

# Romance and Epic in Cambodian Tradition

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## Classical Romance

The romance customarily termed “classical” occupies a special place within Cambodian literature as a whole. The term betrays a certain Eurocentrism and is justified only because the written language of this type of text is neither the old Khmer of epigraphic inscriptions, nor modern Khmer, but the form of the language known as “middle Khmer,” which in theory designates the period from the fourteenth century through the end of the nineteenth century, and of which we have written records from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the romances as we know them. While these romances share one significant feature with Khmer literature as a whole, they are distinguished by other characteristics that are peculiar to them.

The common feature is that these are written texts, composed by learned men or monks, but intended to be recited or sung, performed as theater or represented through images. We cannot be absolutely certain whether the written forms of these texts preceded or followed their oral existence, or whether these two modes of transmission existed in parallel. It is likely that the themes and plots of these romances took their inspiration from a body of cultural heritage that predates the manuscripts we possess, which are themselves copies of copies ...

There is no doubt that during the Angkor period, there existed legends and tales that were written on palm leaves and which may have given rise to oral developments in the romance genre.

Given the current state of our knowledge, it seems plausible to accept the usual notion, i.e., that the oral mode preceded the

written. Nevertheless, the manuscripts were by no means intended for solitary reading; they were considered as virtually sacred repositories, preserved in the libraries of monasteries, touchstones of a tradition that had been handed down for generations. This is a case of "mixed" orality, where "voice and letter coexist," which leads to a second phase, that of "literary tendency." The great Khmer romances begin to show authors' names and dates of composition early in the nineteenth century. But it appears that Cambodia has only partially reached the stage of solitary, silent reading, except in the area of modern newspapers and serials.

As for the characteristics that are peculiar to the classical romance, they concern first of all matters of form: elaborate versification and a specific length.

Other works of Khmer literature are written in verse, particularly wisdom tracts, didactic texts that are meant to be memorized. There is the epic of Râm-Ker, which has some connections with the romances under consideration here; and the purely poetic pieces such as the poem of Angkor Wat; or again, certain Buddhist texts composed in a style known as "garland of jewels."

But the prosody of the romance employs several types of meters, which vary depending on the episode – "dragon's walk," "crow's step," and "Brahman's song," to name a few – including as many as seven different rhythms to mark happy or dramatic events, love, emotions, sadness, separation, nostalgia, or again war, conflict, or storms, or simple narrative description.

These rhythmic changes reflecting the colors of the story show, on the one hand, a mastery of prosody and learned rhetoric; on the other, they reflect the oral dimension of the art, since the lines are written to be heard and sung. The rhythmic alternations of classical Khmer romances exhibits a wealth of variety that marries aspects of writing and orality and moreover expresses an engaging psychological approach.

The second formal feature that is peculiar to the classical romances is the extreme length of these texts: they average about eight thousand lines ... This length is inherent to the very conception of the literary genre they embody. A romance of this type cannot be short, and one might even wonder why it comes to an end

at a certain point, for what drives the plot is an endless series of meetings and separations – a meeting followed by a separation, another encounter followed by another separation, then a reunion of those involved in the first meeting, and so forth – as if the romance were the transposition of the infinite series of deaths and rebirths in the cycle of transmigration.

This cycle not only figures in the romance; it constitutes the very weft of the text, as the characters are often presented at the beginning as reincarnations of one or another personage, and their rebirth is mentioned at the end, in a conclusion that opens onto another potential series of adventures.

The length, then, is intrinsic to the fiber of the romance, which is thereby separated from the folk tale or legend but brought closer to the epic, though in form alone, for the epic is completely different from the romance in its finality.

The Cambodians call their romances *sâtrâ lpên* or *ryoen lpên*, that is, books for entertainment, stories meant to amuse. Their approach, then, is not that of myth or epic, which are “true stories” that serve to explain the world, nor is it the approach of folk tales, some of which are tales to explain “why’s” and others of which, it is true, are meant to amuse, though always with a didactic or moralistic intention. The romances give access to the imaginary, to the structure of the imaginary according to the representation of the world.

