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Pech Tum Kravel

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SBEK THOM:

KHMER

SHADOW

THEATER

Khmer version edited by Thavro Phim and Sos Kem

English translation by Sos Kem

Abridged, adapted, and edited by Martin Hatch



Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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By

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Photographs of Figures produced with the assistance of Dunnara Meas, Mao Keng, Deth Sowatha, Sdoeung Chamroeun, Tum Saroeun, Mann Kosal, Ieng Hoeun, Kong Vath, Danh Davuth, and Oeur Hoey;

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Introduction by the Editors

Sbek thom (Large [Leather] Hide) is the name of a genre of Khmer oral musical theater, a complex of shadow plays that draw their characters and stories from the Khmer version of the Indian Ramayana. Prior to the recent war, *sbek thom* performances were common in some areas of Cambodia. Pech Tum Kravel singlehandedly spent much time and energy researching thoroughly every available document on Khmer shadow theater, assembled photographs of one extant collection of shadow figures, and produced an unprecedented manuscript on the genre. It is quite an extensive work, though it is only preliminary, in the sense that the organization of the text is not sequential and sometimes rather desultory. Moreover, some of the observations about the history of *sbek thom* need to be confirmed, and there is much more that can be said about the place of the genre in Khmer history and culture, including a reasoned description and analysis of the historical relationships between this art form and various genres of Thai shadow theater. Still, the work is impressive and essential, especially now, as a tool for teaching about Khmer life and as a means to preserve and document what is known now about the Khmer performing arts. We offer it as a stimulus to work on the Khmer arts in Khmer and other languages, especially by young Khmer scholars.

The English version of this work is a free translation. The editor has deleted words, phrases, and sometimes whole sentences of the Khmer, and altered many others, to make the work more readily accessible to a general audience.

In transliterating the Khmer script, we have followed the past practices of French and English language writers on Cambodian performing arts, including those who produced the volume entitled *Traditional Music Instruments of Cambodia*, published by UNESCO in 1994. Though more consistent (and scientific) methods of representing Khmer now exist, we have chosen to place this work in the mainstream of past scholarship, and thereby permit more ready associations between the Khmer place names, objects, and dramatic characters discussed in this work and their counterparts in previous publications.

The preparation of this book from the manuscript was accomplished in several stages. From June to September 1994, the Khmer manuscript was typed and preliminary editing done by Thavro Phim. His work was funded in part by a grant to Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program from the Asian Cultural Council (New York, New York). From September 1994 to April 1995, Sos Kem edited the Khmer manuscript and translated the text and captions into English. His work was partly funded by a grant to the Southeast Asia Program from the MFH Fund for Religious, Charitable, and Educational Purposes. From June 1994 until June 1995, Martin Hatch abridged, adapted, and edited the English version and prepared the entire manuscript for its printing in Phnom Penh. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through its offices in Phnom Penh, arranged and provided some of the funding for the printing of the entire work. The Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee (Phnom Penh office) underwrote a significant portion of the costs of printing. The entire Phnom Penh aspect of the project was coordinated and executed by Keiko Miura (Assistant Culture Programme Officer in Phnom Penh) and Khun Khuon (UNESCO, Phnom Penh).

Ithaca, New York: June 1995
Sos Kem and Martin Hatch

Acknowledgements by the Author

I am deeply grateful to Venerable Pin Sem, who patiently took the time to explain and guide me to an understanding of each of the characters in the leather figures, and to help me devise captions for the figures that would aid the reader in remembering the story. The Committee for the "Festival International des Francophonies" (with the special assistance of Monique Blin and Bernard Collet) provided a generous grant which not only facilitated my research for this manuscript but also helped me publish a book called *Chamrieng Changreth Dek* (the song of a kind of cricket) . James Burnet generously provided his own funds to make the initial prints of many of photographs in this publication. Dunnara Meas devoted his precious time to photographing the three types of leather puppets in Phnom Penh for me to keep for future reference and also for this book. Bill Lobban typed into a computer documents on the Khmer arts and Chamrieng Changreth Dek. This facilitated my research and publications. Jacques Brunet generously supplied documents on Khmer culture -- especially documents on Sbek Thom, which he had saved since the 1960s. Alain Danielou also generously provided me with documents on Khmer life and art that he had saved since 1960s and 1970s. Mao Keng, Deth Sowatha, Sdoeung Chamroeun, Tum Saroeun, Mann Kosal, Ieng Hoeun, Kong Vath, Danh Davuth, and Oeur Hoey assisted in the photographing of the entire set of leather puppets to keep for reference and to use in this publication.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Senior Professor Chheng Phon, former Minister of Culture, who is my mentor. He devoted much time to educating me on the arts and cultures of our nation and to guiding me to success in my research on the shadow theater, which has resulted in this contribution to the national interests.

