Rouge regime, Hang Soth stated that Cambodian music and cultural appreciation were reduced to ashes:

I lived in a slave-like environment. I was not well fed, but I did not complain. On January 7, 1979, we were saved from the genocidal regime. I lost 27 relatives. I can't forget and forgive, but because our country needs reconciliation for peace and stability, we need to be calm and contain our anger. At one point, I was so depressed, I felt I never wanted to be Cambodian again, but because of gratitude and the liberation of January 7, 1979, we were reborn and able to start again. I believe that we must not flee anywhere. We should try to reduce our pain and frustration about the past and dream for peace.¹¹

In 1979, we got together and made an announcement on the radio to encourage old comrades to come out of hiding and help to rebuild the country. I was elected to be the president of the group. In 1980, I was deputy director to Peouv You Leng, who was the president, and Pech Tum Kravel, who was the vice president. In June 1980, Keo Chanda, the minister of culture and information, was sent to study in Vietnam and the former Soviet Union in order to reopen the School of Performing Arts. On December 19, 1980, we inaugurated the school officially. We gave special consideration to orphans and later on we selected regular children. There were 480 students accepted into the schools of dance, drama, magic, and entertainment.

At first, students sat on the ground, and later on we had all kinds of supplies because I was working closely with UNICEF and World Vision with the support of Pol Sun and Vun. I also have had great support from Minister Keo Chanda. Up until 1993, I was director, and Pech Tum Kravel was an executive specialist. Overnight, we acquired all kinds of things that we used to have in the past. Nevertheless, we still lack resources, supplies, money, and a livelihood for student-actors. So we are still lacking many needed resources.

In the past, we lived with our heart and soul. It is the lack of heart and soul that leads to the killing and fighting among us, and we can't understand what is what. Our role is to develop a sense of pride and nationalism and identity, and to educate the people. One of our main goals is to fill an intellectual need while other entities will provide the bone, blood and muscle of the country. In the future, we will be able to escape all horrible accidents.

Hang Soth has written one play that has not been published yet. He has also written for the national theater and is a main writer for the University of Performing Arts.¹² Hang Soth described *Tum Teav* this way:

Tum Teav is one of the oldest Cambodian novels. In 1960, it was serialized in a newspaper but had not yet become a finished product. The story depicts events that occurred during the Lovek era, although it was written in the Oudong period. However, the setting of the story is from the Lovek period. The person who composed the story was Venerable Som. He collected the documents from old manuscripts, many parts of which were missing, but which nevertheless the Venerable completed. Now the story is a textbook that is required reading in the educational curriculum.

In 1968, Pech Tum Kravel wrote the story in a dramatic format. *Tum Teav* is the *Romeo and Juliet* of Cambodia. It is well known, and from my understanding, it has a very comparable value [to *Romeo and Juliet*]. The story presents the norms and values of the common people, the

middle class, as well as the upper class, royal family and religious community at the time. The story depicts the pain and suffering of the oppressed people by the ruling class. This is a story about justice.

It also depicts Khmer values at a time when most children today have forgotten such things like what it means to be “in the shade.” The idea is to educate the bride-to-be and prepare her for marriage and motherhood. There was no time limit. It depended upon the class of each family. If the family was well-to-do, it would be longer. Usually it lasted about one or two weeks.

In 1990, the performance of *Tum Teav* was popular. The capacity of the theater was 1,200 people, and it was full twice a day for three months. In 1993, the play was performed at the national theater.

You Bo

You Bo was born in 1942. Between 1963 and 1964, he was a junior high school teacher. In 1962, he published a poem, “Knowledge of Happiness,” and studied to be a writer at the Khmer Writers Association. Later that year, he published his first collection of poems, and in 1964, his first novel, *The 195-Year-Old Doctor*. In 1964, he worked as a reporter and editor translating French to Khmer. In 1967, he became a director of *Sophimit* newspaper before working as a reporter again in 1968 and 1969.



Figure 19: (left to right) Pal Vannarirak, You Bo, Pol Pisey and Yim Nimola

You Bo has written ten novels. Among them are: *Woman of Chenla Island*, *Dos Kramom Sword*, *Toothpick Man*, *Five Steps of Magic*, *Krom Komar Kloaktip*, *Burning Desire of Faithful Love*, and *Faithfulness*.

In 1979, You Bo returned to Phnom Penh and served as the director at the Cultural Institute until 1984. During that time, he also studied Vietnamese. In 1990, he was a director at Choulevath Pheapyon film studios where he directed three movies.¹³ In 1993, he re-established the Khmer Writers Association and became its director. He also worked as a translator for the United Nations in Banteay Meanchey province in that year.¹⁴

When asked about *Tum Teav*, You Bo's response recalls the 1989 political interpretation of the story by the Ministry of Education discussed in Chapter 3:

Venerable Som wrote the book. According to my understanding, the story is part of a cultural revolution because it incited people to act against oppression and the inequality between children and parents, as well as the rich and poor. The author did not want such oppression to prevail.

Pal Vannarirak

Pal Vannarirak was born in 1954 in Kampong Chhnang province where her father, an official in the Royal Government under Norodom Sihanouk, was located. She attended school in Kampong Chhnang from the second grade until high school. When her family subsequently moved to Phnom Penh, she attended Yukonthor High School, where she first read *Tum Teav* in her third year and obtained the second part of her baccalauréat before the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975.

During the Pol Pot regime, she lived in Kampong Cham province and was forced to dig canals and farm rice. During that time, four members of her family lost their lives: her father, mother, and two siblings, who disappeared and apparently died.

In 1989, she competed in the government's annual writing competition, and won first and second place for her two novels. Pal Vannarirak has written 22 unpublished sentimental novels and 6 revolutionary novels, 2 of which have been published. Currently, she is the director of the Office of Information in the Chamkar Mon District of Phnom Penh, as well as a member of the Khmer Writers Association. She stated that the salary she receives from her job is not sufficient to live on in the city, but she is able to supplement her income by writing. She is a scriptwriter for video and film productions and is executive director of Khmer Video

Production, Inc. In addition, she has managed to supplement her income by selling her literary and documentary works to non-governmental organizations. She has written on such topics as AIDS, family violence and health, and has written commercials for television.

Yim Nimola

Yim Nimola was born in 1957. In 1975, the year Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, she received her diplome (roughly the tenth grade). Under the Pol Pot regime, there was no formal education system, and it was not possible for her to pursue her education further.