The twenty-nine known classical romances, twenty of which have been dated, show signs of inspiration drawn from Buddhism, or from the body of local “folklore” with its folk-tale archetypes; or again from Indian, Chinese, or Malaysian literature. These differences in original inspiration are of little consequence for the composition itself, except that when the plot is drawn from a *jâtaka* from the canonical anthology or from the *Paññāsa jâtaka*, the narrative is framed by an introduction that is properly Buddhist, recalling a previous life of the Buddha, and a conclusion that looks forward to the rebirth of all the characters in keeping with their *karma*. But the presence of an introduction and a conclusion regarding the characters, their origins, and their destinies is a constant in all the romances, whether the treatment has a Buddhist flavor or is colored rather by popular themes.

The space in which the plot unfolds joins the real to the imaginary in an indissoluble union. Or rather, the question of this distinction is not even considered, for this is the world described by Buddhist cosmology in a celebrated text, the *Irai Bhûmi* or “The Three Worlds,” conceived as all of creation, in which beings evolve through a process of endless circulation. Descriptions of paradise as the sky of the god Indra, or of mountains as the dwelling place of mythical beings such as the Garuda, are complemented by precise descriptions of tropical nature, long series of stanzas cataloguing various species of trees, flowers, fruit, and animals.

This creation – with its subterranean and underwater worlds, continents surrounded by vast ocean expanses, levels of paradise graded from the peak of the central mountain of the Universe, mount Meru or Sumeru – contains the special places that figure in the romance: the Jambudvîpa, the continent of human beings, with its kingdoms that are always named, or “supernatural” realms such as the kingdom of Uppal, people by Kinnar, half-human, half-bird creatures; or the mountain Simbalî, where the Garuda live. The real cities of Bârânasî and Takkasilâ are transformed in the romances to cities of the marvelous. The forest, described with its flora, lakes, and hills, is indeed the forest of the Khmers’ land, but in the romances it is nearly always the forest of Himavant, of Hempobân (or Himalaya), the place inhabited by omniscient ascetics, seer-hermits or *rsî*, a place where all sorts of marvels are possible. In the ficus tree live the tree spirits; in the blooming lotus of the lakes and ponds, divine little girls are born; while on the riverbanks the seductive lubricious *kinnarî* frolic.

The image of the sea and its storms is largely mythical and implies the existence of an underwater kingdom, Pâtâla, ruled by the *nâgâ* king Bhûvajjan. Strange craft navigate the skies, such as a mechanical bird, a swan or goose that carries passengers and crashes into the waves ...

This is a universe without borders, the very space of transmigration, where all creatures – whether divine, human, animal, infernal, demonic, or invisible – live side by side with one another, communicating and relaying one another in a process that never ends unless they are exempted from any further birth. The space of the romances is therefore, above all, the space of voyage, where

the heroes “leave the plain to enter the forest” and “leave the forest to enter the plain.” In this sense, it can be identified with time, where meetings and partings, good luck and bad luck, alternate depending on *karma*.

Here, duration is a quest for happiness, wealth, power, and royalty, and is ordered in three phases determined by each individual’s series of existences: past life, present life, future life. The articulation of the plot is punctuated by the maturation of *karma*, the result of action. Beyond this dominant time in which worth or its opposite comes to light, a new phase of the narration takes off, sung to a new rhythm.

In the context of the romance, the abstract notion of the effect of action has an intense affective resonance, which endows passion with a particular value. Everything seems to be accepted – from the keenest joy to the cruelest ill fortune – without the least surprise, without protest. The “karmic” attitude implies a sort of active serenity, typical of Cambodian heroes engaged in trying struggles; *karma*, the unifying thread that runs through the entire narrative, serves to define time itself. It is the only form of heredity the characters have. Amid exploits, battles, magical weapons, metamorphoses, their “time” is an endless “becoming”.