May you ladies and gentlemen be successful and prosperous, and have good health.

Pech Tum Kravel

SBEK THOM

(a translation by Sos Kem of the
Khmer language manuscript by Pech Tun Kravel;
abridged, adapted, and edited by Martin Hatch)

Preface

This incredible loss happened so fast, as fast as the speed of a vicious tornado. I saw it with my own eyes in Cambodia.

The war destroyed the customs, the traditions, the moral precepts of a compassionate, tolerant, and empathetic society, and turned that society toward wildness, savagery, inhumanity, and murder.

The war turned a country, a peaceful and prosperous nation, into a shocking hell on earth.

Proceeding from the point of view that "something small or inadequate is better than nothing," I have compiled this book in the hope that it will help to rehabilitate Cambodian culture, a national culture destroyed in a bloody protracted war. I hope this work will play a small part in preserving Cambodian identity.

I am very grateful to Your Highness, ladies and gentlemen, for any advice on ways to improve this book.

Thank you.

Phnom Penh, 1993
Pech Tum Kravel.

Sbek Thom in the Art and Life of the Khmer People

In the past, superb civilizations rose and fell on the land that is now Cambodia. The evidence is preserved in a profusion of inscriptions and reliefs for future generations.

More than a thousand temples built by the ancestors of today's Cambodians all over this region show events of a glorious, prosperous past. These temples show us both what was accomplished then and what is missing now.

From the fall of Angkor in the 14th century through the Longvek era (1587-1594) and the Udong era (1618-1867) -- that is, to the beginning of the French presence in Cambodia -- there were many tremendous wars. The land under Khmer control was reduced from a vast area to nearly nothing. The population under Khmer rule that had reached 10 million in 1200 C.E. was reduced to 800,000 in 1863.

Many aspects of life in the past have disappeared. The harp (*pin*, Indian harp) that is seen on walls of many ancient temples completely vanished; leather art that was highly developed during the Angkor period was wiped out; a narrative art called *pheany* has vanished from public memory; a number of percussion, wind, and string instruments have lost their names in the memory of people -- only their shapes are left behind in temple reliefs; the art of Khmer boxing that our forefathers inscribed on walls of temples scarcely exists; beauty ornaments, headdresses (chignons), and clothes, which were innumerable in those glorious periods, scarcely exist today.

But perhaps even greater than these losses are the losses suffered between 1970 and 1993. Everything -- culture, art, custom, tradition, belief in religion -- was crushed to the brink of annihilation. This war of more than twenty years reduced Khmer moral values and the soul of its national culture nearly to ashes. A number of temples were destroyed, including numerous antique Buddhist statues, some weighing many tons.

In the performing arts, a number of forms such as *beuk bat* (a kind of musical drama), a wooden puppet show, and a clay puppet show have physically disappeared. There are traces of other kinds of shows whose names we do not even know.

As for *sbek thom*, during the dark days of war much damage was done to it. Before the war broke out, there were two groups, one showing in Phnom Penh and the other in Siem Reap. The one in Siem Reap completely vanished and the one in Phnom Penh was partly destroyed. After the war, that is, during this recent period of half-war-half-peace, *sbek thom* has again been receiving significant interest from Khmer people. In these days when we have been compiling this manuscript, we can say that the spirit of the art is coming back to life although it is not yet strong, and certainly not in superb shape.

The Performing Arts in Khmer Life:

The vast majority of Khmer people who believe in Buddhism -- in merit and sin, in the principle that if one does evil he will suffer evil and if one does good he will experience good -- enjoy the *sbek thom* as much as they do the preaching about the odyssey of the Buddha before he became enlightened. They love this story that shows the magnificent powers of the superheroes they adore. While listening to the chanting, their minds drift away and land on a celestial planet where grandiose events take place, great struggles between the good -- represented by Visnu, god of creation -- and the bad -- represented by Ravana (chief of the Raksasas and king of Langka) and a group of ogres. The people normally take sides with Rama, prince of Ayodhya and a reincarnation of Visnu; Laksmana, Rama's younger brother; Hanuman, the mighty king of monkeys; and Sita, whom Ravana was trying to steal from her husband, Rama. They believe that these characters represent the good in themselves. People also see that although the bad have great power and an intricate array of tricks, and can turn many things to their advantage and prevail in most of the battles, in the end the good always win through endurance, patience, and the diligent efforts of Rama, Laksmana, Hanuman and his monkey army.