After the fall of Phnom Penh, she was forced to relocate to Sa-ang district in Kandal province. Yim Nimola stated that many people died in that region, and the mental distress was tremendous. She lost her mother, father, older brother, and two younger sisters. Currently, she is working in the Development Center of Cambodian Women. To supplement her income, she has a salt farm.

Yim Nimola is a member of the Khmer Writers Association. She first read *Tum Teav* when she was at Endreaktevey High School during the Lon Nol Regime in her third year (tenth grade).

Pol Pisey

Pol Pisey was born in 1958. Her education ended in 1975 at the start of the Pol Pot regime. At that time, she was preparing for final examinations for junior high school. Her father was a teacher, poet, and a member of the Buddhist and Cultural Debate Club. Pol Pisey stated that she inherited her love for writing from her father. Currently, she works in the Cambodian Women News Center, where all of the members are women.

Pol Pisey is also a member of the Khmer Writers Association. She first read *Tum Teav* at school. "It is a story that everyone knows in Cambodia," she said. "Students study the novel in the *tnak ti bey tumnurp* (tenth grade)."

Va Sam Arth

Va Sam Arth was born in 1958 in Ba Phnom in Prey Veng province. He attended the May 18th High School, also known as Yukonthor High School.

During the Pol Pot regime, he was forced to live in the countryside as a farmer. He stated that during that time nobody had the opportunity to go to school. Everyone was relocated to forced labor camps. When Phnom Penh fell, he had three people with him. The members of his older brother's family were all executed in one place at one time. He stated that this story is

not unique. It happened everywhere.

After the Pol Pot regime, he never went back to school, and in 1981 he volunteered for the army in Siem Reap province, where he served until 1987. During that time, he had an opportunity to study Cambodian literature for about seven months from several professors and scholars, including many from foreign countries.

Va Sam Arth writes novels, and in 1981 he competed in the national writing contest and was awarded the gold medal. Kampuchea News and several publishing companies published his work as a serial novel. In 1990, he wrote a novel entitled *The Love of My Life* that was bought by a video production company. Later on, he competed in a contest sponsored by a national film and video production company in Phnom Penh, and was awarded second place. In 1997, he wrote *Burning Desire*, which won fourth place in the same contest and was published by KWA.

Va Sam Arth stated that he first read *Tum Teav* in school saying that, “all students studied that novel in Cambodian high school.” He was also aware of the story being performed as a play and sung to the accompaniment of a *chapei*. He added that *chapei* singers who can perform *Tum Teav* have all probably died or no longer perform.

Sok Heang Oun

Sok Heang Oun was born in Phnom Penh on October 5, 1967. During the Khmer Rouge regime, he lost his father, older brother and sister. He is a graduate of the School of Engineering and Chemical Food Products and presently works in the Mineral and Energy Industry where he is a director in the technical and engineering department.

Sok Heang Oun stated that his primary interest is writing. He said that he likes to write prose more than poetry and that he has written several novels. He wrote *Everlasting Day*, which won first prize in a national competition held every year on January 7, 1999.

He read *Tum Teav* in high school, and he has seen it performed by storytellers, on television, and in *yi-ké* theater.

Ven Son

Ven Son was born in 1938. He was orphaned as a child. His father died when he was seven years old from some kind of epidemic disease. He was raised by his grandfather.



Figure 20: (left to right) Va Sam Arth, Sok Heang Oun, and Ven Son

Ven Son stated that his educational background had two parts. Initially, he was ordained a novice monk when he was seven years old. At the temple school, he learned the Pali language and poetry. When he was 17 years old, he left the monkhood and attended public school. In 1965, he attended music school and was a member of the Damrout Phirum band, as well as a songwriter.

In 1970, he joined the army. From 1970 to 1975, he worked at the army radio station writing poems to entertain the soldiers while the government was fighting the Khmer Rouge. During that time his nickname was Rith Son Sary. During the Pot Pot regime, he lost an uncle, his wife and three-month old baby, and a cousin. In 1979, he served as a marching band musician in the Cambodian army. He also performed a drama that was broadcast on the radio and attended school to study literature and writing. Ven Son said he prefers to write poetry. In 1987, he entered the national poetry contest when Chheng Phon was the Minister of Culture and Information. One of his poems, "Always Remember," is about the brutality and atrocity of the Pol Pot regime. In 1973, he wrote "Words from a Poet," roughly 30 pages long, which won a first prize from the Ministry of Culture and Information.

In 1996, he applied to become a member of the KWA, and is currently

a director there. That year, his poem “Last Word from Khmer Children” won fourth place in the annual writing contest. In 1998, he won the second place prize for his poem “Heaven in the Dream.” Ven Son stated that the poem is a true love story about a couple that was engaged prior to the fall of Phnom Penh and were separated during the regime. He said that the purpose of the poem is to remind future leaders of Cambodia to follow their conscience and not propaganda.

Ven Son first read *Tum Teav* in high school. He also read the story at the temple library. He stated that Venerable Som, Santhor Mok and Nou Kan all wrote versions of *Tum Teav*. He said the first two were the original authors and that Nou Kan wrote a similar story entitled *Teav Ek*.

Oum Sophany Oum

Oum Sophany was born in 1946. From 1970 to 1975, she studied ancient history at Yukontor University in Phnom Penh. She said that between 1975 and 1979 education was suspended for the entire population. During the Khmer Rouge period she was forced to live in Prateap village, South Trapeang Thom subdistrict, Tramkak district in Takeo province, known as Zone 105. Her mother, father, and four siblings died during that time.

From 1979 to 1988, she was a deputy director of research at the *Kanithan Akphirak* [Tourism Museum] in Phnom Penh. In 1989, the Ministry of Information and Culture assigned her to be the deputy director of the Royal Palace, and currently she is the director of Communications at the Royal Palace.

Oum Sophany said she first studied *Tum Teav* during her third year of high school. In addition, she studied modern novels such as *Kolap Pailin*. In the 1980s, she translated some texts into French with the help of a Polish scholar. They also translated *Reamker*, and Leang Hap An added a summary.

Venerable Sao Khon Thamteroa

Venerable Sao Khon Thamteroa was born on April 17, 1934, in O Leu village, Sangvoey subdistrict, Chi Kreng district in Siem Reap province. He was ordained as a novice monk when he was 14 years old, and he has been a monk since he was 20. His parents died when he was young.