Whereas the folk tale generally has one protagonist whose fate is followed from one episode to another, transposing the theme of death and resurrection within the framework of a single existence, the romance portrays a number of interlocking existences that fall in and out with one another. The time of the romance is the time of quest, of flight towards the future, which will offer not a definitive conclusion but rather a door opening onto other births. And yet in these texts the quest in the present existence is entirely geared to success, love, solving problems, and above all, accession to royalty, the ultimate stage in nearly all the classical romances.

Of the romances’ large cast of characters, kings and queens, princes and princesses are the first to appear, in the setting of a particular kingdom. The description of this royal milieu is by no means completely fantastic, but rather closely reflects historical fact as recorded in chronicles that trace a network of court rivalry and intrigue.

But soon other kings who are not human appear, such as the Yak and Nâga kings, who have daughters to marry off, *yakkhinî* and *nâgi*. Then come the hermits, endowed with supranormal powers, the deities known as *Tevoda* (*devatâ*), the bird-women, the mythical animals, all auxiliary characters. The god Indra himself intervenes in this action, assisting those human beings who are worthy. The Brahmans, the court seers, belong of course to the real world, but their actions partake magic, illusion, and metamorphosis, all common currency in the realm of the romance. There are thus no borders – neither between real places, which correspond to Cambodian landscapes and residences, and mythical places, nor between beings, all of which, in the Khmer conception, represent possible conditions of existence, “forms” of fate, observed in the world we know.

All of these features can be found in romances such as *Khyan Sankh*, dating from 1729, of which there exist six versions, which are performed in the classical and popular theater; or *Bhogakulakumâr*, composed in 1804 by the poet Nan, or Nan Kaki, attributed to the king Ang Duong, or Puññasâr Sirasâ; or the celebrated *Brah Jinavamsa* (Chinavong), which is still sung or chanted by blind singers who accompany themselves on the two-stringed lute, *câpî*, or on the single-stringed *sâtiev* with a sounding gourd. The Chinavong romance, consisting of sixteen books with thirty-nine characters, was performed over seven consecutive nights at the Bassac theater in Phnom Penh, and was later condensed to a two-hour version. It is the most striking example of this space and time divided by departures and returns: the hero leaves in pursuit of someone or something, and each time he has found his object he returns to his origins, his parents and his first kingdom. This cyclical time of the eternal return appears to be the time *par excellence* of orality.

The field of research is immense seen from the standpoint of literary studies proper, but also with respect to the relations between the oral and the written, between the “learned” and the “popular.” Classical Cambodian romances are heir to a cosmology and a mythology that are learned and written down, but also sung, played, performed, familiar to all; they are the vivid expression of an irreplaceable collective imaginary.

## The Glory of Râma

The Indian epic of the *Râmâyana* has enjoyed a unique status: not only has it been translated into hundreds of languages, both Asian and Western, but above all it has been adapted, reinterpreted, and recreated so as to blossom again in new forms, new versions built from the same original framework: Râma's *geste*, his quest or journey – *ayana* – leading towards his reunion with his wife Sitâ. Even more than the *Mahâbhârata*, the *Râmâyana* is multifaceted and full of movement, possessing a life of its own, overflowing with inspiration at every turn; it teems with characters that are added or transformed, with supplementary episodes, with a particularity of detail and motif that distinguishes one version from another.

Moreover, the epic refuses to remain within the bounds of a text that is both written and orally transmitted. It is declaimed and sung, but also mimed, danced, painted in numerous frescoes, carved on pediments and bas-reliefs of monuments in India, Indonesia, and Cambodia, staged by shadow puppeteers. Dramatized in literature, music, and the visual and performing arts, the epic partakes of the fundamental system of belief.

Radiating outwards from India, an exceptionally creative and diverse process of dissemination recreated the *Râmâyana* anew as the profound and living expression of the cultures receiving it. Certain authors<sup>1</sup> have spoken of "acculturation," but this term is too restrictive, designating only passively received influences or accepted contacts, whereas what we really find is a virtual transfusion of inspiration, with the integration of specific matter belonging to local "heritage." It is relatively easy to enumerate the similarities and divergences between, for example, the versions found in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Bali, Java, or Malaysia, but such research betrays a rigid comparatism, solely concerned with tracing literary, historical, or geographical descent. A closer examination of the Cambodian versions of *Râmakerti* or "The Glory of Râma" shows that the epic has taken root in the world view, the system of connections that closely link the human, animal, plant, divine, "natural," and "supernatural" worlds; in the system of

beliefs that relate to the normal and the nefarious; and finally in the fundamental elements of Khmer Buddhism.