Khmer beliefs in spirits, spells, Buddhism, and Brahmanism have become entwined in a single complex of belief for many centuries now. *Sbek thom* only shows the Ramayana story, a story that every Khmer knows well, and also a story from the beginning of the era of the strong influence of Brahmanism, which was followed by Buddhism. Brahmanism strongly influenced our religious arts. Because Khmer people value religious art as a heritage passed on from our forefathers and as a source of support for daily life in general, we have been making great efforts to safeguard *sbek thom* for many centuries.

According to the general beliefs of Khmer people, *sbek thom* and the masked dance (*lkhon khol*), are not performed for the public in same ways as are contemporary popular arts. *Sbek thom* and the masked dance are considered sacred. They embody Brahmanism and Buddhism, the deep beliefs of the Khmer people, and they involve religious acts and entities such as supernatural beings, deities, witchcraft, spirits, venerable teachers, Indra, and Brahma. *Sbek thom* is also performed at birthday ceremonies of abbots, venerated parents, and other old people who have great influence in the society, or for the funerals of abbots or parents. Furthermore, from ancient times to the present, most Cambodians, who are farmers and depend almost entirely on nature to make their living, have performed *sbek thom* when there is a drought, to ask the supernatural beings for rain.

Shadow Plays in Cambodia:

Shadow plays are found in Iran, Turkey, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos. The shapes, the stories, the techniques of staging and narration, the music, and the art on the figures differs according to the histories and customs in each region. In Cambodia, three different types of shadow play are found:

1. *Sbek Thom*:

Sbek thom figures are made from cowhide. Some are as large as two square meters and as heavy as eight kilograms. They have no moveable parts, and thus are not true puppets.

2. *Sbek Thom Mothium* (Medium Size Figures):

These figures are also carved from cowhide. They are different from *sbek thom* in two ways: they are smaller, and they are dyed, not painted. *Sbek thom mothium* are used in daylight performances, without a fire, and so this is not truly a shadow theater.

3-*Sbek Touch* (Small Size Figures):

Sbek touch are true puppets, because they have movable parts. They are made from cowhide and are much smaller than *sbek thom mothium*. Cambodian people like this kind of shadow theater best.

The History of Shadow Theater in Cambodia

We do not know when shadow theater began in Cambodia. However, a passage from a stone inscription carved before the Angkor period describes dolls used in a ceremony invoking Svarasvati, goddess of beauty. This tells us that dolls were used then in religious ceremonies.

In considering the many superb sculptures and inscriptions found at Angkor, the following analysis concerning the origins of shadow theater in the region emerges:

The reliefs on the walls of Angkor present scenes of important events in the lives of famous royal families and common people, scenes of religious stories and of ceremonies. Apsaras, the dancing angels that our forebears used as decoration on every terrace of these temples, show that the Khmer classical dance originated before the Angkor period. *Sbek thom*, like masked dance-drama (*lkhon khol*), is now a male art form. Even female characters are played, and female roles spoken, by male artists, because the performance is meant to publicize religion and, in Buddhism, women may not perform some activities. Both masked dance and *sbek thom* are used to perform Reamker. In Cambodia, Reamker was, at first, the most important story in the Brahmanic religion. Later it became a part

of Buddhist lore. The two religions had flowed into the Sovannaphum peninsula, which included Cambodia, before the Christian era. The arrival of these religions in the area was certainly at about the same time as that of the development of the dance forms which became the royal ballet and the masked dance -- that is, long before the Angkor period. When we compare the masked dance-drama with the *sbek thom* shadow play, and again the *sbek thom* with the sculptures on Angkor walls, the following points emerge.

1. In ancient times, Cambodians used buffalo hide, cowhide, or hides of wild animals in place of paper to draw plans for wall sculptures.
2. According to historical documents, Khmer have practiced tattooing their skin as decoration since the first century of Christian era.
3. The poses of a number of the characters in the *sbek thom*, especially in battle scenes, are similar to those of the personalities sculpted on the walls of Angkor.
4. The movements of the characters in the *sbek thom* are like those of artists in the royal ballet and the masked dance.
5. The styles of costumery, crown decorations, and jewelry are the same in *sbek thom* as in the royal ballet and the masked dance.
6. The *pin peat* orchestra is the same in all these forms.
7. As well as prose, poetic forms called *pumnol* and *promkiti* are used widely in *sbek thom*. These two forms of poetry were also used during the Angkor period.