In 1974, Venerable Sao Khon left Morhamontrey Pagoda in Phnom Penh and went to Po Veal Pagoda in Battambang city. He met an old monk, and they decided to leave for Thailand while the border was still loosely controlled. During the Khmer Rouge period, he lived in Thailand in Buriram

province. Later, he moved to the Dangkoa Pagoda in Surin province. One of his two siblings died during the Khmer Rouge regime.

He first heard *Tum Teav* on the radio in 1961. He also read the book at the temple library. Venerable Sao Khon said that he considered *Tum Teav* to be a true story, and that there is a lot of evidence to support this in Tbong Khmom where the story took place. He said that the story describes the secular and non-secular populations in Cambodian society, as well as its feudal elements. He said that the story is considered to be a national literary treasure.

Youk Chhang

Youk Chhang was born in 1961. He is the director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, which gathers information on the Khmer Rouge period (1975-1979).

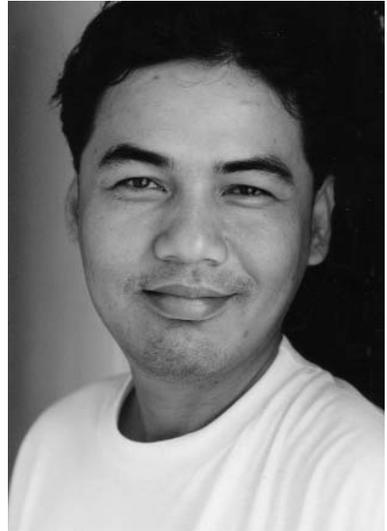


Figure 21: Youk Chhang

Youk Chhang said he first read *Tum Teav* when he was between 10 and 12 years old. He added that his sister has a degree in Khmer and French literature, and she had many books at home by Victor Hugo, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and others. He read all of those books, as well as many that were translated into Khmer between 1970 and 1975. However, he didn't study *Tum Teav* in high school. Instead he studied classical texts and folk stories like *Thmenh Chey*. He said the curriculum was designed to fit the political situation. Nonetheless, he said that *Tum Teav* was one of his favorite stories because during the Lon Nol period the story was dramatized in the *La-kaon niyeay* style. He said that a 1979 dramatic performance was done in *yi-ké* style as well. He said that the dramatic rendering of *Tum Teav* was anti-royalist and portrayed the feudal regime in a negative light.

Interviewees' Viewpoints on *Tum Teav*

This section summarizes the interviewees' viewpoints on the major themes in *Tum Teav* and how they compare with those expressed in the study guides and critical texts produced in the 1960s and 1970s. Since most of the interviewees were students during this period and would have used the critical texts in their studies, it is not surprising that their opinions are often similar to those expressed in the study guides and critical texts on *Tum*

Teav.

A major difference between the study guides and the viewpoints of the interviewees is the added importance the latter give to notions of justice. The experience of the genocide perpetrated by the Pol Pot regime, along with the propaganda of the Vietnamese-installed Hun Sen government, has influenced the way the interviewees interpret the characters and events of the story. Another experience that has apparently influenced the way the interviewees interpret the story is their exposure to and participation in Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been operating in Cambodia since at least 1993. Indeed, part of the mission for many of the NGOs is the promotion of human rights, particularly with regard to women and children, and the development of an independent judicial system.

The first part of this section deals with the theme of Buddhist morality and traditional codes of conduct. Similar to the critical texts, the interviewees pointed to the failure of the characters in the story to live up to the moral values defined by Buddhist doctrine and traditional codes of conduct. The second part is concerned with abuse of power by characters in the story. The final part presents the interviewees' more general viewpoints on the breakdown of the system of justice in the story, along with their opinions about justice in contemporary Cambodian society and its notoriously corrupt legal system.¹⁵ Here, many of the interviewees make a distinction between legal systems and morality, and emphasize the importance of equality before the law. With the pending trials for the former leaders of the Khmer Rouge, notions of justice have a very personal importance for the interviewees.

Buddhist Morality and Traditional Codes of Conduct

For all the interviewees, Buddhist doctrine and traditional codes of conduct form the basis for assessing the moral conduct of Tum and Teav.¹⁶ As discussed in Chapter 3, both Tum and Teav violate the prescribed rules with which they are expected to comply. Tum pursues Teav after disrobing without the head monk's permission. And Teav has sex with him while she is still "in the shade." Each of the interviewees sites Teav's violation of the moral codes for young women. Also implicated was Nor, Teav's nanny to whom Teav's mother entrusted her daughter. Although many of the interviewees put the incident in historical context, the codes of conduct described in the story are still relevant in Cambodia today. Below are some excerpts from the interviews:

Oum Sophany:

At that time, Cambodia had very strict traditional values. The violation of the moral standard on Teav's part is one error. Nor, who relates the news of Tum's beautiful singing voice to Teav's mother and thus allows the whole incident to unfold, can be blamed also.

Pal Vannarirak:

Teav is at fault when she does not respect and obey the ancient culture and traditions of the society. She is a woman "in the shade." Why does she fall in love with someone, especially with a monk? During that time, our culture was very strict. For men and women to meet and fall in love in the house was unacceptable.

In Chapter 3, Ouk Saman identifies extenuating circumstances that mitigate the degree of wrongdoing committed by Tum and Teav. Although Tum and Teav have clearly violated traditional codes of conduct, Ouk Saman balances his judgment in light of the complexity of the characters and their situation. We find that here as well in the comments of Pol Pisey and You Bo.

Pol Pisey balanced her assessment of Teav's conduct by viewing her situation from a modern, psychological perspective:

Teav was born at a time when tradition ran deep and women were expected to be obedient and respect the culture. As soon as she sees Tum, she falls in love at first sight. This is one huge error. It is a serious violation of our culture when she sleeps with a man while she is "in the shade." If we talk about moral values for women, it is a serious offense. However, I would not criticize or blame her for this. I would rather analyze the situation using psychology. That is to say that she is a mature woman, but she is confined in an environment that restricts her freedom. Her mother uses the culture to justify her control over Teav. All humans need love regardless of their sex. The suppression or sanction of urges for sexuality will backfire when the time comes. So when the time is right, nothing can stop them. Therefore, I would not blame Teav for that. However, if you view her according to our culture, Teav is wrong.

You Bo suggested that Teav is not in control of herself when she makes love with Tum: "Teav commits a mistake, but not while her state of mind is fully aware of what she is doing."

Tum's behavior is governed by the rules and expectations that apply to novice monks. At the top of the list is strict compliance with the

instructions of the abbot of the temple. Tum is also expected to comply with the Buddhist precepts that prohibit a monk from having any physical contact with women.