The work carried out in 1969 in Phnom Penh by the Commission on the *Râmakerti*, or Râm-Ker, led to the observation that the professors and students had in a sense completed a “pilgrimage to the sources of genius and of an entire people.”<sup>2</sup> Their research, however, was limited to the field of the arts: the Râm-Ker constituted the key to every artistic form of Khmer culture, whether sculpture, painting, the declamation and creation of poetry, choreography, stagecraft, choral and instrumental music. Useful as it may be, this approach seemed to fall short of grasping the epic’s deeper and more elusive nature, which was merely hinted at in a brief remark in a preface by Vann Molyvann, who describes the Râm-ker as being drawn “from the give-and-take between the imaginary and the ordinary that constitutes the very essence of Khmer art.”<sup>3</sup> Adding that the Khmer *Râmâyana* was “both very removed and very close to reality, experienced with equal intensity by elite and mass alike,”<sup>4</sup> Molyvann expressed the desire to “understand this soul, this breath, this electrifying form ... one of the keys to the secret of the creative imagination.”<sup>5</sup> Thus we have before us the epic as source, force, life itself – the Word *par excellence*.

The “classical” *Râmâyana*, that is, the Sanskrit text attributed to Vâlmiki, gave rise to several types of interpretations, which can be classified according to two main tendencies. The historicizing interpretation sees Râma, the northern Indian prince who journeys and wages war all the way to Ceylon, as a hero of the ideal unification of the Indian world: he alternately crushes enemies and joins forces with local populations. In the dualist interpretation, which brings divine and demoniacal forces head to head, the divine hero kills *râkshasa* and *râkshasî*, ogres and ogresses, throughout his earthly adventure until he finally wipes out the King of the Demons, the ten-headed Râvana, whose heads sprout forth as they are cut off until the god triumphs absolutely over Evil.

There is no doubt that the original *Râmâyana* is first of all the epic tale of Râma, an incarnation of the god Vishnu-Nârâyana himself, and that he emerges from the world of the gods on a mission of salvation: not the quest for the Holy Grail or the fount of immortality, but the extermination of the *râkshasa*, maleficent crea-



tures that infest the forest, whose harmful activities include endlessly tormenting the *rishi*, ascetics who practice meditation and receive divine revelation or *çruti*. These ascetics are the earthly vessels for this revelation, intermediaries between the heavens and the terrestrial world, omniscient hermetic saints entrusted with Truth and charged with Order and Harmony. The exploits that take place in the course of Râma's mission arise from his very incarnation in a princely setting: winning his wife Sitâ through an archery trial; learning the art of war from the ascetic Vishvâmitra; experiencing outsize rage, sorrow and despair, bitter bouts of jealousy and suspicion, violent battles, the ultimate triumph of the holy, behaviors that are both utterly human and as if situated at a higher level of nobility and intensity.

The seven books of the Indian *Râmâyana* correspond to the seven nights of recitation and performance whose names straightforwardly indicate their contents: The Book of Childhood, *Bala*; the Book of Ayodhyâ (from the name of the royal village of Râma's father), the Book of the Forest, *Aranya*; the Book of Monkeys, *Kishkindhâ*; the Book of Marvels, *Saundarâ*; the Book of Battle, *Yuddha*; and finally the Last Book, *Uttara*, the final epilogue of Râma's return to the divine Heavens.