The above constellation of facts strongly supports the hypothesis that *sbek thom* developed during the Angkor period.

The Musical Ensemble for *Sbek Thom*

The musical ensemble that accompanies *sbek thom* is the same as that which accompanies traditional dance and dance drama. The ensemble (called *krom phleng pin peat*) may have been in existence since before the Angkor period; many of the instruments in it are pictured in sculptures on Angkor's walls.

For a normal orchestra, the instruments are

A small xylophone:	<i>roneat ek;</i>
A large xylophone:	<i>roneat thom;</i>
A large pot-gong circle:	<i>kong thom;</i>
A small pot-gong circle:	<i>kong touch;</i>
A large wooden oboe:	<i>sralay thom;</i>
A small wooden oboe:	<i>sralay touch;</i>
A double-headed, strapped, barrel-shaped drum:	<i>sampho;</i>
A pair of double-headed, pegged, barrel-shaped drums:	<i>skor thom;</i>
A pair of small cymbals:	<i>chhing.</i>

In smaller versions of the ensemble the instruments are *roneat ek*, *kong thom*, *sralay thom*, *sampho*, and a pair of *skor thom*.

The songs and instrumental style for *sbek thom* are unique. One person with a stick in each hand plays both of the *skor thom*; each drum is placed at an angle on a stand, with one head tilted up, facing the player. The *sampho* is played by one person, barehanded, with both hands, one on each head. The musical ensemble plays many songs, some of which have been borrowed from the repertoires of other Khmer ensembles to fit particular themes in the play. There are about twenty songs for *sbek thom*. Each of them describes the story, reflecting the actions, the character, and moods of each person in the story. The songs are as follows: Sa Thuka, Cheut, Cheut Chhoeng, Cheut Chap, Domneu Khnong, Lo, Phleh, Ruo, Ruo Bey

Choan, Trak, Ot Touch, Ot Thom, Reav, Tanav, Sdech Yeang, Neang Lot, Chhou Chhay, Smey, and Phlom.

Fabrication and Care of *Sbek Thom* Figures

In Cambodia, red straw matting is a popular material. Besides being used for sleeping, receiving guests, and sitting on to eat everyday meals, a red mat can be a piece of decorative furniture in a Khmer home.

The technique of making a red mat has become a tradition for Khmer people to keep from generation to generation -- passed on from mothers to children to grandchildren, who are taught as they make the material. The teaching of one generation by another adjusts to new discoveries, such as new ways of arranging patterns on the mat and new dyes. Recently, some patterns have incorporated scripts (writing). For many years now, makers have used *doeum sbeng* tree bark, or that of other trees, to color the mats. They boil the different kinds of bark until the desired color emerges; and they dip the dry matting straw in the solution and then dry them before weaving them into a mat. More recently, and only in some regions, weavers use chemical dyes, because they are more convenient. Despite this development, a red mat, whether it is short or several meters long, is considered a masterpiece and is as highly valued in Khmer society as *houl* and *phamong* hand-woven textiles.

Teaching the preparation of leather for *sbek thom* is basically the same as teaching the weaving of *houl*, *phamong*, and red mats. It is a personal skill that is passed on from generation to generation with some variation (which is inevitable) in time. The leather preparation techniques outlined here are those of Look Krou Dep, a teacher of leather art and a resident of Siem Reap. Look Krou Dep was one of the teachers of popular (folk) arts in Siem Reap who performed in the tour of a large dance troupe (Mohor Srap) to Malaysia and Singapore with me (Pech Tum Kravel) in 1968. He joined the University of Fine

Arts staff and was put in charge of leather preparation at the National Conservatory of Pageantry. He did most of the leather work for these places himself between 1970 and 1975, and took it up again after 1979. This was a good timing for us, because as we were beginning this manuscript, the Art Office of the Department of Culture was preparing leather to copy more than 100 old figures, as a part of our efforts to restore the art form.

Fresh cow skin is either immediately put into the preparation process or immersed in ash to prevent it from rotting. (This is normally done during the growing season.) If the skin has been treated with ash, before it is worked any further, the ash must be removed. In the first step of preparing the skin, it is spread out and any flesh or muscle still attached is shaved off using a sharp knife. Then it is soaked for many days in a solution of tree bark that has been prepared by beating until it has become soft and its sap can be readily released into the water solution. The preparation of the water solution from tree bark takes at least a few hours. The colors that result from tree bark are different from region to region in Cambodia, and differences in color have become matters of preference in this process. But the colors most people desire are red, yellow, or dark brown. In the Khmer tradition, so that the skins will last a long time, the types of tree bark used for color are mixed with types of tree bark that have bitter, sour, tart substances. These substances keep insects away from the prepared leather.