Oum Sophany: “Tum is a monk. He violates the Buddhist moral code by falling in love and using magic spells. He makes huge errors.”

Yim Nimola: “[Disrobing by himself] is against the religious code, a violation of Buddhist values.”

Va Sam Arth spoke for Ven Son and You Bo as well when he said:

There are a lot of errors and weaknesses with all of the characters, but I will choose only three issues to talk about. First, there is the violation of Cambodian social norms. Secondly, there is the violation of traditional values and ways of choosing a marriage partner. Thirdly, there is the use of force and absolute power. Tum is wrong on the first two categories. As a monk, he should not even think about women, never mind singing to her and using a magic spell to win her heart. When he returns to the temple, he does not even pay attention to the head monk. He makes another mistake when he disrobes by himself without proper consent. He even lies, which is another violation of the ethical conduct for a monk. Another bad action by Tum is when he sneaks out to meet Teav and sleeps with her without a proper wedding. But Tum is a person who cannot control his emotions. At the end of the story, he acts foolishly by getting drunk and kissing Teav in front of everyone. It is a bad move that causes his death.

As with the critical texts discussed in Chapter 3, the interviewees generally agreed that the most compelling extenuating circumstance is the true love between Tum and Teav, along with the courage they display before more powerful individuals. Tum and Teav exemplify the notion of *kou preng* (a predestined couple), for which the interviewees generally feel a strong affection and sympathy. Another image that was evoked by the interviewees is that of *kou kamsot*, which refers to a couple that has endured hardship together. For survivors of the genocide, these images resonate strongly.

Pech Tum Kravel: “Tum informs Orh-Chhuon through his singing that he and Teav are indeed husband and wife. This is the second time that Tum demonstrates his bravery on behalf of his love. The first one is in front of the king of the land.”

Yim Nimola: “Tum is innocent. When he goes to interfere at the wedding, it is because he is concerned about Teav who is his wife. Tum and

Teav have endured many obstacles already.”

However, Youk Chhang sees Tum’s love for Teav very differently. He questions the sincerity of his affection for her, and sees Tum as simply a rash young man not worthy of sympathy:

Tum makes two mistakes with Teav’s mother. First, he sneaks in and has sex with Teav. Secondly, he doesn’t even care when Teav’s mother is supposedly sick, and he doesn’t even intend to come to comfort her, to bring some fruits, some gift. Tum is supposed to do something like that. In those old days that’s what Tum should have done. Secondly, Tum should never have let Teav, this beautiful woman, go back to Tbong Khmom alone. Tum should have been afraid that someone might arrest her or rape her. To me, it shows that Tum really doesn’t love Teav from the bottom of his heart. If Tum had gone with Teav, perhaps the mother would have understood that they love each other and that she should not break them apart.

I don’t want to blame Moeurn Nguon. In fact, he’s more responsible than Tum because he protects Teav. I don’t think Moeurn Nguon knows that Tum and Teav are married, so it would be wrong to blame Moeurn Nguon or Orh-Chhuon for doing those things to Tum. In fact, it showed what the husband is supposed to do for his wife: to protect her from a crazy guy like that.

Teav’s nanny, Nor, and Tum’s best friend, Pech, have parallel roles in the story. In this case many of the interviewees stated that Pech does not fulfill his obligations as Tum’s best friend and companion. Given the importance placed on friendship that borders on brotherhood, this is a very serious fault.

Oum Sophany: “Pech, who was Tum’s best friend, fails to advise him properly.”

Pal Vannarirak: “Pech knows that Tum has done something inappropriate. Why doesn’t he intervene or help as a friend should?”

Va Sam Arth:

Pech, who is Tum’s best friend, does not help or educate Tum when he badly needs it. Pech allows Tum to do whatever he wants, as when he sleeps with Teav. In this case, Pech should have told him to act according to the norms and culture of the land. When Tum drinks and kisses Teav in front of everybody at the wedding, Pech should have advised his friend to restrain himself from all those wrongdoings by warning or taking him out of the place or telling him to deliver the royal edict. If Tum did not comply, Pech could have taken the letter

and shown it to Orh-Chhuon himself, and this could have made the story end differently.

Pech Tum Kravel had a more balanced assessment of Pech:

The accusation that Pech is to blame is correct, but there are many factors involved, which cannot be completely understood. In general, people should act and behave properly; however, that was sort of an emergency where things could not be planned or calculated.

Abuse of Power

The issue of abuse of power by King Rea-mea, Governor Orh-Chhuon, and Teav's mother came up repeatedly in the interviews. However, since many Cambodians believe that it is not appropriate to criticize the monarchy in any way, discussing the king's abuse of power was a somewhat sensitive subject for some of the interviewees. Indeed, while I was in Phnom Penh, the criticism of King Sihanouk in local newspapers led to their censorship by government authorities. While most of the interviewees apparently spoke openly about their opinions of King Rea-mea's abuse of power in the story, some of them appeared hesitant to discuss the issue.

The issue of abuse of power with regard to King Rea-mea is primarily centered around his punishment of Orh-Chhuon, *Yeay* Phan and the villagers of Tbong Khmom. In this regard, most of the interviewees agreed that the punishment is unnecessarily cruel. Oum Sophany exemplified this view:

I think the king's punishment is not appropriate. The people who committed crimes should have been punished, and those who did not, like the villagers of Tbong Khmom, should not have been a part of this punishment.

Pal Vannarirak tactfully prefaced her response to this question, then went on to express her disapproval of the king's punishment:

I'm not sure that I recall the king's punishment of Orh-Chhuon completely. But for the king to order *Yeay* Phan, Orh-Chhuon and seven generations of relatives to be killed was a big mistake. It's like he was just flaunting his power. Now, all those relatives did not do anything wrong here. The king should not have blamed them. If Orh-Chhuon did something wrong, he alone should pay for the crime. It is unfair for other innocent relatives to be made slaves. The king acts out of anger. He commits a crime by punishing people who don't know anything about the situation.

Va Sam Arth put the king's punishment in political context:

[The king's punishment of Orh-Chhuon] is another example of feudalism and absolutism. It is too severe and an injustice to all of those relatives of Orh-Chhuon. It was injustice to the people in Tbong Khmom who are innocent. In the book, the people in any town where the bell could be heard from Teav's house are enslaved. But that was the Cambodia of the 16th century, when the king's divine right was undisputed and absolute.