The epic unfolds through the stages of human vicissitudes between two defining events: the god's arrival on earth, his "descent" or *avatar*, and his return from the earth to the heavens, his "re-ascent." The intervening time, in which divine intervention restores order, is part of the cosmic rhythm. Sitâ, the wife who emerges from a furrow in the earth – her very name means "furrow" – and who in other versions is Râvana's daughter, returns to the earth, burrowing deep within it, while Râma "ceases to breathe and takes the form of Vishnu."<sup>6</sup> Thus Râma's journey is inscribed within the epic cycle of the *avatar* of the god Vishnu and partakes of the very essence of the narratives of the Purâna of India, without the necessity of adding supplementary interpretations. It shares in the same pulse of creation, the perpetual struggle between Chaos and Order, between gods and *asura* or antigods, with the survival of the cosmos itself at stake in the inexhaustible questioning that unfolds in the succession of passing phases.

A grasp of this fundamental scheme or skeleton adds to our understanding of the Cambodian Râm-Ker. Do we find the “descent” of a god who assumes a human form and makes a divine journey through earthly existence, then having completed his task ascends once more to the heavens? In other words, one of the various divine exploits, in a cosmic enterprise, a transcendent adventure that has neither beginning nor end but that from time to time takes the shape of a particular episode?

It would appear that the literary and stage versions of the Râm-Ker do not have this resonance. Those who listen and watch, the ordinary Cambodian public, straightaway recognize the characters who are familiar to them and whose adventures they never tire of hearing. Râma is to them the model both of the prince of divine essence and of the exceptionally worthy being who has attained a high degree of Buddhist perfection. Sitâ – Setâ to the Cambodians, that is, “the White One,” – is the paragon of the accomplished and faithful wife. The very title of the Khmer epic refers not to Râma’s journey, but to his glory. This glory is more than the renown earned through his exploits; it is the fulfillment of his fate in the Buddhist sense.

A thorough study of the Khmer epic is difficult and complex because of the many versions in which it exists: oral, written, danced, dramatized by the Royal Ballet or by provincial troupes, with a view to providing entertainment or for magical or religious purposes. Certain tellers such as Tâ Krut or Mi Chak,<sup>7</sup> sought after by their audiences, would insert newly invented episodes that would immediately become integrated into the structure of the narrative, living motifs in an unfolding narrative that is always open to more adventures.

The articulations of the Râm-Ker in the Phnom Penh<sup>8</sup> version punctuate Râma’s long journey in search of his missing wife. Râma’s origins are traced to Vishnu-Nârâyana, but instead of being one of the god’s *avatars*, he is portrayed as a “rebirth” in the form of a prince of king Dasharatha’s court. From the beginning, Râma is a prince who exhibits exceptional powers, one capable of slaying the demon Kâkanâsura, devourer of ritual offerings. The prologue introduces the various protagonists as allies or enemies. Some are the products of magic: Lady Mandogiri (the wife of

Râvana, king of the demons), was created from a frog; others metamorphosed into monkeys as the result of a curse, such as Sugrîva and Bâli; Sitâ, the wife of the god Indra in her previous life, is reborn as a daughter of Râvana; Hanumân, the white monkey, is the son of the god of Wind.

This first part of the epic reveals no divine mission but rather a mythology of battles, vengeance, intrigue and curses from which Râma always emerges victorious. Heir to his father's throne and Sitâ's happy husband since he won the archery contest, he is nevertheless prey to court intrigue. His mother-in-law Kaikesî, who claims the throne for her own son, forces Râma into exile. He is thus the hero of the virtues of obedience, of the spirit of renunciation, of the respect he owes to his father's name, and of nobility of soul, and he sets out with his brother Lakshmana and his wife Sitâ.

The second part is entirely given over to Râma's exile in the forest, where dressed in leaves and skin, he settles into a hermitage and dreams of adopting the ascetic life. There he is visited by his half-brother, who announces his father's death and asks him to reign in his place. But Râma, unshakable repository of the sacred word, refuses to return to Ayodhyâ and decides to go deeper into the forest.

This part of the narrative is strongly reminiscent of Buddhism. Like prince Vessantara, the penultimate rebirth of the Buddha, Râma seems to follow the Path of Perfection, that of "wakefulness" or *bodhisatta*, with his attitude of detachment after all the turmoil and human failings he has experienced. But the rest of the journey is overshadowed by conflicts and extreme behavior.