You Bo is the most critical of the king when he says: "The king's punishment was too savage and severe and absolute. At that time there was no justice because it was always about absolute power. The king always won. The people always lost."

Some of the interviewees qualified their view of abuse of power. Pech Tum Kravel, for example, did not feel that the king abuses his power and pointed to the fact that he allows Tum and Teav to marry after learning of their love for one another:

Some would have the opinion that the king's punishment of Orh-Chhuon is rather severe. However, if you think about people and the value of life regardless of their social classes, I think the punishment is appropriate. For example, Orh-Chhuon does kill an innocent person and thus receives the death penalty in the end. As for the people who collaborate with Orh-Chhuon and are punished with taxation, I think the King's anger is appropriate. For the most part, I think the king had good judgment.

In my opinion, there is justice in the story from all points of view. Kings had to have respect for the ten moral codes of conduct. For example, even though he has Teav as his concubine, he acts properly by respecting the love affair of the couple. His punishment of Orh-Chhuon and *Yeay* Phan is also appropriate for the nature of the crime. However, one must remember that the story takes place in the 16th century, and we are now in the 20th century.

Turning to the question of abuse of power by Orh-Chhuon, Pech Tum Kravel pointed out that although Orh-Chhuon knows that Tum is already married to Teav, he abuses his authority as governor to have Tum killed:

Tum informs Orh-Chhuon through his singing at the wedding that he and Teav are indeed husband and wife. Thus, Orh-Chhuon abuses his power and does not give appropriate consideration to the matter. He then orders Tum to be killed which he later realizes is his fault.

Pal Vannarirak agrees: “Orh-Chhuon is the kind of person who abuses power. He not only dares to break an honest marriage. He also challenges the king’s authority. He is the kind of person who would stop at nothing.”

Most of the interviewees agreed that *Yeay* Phan is most to blame for abuse of power because of her treatment of her daughter Teav. As with the absolute authority given to the king whose word is law throughout the kingdom, Teav’s mother enjoys a similar status in relation to her daughter. According to many of the interviewees, *Yeay* Phan abuses her power out of greed, and this leads to the story’s tragic ending.

Pech Tum Kravel:

There is a popular saying: “The cake is never bigger than the mold” that is interpreted as “children must obey their parents.” This is an old cultural value. In general, in later generations there have been changes in this concept. However, in the old days, children had to obey and respect their parents. Sometimes, a man and woman did not have to be in love to be married if the parents preferred the match and believed it would bring happiness for their children in the future. Thus, children had to adjust their feelings and respect their parents’ choice. This is one old strict tradition. *Yeay* Phan’s error is that she is too greedy. She wants money, wealth and power, and that leads to the death of her daughter and to her own insanity later.

Reminiscent of Ouk Saman’s analysis, Va Sam Arth explained that *Yeay* Phan reveals her singular motivation for wealth and status when she changes her mind regarding Teav’s marriage according to the wealth of the prospective suitor:

The theory of “the cake is never bigger than the mold” is not such a bad idea. It’s the people who give it a bad name. At first, *Yeay* Phan sees Tum as an educated man who loves Buddhism and has a beautiful voice. Though both Teav and Tum are not engaged yet, *Yeay* Phan is in love with Tum’s personality. However, when Moeurn Nguon comes to engage Teav, *Yeay* Phan turns against Tum. Furthermore, when the king goes around the kingdom looking for someone to be his top concubine, she dumps Moeurn Nguon out of greed and goes this time after the royal family. Thus, it demonstrates that she is absolutely greedy. Cambodians believe that if one is too obsessed with wealth and power, it might backfire just as it did with *Yeay* Phan. In the end, she loses her daughter and all of the things she loves dearly. She wants her daughter to be secure but she uses the wrong approach.

You Bo described the injustice of “the cake is never bigger than the mold” when he said:

This has to do with not giving consideration to individual rights or liberty. It applies to parents versus children, ordinary people versus the ruling class, and the king versus the people. It means that those who have power can do what they want and as they please.

Some of the interviewees had somewhat different views on *Yeay* Phan's treatment of Teav. Above, Yim Nimola described the king's punishment of Orh-Chhuon as "appropriate." Then, in a way that is reminiscent of some of the critical texts discussed in Chapter 3, she added that *Yeay* Phan does in fact act in the best interests of her daughter by arranging her marriage to the son of the wealthy governor:

Any mother would have tried to do anything to get fame and fortune for her daughter. Mothers want prosperity and happiness for their loved ones and do not want their children to endure poverty and indignity. However, Teav's mother is not aware that what she is doing would result in such an outcome.

She then put her assessment in historical context and contrasted notions of freedom in the story with modern ideas of "personal freedom" and "equality between the sexes" that appear to reflect recent Western influence on Cambodian society.

In Khmer society back then, all children were under the complete control of their parents. It was perfectly fine for that time. Today is different. That kind of control is not appropriate. People demand more personal freedom and liberty and equality between the sexes. Freedom within the family is the same thing. People are born to be equal. Back then it was not the same and there were many cultural values imposed on people.

In a way not very different from the nationalistic viewpoint of Kim Sam Or in Chapter 3, Va Sam Arth advocated for an organized effort to bring greater freedom for women in Cambodian society:

At that time, if I were Teav, I would have revolted and energized a feminist movement that could have been an effective message for all mothers. It would show that the oppression of children by their mothers regarding such issues could cause a harmful legacy. She could have set a new standard for the next generation of women.

Hang Soth agreed that arranged marriage is an outdated custom that violates "freedom of choice":

The idea that the mother is always right when it comes to deciding the

future of her children is a value and norm of the Oudong era in Cambodian history. It was justice for that time because arranging the child's marriage was the role of the parents. Nowadays it is an injustice because it is a violation of a grown-up person's freedom of choice.

One of the more negative effects of abuse of power is the silencing of the underclass, particularly women. In the following excerpt, Va Sam Arth states that Teav should have spoke up when she is chosen to be a concubine of the king. She does not, Va Sam Arth argues, because of "her inability to oppose the pressure from the environment":

When the king's men go around the kingdom looking for the finest concubine, they choose Teav for the king. Teav again decides to remain silent instead of confessing that she is no longer a virgin. She might have been able to plead to those men not to take her to the king because she is not a pure woman, but she remains silent because of the king's authority. Another factor that I think is especially important is Teav's inability to oppose the pressure from the environment that never gives her the opportunity to speak freely.

Justice

When speaking on justice, the interviewees indicated that the breakdown in the system of justice in the story is a result of Tum's failure to deliver the king's edict to Orh-Chhuon. That is, if the letter had reached its destination, the tragedy would have been avoided and Tum would have been reunited with Teav.

Pech Tum Kravel described the two opposing views on the reason for Tum's failure to deliver the king's letter to Orh-Chhuon:

Many people blame Tum for not delivering the royal message to Orh-Chhuon. Some blame Tum's bad karma and irresponsibility for getting drunk and losing control. This allows his opponents to become very angry and end his life. There is the counter argument that Tum is fully aware of what he is doing, but he is disgusted with injustice and thinks that he could solve this problem without royal help. However, he only creates a big problem for himself. The two opinions have sharp differences.

For the most part however, the interviewees blamed Tum for getting drunk and not delivering the letter. According to Pal Vannarirak:

Tum knows that Orh-Chhuon is a powerful man who has taken his wife away. Why doesn't he use the royal edict to handle the situation with Orh-Chhuon? This is his weakness. Another weakness is when he

becomes drunk at the wedding and acts very inappropriately. Tum should have used the power of the letter to stop the wedding.

Youk Chhang agreed:

Tum has the king's letter. But when he comes to the wedding party, he gets drunk with the musicians. Again it shows Tum's arrogance and that he's not a responsible man. First of all, traditional artists are considered to be low class. You can argue from the point of view that Tum shows that he feels all people are important in a democracy. But he should have just delivered the letter, and maybe it would have been the end of the story. Instead, he gets drunk and crazy.

Many of the interviewees made a distinction between moral ethics and the law. The most important issue for many of the interviewees was equality before the law. Pech Tum Kravel made one of the few references to karma, the Buddhist concept of justice, according to which one's present circumstances are the result of past actions, or, as discussed in Chapter 3 in the section on Vandy Ka-onn, "Do good, get good. Do bad, get bad." When asked to define "justice," Pech Tum Kravel replied: "It means that when you do good, you get what you deserve and if you do bad, the same should apply to your actions." Reminiscent of Vandy Ka-onn's criticism of the misapplication of the idea of "do good, get good," Pech Tum Kravel made the following distinction between moral justice and legal systems:

From my understanding, there are two different kinds of justice. One is a moral value and the other concerns societal values and rules. For example, if someone robs your motorcycle, is it enough if we tell him that if you do good, you will get good things, and if you do bad, then you will have to pay for it. There must be another way to protect justice in the society, or is that enough already?

What I meant to say is that there must be a high standard of moral value. However, if you try to find justice in society according to law, the robbery is a violation of justice: the property belongs to the owner. In general, it only makes sense to explore facts in the court of law. Once wrong and right are identified, then there is justice right there. They need law.

When asked if there are appropriate laws to serve justice in Cambodia today, Pech Tum Kravel replied: "I believe that I am not the only one who thinks this. Everybody knows there are laws, but they are not enough. First, we must have sufficient laws. But that is not enough. We all must obey those laws from top to bottom. Then I believe there will be justice at hand."

From another perspective, Oum Sophany stressed the importance of forgiveness and the harmful consequences of seeking revenge. Like Pech Tum Kravel, she made a distinction between responding to wrongdoing with forgiveness on a personal level and the legal response by the judicial system. When asked if the king in *Tum Teav* is good or bad, she said:

I am sorry. I am not a judge. I would decline to give any comment. Maybe it would not be accurate. Maybe somebody else is more knowledgeable than me about this question. For example, there was a person who did something really bad to my husband during the Pol Pot regime. When the Khmer Rouge was no longer in power, my husband did not seek revenge on him. When the individual apologized, he then forgave him and went on to be his friend. However, the law is different. Those who commit crimes should be punished. On a personal level, there is a sense of justice through forgiving, understanding that there is nothing to be gained by seeking revenge upon one another. If you kill people, your soul will be lost. However, if you try to correct things in a court of law, maybe it is better in my opinion.

When asked if the king's punishment restored justice, Oum Sophany responded:

I did not know what had to be done to serve justice at that time. Each country has its own laws. Crimes should be punished accordingly. If you ask how I feel, I can tell you that seeking revenge is too severe and too tragic. Burying them alive and executing them by raking over their heads is not necessary. I am a person full of compassion and sympathy. I feel it is too severe.

We believe in Buddhism, and we listen to the Dharma which teaches us to seek peace and nonviolent solutions. For example, if someone kills our children, and we kill theirs, then their children will come back and kill one of us again. It would never end. If somebody committed a bad crime against us, we should try to tolerate it and go away at that point.

When asked about the participation of former Khmer Rouge in the current Cambodian government, Oum Sophany reiterated her philosophical view that reconciliation is necessary in order to end the cycle of violence:

It is a complex problem. If we identified who is red and who is black, we would never find peace. In my opinion, all Khmers are victims of somebody's schemes and tricks. We have all made mistakes and are responsible for our own mistakes. The result of pointing fingers at one another is an endless cycle of violence. The only way to be fair is for

everyone to be responsible for his/her history and move together to remedy our mistakes so we can catch up with our neighboring nations. It is useless to say who is red and who is not.

When asked to define “justice,” Va Sam Arth, like Pech Tum Kravel, described justice on the one hand in terms of morality and on the other in terms of legal codes:

Anything that has moral righteousness is justice. Anything that has to do with truth, logic or reason and properly amended by the civil laws is justice. For my country, I see justice as being very far away from the hope and expectations of the population who live under the law and obey the law. I would like to decline any more comment on this matter.

Hang Soth described justice in terms of “peace and equality” and noted the difficulty of enacting justice:

Justice has a lot to do with truth. Justice can be sweet for one person and bitter for another. Common justice is the idea that people are born and long for peace and equality. They tend to avoid harming each other. Committing wrong actions, being ignorant, uncivilized, etc., are injustices for others. This is the common justice we want. Special justice is justice specifically for a person. It is for “A” but not necessary for “B”, “C” or “D.” We all want common justice, justice for all. That is to say, happiness without harming one another. Nepotistic justice is an injustice. Justice for Tum and Teav is honesty and faithfulness. Justice for the king is giving up Teav for Tum.

Finally, Youk Chhang gave an involved explanation of justice that also stressed the difficulty of enacting laws that are fair to everyone, particularly with respect to the attempt to bring the Khmer Rouge leadership to trial:

Justice means that everyone accused of a crime has to be equal before the law. Justice in Cambodian society today depends on the particular case. Sometimes there is, sometimes there isn't. There are different meanings for different people.