Arriving in the world of the Yaks – the *râkshasa* of the Sanskrit *Râmâyana* – the exiles will be subject to a series of attacks by these forest "ogres" and "ogresses": first attempt to abduct Sitâ, ruses, seductive wiles proffered by the perversely enticing *yakkhinî*, duels and frightful massacres, rivers of blood in which thousands of *yaks* perish, before the central episode takes place, that is, the abduction of Sitâ by Râvana, against whom Jatâyû, king of the vultures, attempts to pit himself, thereby losing his life.

With Râma's noisy despair at this intense torment overriding the clamor of war, the hero continues to threaten and hack mercilessly around him. Still the mechanism of causality, the chain of causes and effects that underlies all the action, pursues its work,

and soon a new phase begins: Râma and Lakshmana rest in the shadow of a large tree.<sup>9</sup> The arrival on the scene of the white monkey, Hanumân, brings about a favorable alliance with another forest people, the monkeys. There are many intertwining adventures; the narrative teems with episodes without interrupting the guiding thread, the heated pursuit of Sitâ.

Râma is thus involved in a quest that may appear to be a human one, that of a man possessed by the desire to regain his wife and ready for whatever it takes to do so. And it is thus that the "ordinary" audience of the Râm-ker perceive the fabulous exploit that is the crossing of the ocean on a bridge built by the monkeys and Lankâ's three formidable assaults on Râvana's armies of demons. But the battle takes on cosmic proportions, and the reunion with Sitâ is hardly a typical reunion of two separated partners.

The classical literary version stops before Râvana's death, which the oral versions go on to tell, along with the return to Ayodhyâ and Râma's coronation. The generalized euphoria, the gift of half of the kingdom to the faithful Hanumân, and a few comic episodes bring to a close this part of the Râm-ker like an adventure story in which the hero becomes king and rewards those who have helped him. Only the trial by fire that Râma imposes on Sitâ to make sure that she has not coupled with Râvana smacks of anything but happy endings, underlining the imperative of perfection.

As if for extra measure, and because like the great romance it is the Râm-ker refuses to come to an end, the third part and epilogue recount the condemnation and exile of Sitâ, who is accused of having drawn a portrait of Râvana; the birth of her two children and the "revelations" that identify them as the sons of Râma; the trial of Râma's fictive funerary urn; the wars of vengeance waged by Râvana's sons; Sitâ's descent among the Nâga, the earth's testimony that Sitâ did indeed remain faithful to her love for Râma; and finally the arrow shot by Râma, a supreme message to Lankâ. This episode is left hanging, looking forward to a future chain of causalities, perhaps to the ultimate reunion of the two heroes or their entry into *nibbâna*.<sup>10</sup> It is as if the epic's essential goal, through all the endlessly multiplied events, were to show the path towards an ultimate transcendent truth. For the Khmers, this path is none other than that of Buddhism.

Several authors<sup>11</sup> have observed the “Buddhization” of the Cambodian *Râmâyana*. Bernard-Philippe Groslier has written: “Converted to the Buddhism of the Thera after the fall of Angkor, the Khmers nevertheless did not renounce the *Râm-ker*, whereas they gradually forgot the *Mahâbhârata*, the *Purânas*, and the other Hindu *sastras*, indeed the whole of Sanskrit literature, which was overshadowed by faded canonical texts. But the *Râm-ker* was retained.”<sup>12</sup> In her introduction to “La Gloire de Râma, Râmakerti,” Ginette Martini noted that Râma is “referred to as ‘Buddha’ several times, as well as ‘Precious and Supreme Buddha,’ as ‘*Bodhisatta*,’ and yet again as ‘the bud of Buddha.’”<sup>13</sup> The references to the law of causality, to the effect of “virtues reaching their end,”<sup>14</sup> leave no doubt as to the fundamental structure of the action. On the basis of the singer Mi Chak’s oral version, François Bizot has identified the narrative of the *Râm-Ker* as an initiatory journey belonging to the mahayanic rather than the tantric tradition, with the quest for Sitâ becoming the pursuit of a truth represented by the Jewel of Knowledge, the “Crystal Ball,” and the gestation of a new rebirth.<sup>15</sup>