So what is justice? The farmers don't want us to punish Ieng Sary or Nuon Chea. They want you to punish the one who killed their husbands and wives. But at the same time, we have to punish the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge. What does justice mean, for us or for the victim? Then also me, I had my sister, niece and nephew killed by the Khmer Rouge. I know that Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan didn't kill my relatives, but I learned that they invented the policy that led to the killing of my sister. To me, justice means punishing the Khmer Rouge senior leaders. So we each have our own definition of

justice: the perpetrator, the victim, myself. And then the Khmer Rouge said "I would not do such a thing. It's all because the Americans bombed Cambodia. I'm doing this to save my country," they said. "If I didn't do this, maybe Cambodia wouldn't have peace right now." The leaders say this. So they have their own definition of justice. To them, the Khmer Rouge leadership, justice means to get rid of the foreigners, to get rid of the kingship – so people would be free from slavery, so people would be equal.

So even now you have the past and today [he draws something on a piece of paper], and this is justice. And here you have justice according to the victim, according to the perpetrator, according to the Khmer Rouge leaders, according to individuals, according to international interests. And here you have justice according to NGOs, justice according to the government, justice according to the military, according to people who give money to Cambodia, and by many others. So in Cambodia, there's no single definition of what justice means. It should be very simple. Everyone is equal before the law. But now because of the political situation... so now how do you mobilize everyone to understand that justice means everyone is equal before the law?

But I think we can have a single definition of justice if you separate politics and other things out from justice. Call it independence, I mean independent courts, independent judges. The whole judicial system has to be independent. And then people can stay away from it and then you implement what the law states.

Legal codes on the one hand and tradition, customs, Buddhist teachings, etc., on the other have to be separate. Law is law. Culture is culture. Religion is religion. If someone commits a crime, why not plow him over as in *Tum Teav*, if that's the custom. It's the evolution of the culture. People change from time to time, and laws stay the same or are amended according to the needs of the society. These two have to be separate. So people should not confuse the law with Buddha's teachings. Not all Cambodians are Buddhist. Just because they go to the pagoda, doesn't mean they are Buddhist. It's a culture, not a religion. If you look into the Buddhist teachings – I haven't read much but from what I understand – part of it, if you understand Buddhism, it's about teaching people about not doing the wrong thing. But I think people interpret it differently because they don't have a deep knowledge of what Buddhism is all about. Buddhism teaches you: if you do a bad thing, you receive a bad thing; if you do a good thing, you receive a good thing. You have to distinguish between Buddhism, the culture and the law.

Conclusion

Tum Teav and Systems of Justice in Cambodia Today

This section discusses the system of justice in *Tum Teav* in relation to Cambodia's current judicial system as it prepares for a trial of the Khmer Rouge leadership more than twenty years after the genocide. To begin, I would like to propose a definition for "system of justice": the system that produces, enforces and adjudicates the laws for a society. The members of the group abide by the law willingly in the belief that their compliance is in their best interests. In doing so, they believe they will have greater access to desired resources than if there were a free-for-all. The members of the group thus exercise self-restraint with the expectation of mutual gain.¹⁷ What is important for this discussion is how to assess the extent to which the people in Cambodian society *willingly* comply with the law.

This brings up the Khmer word *klach*. This term literally means "to fear" and connotes the meaning "to respect." A child *klachs* his or her parents. The people *klach* the king, and so on. In this sense the children obey the parents and the people obey the king both out of respect for their authority and fear of the consequences for noncompliance.¹⁸ In our analysis of Cambodian systems of justice, the distinction between fear and respect is particularly important. If a system is just to the extent that the people willingly comply with its laws, what degree of fear must be present for the system to become unjust such that compliance becomes a means for avoiding punishment without any prospect of greater access to resources?

To analyze *Tum Teav* in terms of the breakdown of the system of justice, one can begin by describing the system at work in the story. In *Tum Teav*, the king embodies the system of justice. He has jurisdiction over the kingdom and literally "speaks the law." Although he refers to his ministers, he has the final word. In effect, he produces, enforces and adjudicates the law. The system breaks down, however, when the king's edict fails to reach the governor. It is safe to believe that there would not have been a crime if the letter had reached its destination. If the governor had read the letter, he would surely have complied with it and called off the wedding. His compliance with the law would have been done primarily out of fear of the king. It would also have been done willingly, in order to maintain his position as governor and the access to resources that it affords. The system of justice would have functioned and no harm would have been done.

The first question to ask therefore is: who is to blame for the letter not reaching its destination? There are many possibilities. As discussed in Chapter 3, Tum is to blame for not delivering the letter as instructed by the

king. But there are extenuating circumstances. He is young, foolish and upset. In his condition, he simply forgets to fulfill his task. The next possibility is Pech. As Tum's best friend, it is his responsibility to act on Tum's behalf and deliver the letter to the governor when Tum becomes drunk and incapable of doing it himself. On the other hand, Tum would not have gotten drunk in the first place if Teav had not served him wine. But as Tum's wife, she is obligated to obey him. It has also been pointed out that the king may be responsible for the breakdown of the system by giving the task of delivering the letter to Tum instead of a palace messenger.¹⁹ However, most people agree that Teav's mother is most to blame for the story's tragic outcome for instigating the sequence of events in the first place. To a lesser degree, this is also true of the governor and his family. They are the ones most responsible for committing the crime, i.e., not complying with the king's edict. But this is not the same as being responsible for the breakdown of the system of justice. Their wrongdoing would not have led to such tragic consequences if the letter had reached its destination and the system had functioned. In the end, it may not be possible to assign blame to any individual for the failure of the system.

Of perhaps more direct concern is the means by which the king attempts to restore the system of justice. By inflicting such an extreme punishment on Teav's mother, the governor and his family, the king reinstates the people's fear and respect for his word. In this system, the law is embodied in a single individual, not a body of law that is objectively interpreted by a judge. As a god-king, the king rules by divine right, and it is his prerogative to exercise the full force of his power to restore his place as the single, uncontested source of the law.

According to the definition of justice above, the system is just as long as the people willingly comply with the laws produced, enforced and adjudicated by the king. It can be argued that the people do willingly give the king in the story this authority in the belief that his divine powers as a god-king protect them and assure them of a good harvest, etc. However, the king's status as divine ruler complicates the distinction between respect and fear, and this assessment of the extent to which the system of justice in *Tum Teav* is just remains unresolved because it is not possible to determine whether the people comply with the law willingly or simply out of fear.