A more immediate function, one that is more directly anchored in Khmer reality, is the “magic” of the Khol theater of Vat Svay Andet<sup>16</sup> or of Battambang,<sup>17</sup> and of the shadow-puppet theater of Siem-Reap,<sup>18</sup> considered to have ritual power to bring rain and appease the sun spirits, or to “exorcise” a calamity. To this end, any episode viewed as inauspicious, such as scenes of separation and death, are avoided. In any case, the manuscripts, where they exist, are held to be sacred, as are the masks and the shadow puppets, for they are used to effect the momentary presence of creatures of the invisible world who visit the human world in a fertile meeting that brings salvation.

Whether experienced as a drama of deeply human passions, a repertory of emotions, visions, and phantasmagoria, or an aesthetic entertainment, or as the god Vishnu’s mission to the earth, or Râma’s path to enlightenment, or a propitiatory ritual, the epic recreates and revives the world through word and gesture. Not the world in general, but quite precisely this world where we live, on which it confers full meaning.<sup>19</sup>

Translated from the French by Jennifer Curtiss Gage

## Notes

1. S. Singaravelu, *A Comparative Study of the Story of Râma in South India and South East Asia* (Kuala Lumpur, 1966).
2. *Râmker (Râmâyana khmer), ses formes artistiques et littéraires. Ses caractéristiques dans la culture khmère*, with a foreword by Hang Thun Hak and a preface by Vann Molyvann (Université royale des Beaux-Arts, Phnomh Penh, 1969), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
7. The storyteller Tâ Krut has been studied by Alain Daniel, *Etude d'un fragment du Râmker (Râmâyana cambodgien) dit par un conteur* (Doctoral thesis, Université Paris-III, 1982, 2 vols.). The storyteller Mi Chak has been studied by François Bizot, *Râmaker, l'amour symbolique de Râm et Seta* (Paris, EFEO), vol. 155 (1989).
8. Edition printed in Cambodian alphabet, published in Phnom Penh in 1937 by the Royal Library, after two bundles of manuscripts (16 booklets numbered from 1 to 10 and from 75 to 80). See Ginette Martini, *La Gloire de Râma. Râmakerti, Râmâyana cambodgien* (Paris, 1978). For other versions, see Saveros Pou, trans. and commentator, *Etudes sur le Râmakerti (XVI-XVIII)* (Paris, EFEO, 1977) and *Râmakerti (XVI-XVII)* (Paris, EFEO, 1977).
9. *Râmker*, (see note 2 above), p. 39.
10. Equivalent to the Sanskrit *nirvâna*.
11. François Martini, "Note sur l'empreinte du bouddhisme dans la version cambodgienne du Râmâyana," *Journal asiatique* (1952), pp. 67-70; "En marge du Râmâyana cambodgien," *Bulletin de EFEO* 38:2 (1938), pp. 285-295; and "Quelques notes sur le Râmker," *Artibus Asiae* 24:3/4 (1961), pp. 351-361. Saveros Pou, "Les traits bouddhiques du Râmakerti," *Bulletin de l'EFEO* 62 (1975), pp. 355-368.
12. Bernard Philippe Groslier, "Le Râmâyana dans l'ancien Cambodge," in *Râmker*, (see note 2 above), p. 63.
13. Martini, *La Gloire de Râma*, Introduction, p. xxix.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
15. François Bizot, *Râmaker*, "Interprétation," pp. 42-61.
16. *Râmker*, (see note 2 above), pp. 72-75.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
18. *Râmker*, (see note 2 above), pp. 77-86.
19. Eveline Porée-Maspéro, "Le Râmâyana dans la vie des Cambodgiens," *Seksa Khmer* 6 (1983), pp. 19-24.