In many ways this system has arguably been maintained to the present time in Cambodia. Following independence, Prince Sihanouk ruled Cambodia as though by divine right. He had the authority and the prerogative to dictate the law while maintaining the pretense of a democratic system. Currently, although there is a body of law produced by

a legislature and a Cambodian judiciary, it is questionable to what extent they function independently of Prime Minister Hun Sen. After many years, Hun Sen has acquired the attributes that enable him to rule as though by divine right: royalty; "one who knows," "one who struggles."²⁰ To what degree do the Cambodian people today willingly abide by the laws in the belief that doing so is in their best interests?

Once again, we come up against the question of the distinction between respect and fear. While many people, particularly among the older generation, may have seen Prince Sihanouk as a god-king ruling by divine right, that belief has steadily been on the wane. It is unlikely that the majority of people felt that way about Sihanouk in the 1960s, when he quelled the democratic opposition, or presently about Hun Sen. Slowly but surely, the Cambodian system of justice is making a transition from an autocratic system to one where an objective interpretation of a body of law takes precedence over the authority of a single individual in power. The movement from a culture of impunity to a culture of accountability among the nations of the world is slowly but surely gaining momentum. It will be accomplished case by case over a period of many years. A trial of the Khmer Rouge leadership, though fraught with challenges and uncertainties, will provide an opportunity for the Cambodian government to contribute to its achievement.

Endnotes

- ¹ Unfortunately, the production, which had been running for a month, closed the day before I arrived.
- ² According to the article, Sok Tong's uncle was also an actor prior to the generation of Pech Tum Kravel, the renowned modern actor of the role of Tum.
- ³ Special thanks to Tomoko Okada and Hiromi Ueda of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies for bringing these articles to my attention.
- ⁴ The jeep and the driver were provided to me compliments of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. While traveling during the day was not considered dangerous, it was not advisable to travel the roads at night because of bandits. Apparently, the third passenger came along to provide additional security.
- ⁵ The road is heavily traveled by merchants carrying goods to and from Vietnam. Highway 7 is wide enough to accommodate two lanes of traffic. However, there are many people who travel on bicycles or motorcycles heavily laden with merchandise. They must share the road with fast moving cars and trucks at their own risk. There are many accidents, and on one occasion I saw a woman riding a bike who was knocked over by a car that simply continued on its way.
- ⁶ I do not know the ages of the *bodhi* trees I was shown. However, they obviously could not have been the same trees described in the story, which supposedly took place in the 16th or 17th century. It is more likely that the story's popularity makes Tbong Khmom a tourist destination, and identifying the sites provides some minimal income for guides such as ours.
- ⁷ While the family may have tried to exaggerate their difficulties in order to appeal to my sympathies in the hopes of a larger fee for their daughter's services as our guide, it was clear their financial difficulties and poverty were very real.
- ⁸ *Rasmei Kampuchea*, 18 June 1999. Many thanks to Hiromi Ueda for making this article known to me.
- ⁹ This was a different and smaller office than the Association's previous location on the grounds of the more attractive Wat Ounalom where, in 1996, I first met the writers interviewed here etc.
- ¹⁰ Pech Tum Kravel's father's name was Orh-Chhuon Chhorn, and his given name was Toat. Thus, his original, full name was Chhorn Toat. After 1979, he changed his name to Pech Tum Kravel because, he said, he has "known so many famous dramas and novels, and the most well-known to international audiences is *Tum Teav*. In performances of *Tum Teav*, I played the role of Tum, the name which I am proud to adopt."
- ¹¹ Hang Soth's response echoes the government rhetoric that depicts the

Vietnamese as saving Cambodia from the Pol Pot regime, as well as the current propaganda that calls for peace and reconciliation in response to international efforts to bring the Khmer Rouge leadership to trial for crimes against humanity.

- ¹² Hang Soth conducted considerable research after he returned from China and formed the School of Modern Performing Arts, with the help of such scholars as Chheng Phon. They researched all sources of ancient music and went to various places around the country such as Pailin, Pursat and Ratanakiri, and brought back the various dances and plays from each location. They also located the scores of Cambodian music that they were able to play using international music notation. However, everything was lost in 1975. Between 1968 and 1974, Cambodia had about 5000 specialists in this profession. There were only 90 left after the Pol Pot regime.

In 1986, he helped to create the University of Modern Performing Arts for a second time, which now has a more extensive curriculum than during its golden age. However, there is still a lack of money for technical, facility and living expenses for all artists. At present, five groups have been organized in Siem Reap province to receive international guests and Cambodians from other provinces who go there to visit the ancient monuments. The university presents plays at theaters every Saturday night in 23 cities and towns across the country, so audiences can be aware of the beauty of Cambodian culture.

- ¹³ He wrote the first movie himself. Pal Vannarirak wrote the second, and Mao Samnang the third.
- ¹⁴ In May 1993, UN-sponsored elections were held in Cambodia.
- ¹⁵ In Cambodia's judicial system, the outcome of a case is often determined by one's ability to bribe officials. Consequently, those who can afford to pay the greater bribe can use the judicial system to their advantage to seek revenge or, for example, obtain land or a car.
- ¹⁶ The expectation for compliance with these moral codes is particularly strict for young women, whose reputations are seen as being more vulnerable than those of young men. There is a Cambodian saying that compares a young man to a piece of gold and a young woman to a piece of cotton. If the piece of gold should fall in the mud, it can be washed clean. However, if the cotton should be dirtied, the stain can never be completely removed.
- ¹⁷ This view of justice was described by the 18th century Welsh philosopher David Hume as "an artificial virtue," since it is based on self-interest. The notion of justice as "natural virtue" according to Hume is a subsequent effect of the first instance. The moral dimension of justice develops when compliance with laws out of self-interest comes to be seen a virtue itself.
- ¹⁸ The relationship between parent and child or king and people is complicated. The client-patron relationship is used to explain the complex interrelationship between those with means and those without. The "have-not" depends on "the have" for protection, especially in times of adversity, and in exchange the

client gives his steadfast loyalty to the patron. This is used to explain many kinds of relationships in Cambodia's hierarchical society. In addition to the two examples already mentioned, this includes the relationship between monk and laity, rich and poor, old and young, men and women, etc. With the relationship between the people and the king, the king is authorized by divine right to be the word of law.

¹⁹ This possibility was suggested to me by Ben Kiernan of Yale University.

²⁰ These features of the ruler were described to me by Steve Heder.

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