After being soaked in the solution, the skin is stretched tightly on flat ground in the sun, with stakes on its rim so that when it is dry, it will be smooth. After it has dried, the hair is scraped off of it. It is important to be aware of the thickness of the skin during this scraping. The skin must be shaved until it is of a uniform thickness. When the desired thickness is obtained and all hair is scraped off, the skins are turned over to an artist who is an expert at drawing the characters in the *sbek thom* story. The artist knows the physical attributes of the characters, the scenes in which they appear, their movements, and details that reflect their moods. Each picture is different. This stage requires great care. Each character must be painted with the correct colors. At

this time, the artist also makes small pictures of some of the characters for the convenience of the performers, who attach them to the bamboo staves of the large leather figures. The perforations in the figures are carefully cut out by a team of artisans.

In the Khmer tradition, Siva showing his power, Visnu radiating his power, and Preah Muni Eysi (the Ascetic), are not represented on ordinary leather. For Siva and Visnu, skin from a cow that is accidentally killed or has died of natural death is used. As for the Ascetic, skin of a panther or bear is used. And the artist working on these three characters must follow a strict discipline; he must wear white clothes, and finish his work all in one day.

When the *sbek thom* figures are not being used in a performance, they are stored in a well-appointed shed, built with its entrance facing the sunrise. In the shed, there are shelves for keeping the *sbek* neatly. In front of the shed, a spirit house is built, and candles and types of incense are burned periodically in remembrance of the teachers, especially of Preah Muni Eysi.

Because of their religious beliefs, their veneration of teachers, and the esteem they show for art, Khmer people have treasured *sbek thom* from generation to generation, from teachers to students, and have made sure that it has been protected.

Narration in *Sbek Thom*

In *sbek thom*, the narrator is the most important performer. Most narrators are teachers of the art and leaders of a troupe. The narrator structures and leads the performance: he edits the story, adapts its length, arranges and composes texts to fit a performance context, memorizes them, improvises dialogue, directs music as the performance unfolds, and asks and answers questions.

There are two narrators in a *sbek thom* performance. Both stand in front of the screen. Both have the ability to narrate or to lecture on the Ramayana in a way that deeply entertains the spectators. Both truly act as they narrate. They show anger, sadness, grief, desperation, heartbreak, lightheartedness, and sarcasm. They create a medium which engrosses the spectators, entertains them, and engages them in the story from the beginning to the end.

The narration of the story is in poetry, using different meters (and songs) according to the mood. The following are samples of types of narration from one rendition of the story:

Narration of the Story by the Story Teller:

The reigning king, respected by all the deities, resided in heaven. Preah Lak (*Laksmāna*) was flying to battle with Enthachit (*Indrajit*), the ogre, shaking all the other planets and arousing Indra and other deities from their normal life. The king was happy and blessed his two sons, that they might be victorious over the ogre. At that time, the two princes showed great power, and Enthachit backed off. Enthachit was afraid of the younger prince's mighty force. But, while withdrawing, he sarcastically said, "Hey! Preah Lak, you human being, is this all the force you have to show me? If so, go tell your older brother to come and fight me. You are too weak for me, not up to my level. I will not fight you because you are like a woman. I will be criticized if I do battle with you."

Show of Anger:

Very angry, the king of Langka pointed his finger at Pipek (*Vibhisana*) and said, "Hey! Pipek, you are a traitor, a wanton; you allow yourself to not think of our family. You went over to Preah Lak and Preah Ream's (*Rama's*) side. What for? If the king's father dies, all the ogres will weep and the monkeys will be happy and cheer for victory. Will you be weeping or laughing? What is the reasonable thing to do?" After listening, Pipek said, "Hey! ogre king, what gives you the right to say that?"

Expression of Sadness in Separation:

"My beloved, I will not see your face for a long time. In hardship, in poverty, you always followed me and took care of me, just as in a flawless relationship between a student and a teacher. Early every morning you went into the forest to pick fruit and bring it to me in our house. You never let me worry. I have always had peaceful thoughts. Now, my beloved, you have died in the middle of this quiet forest. I will return to the palace in Ayudhya to tell mother and the rest of our family about all that has happened. I will tell mother that you have to be brought home in an elaborate ceremonial procession. The coffin will be gold, as will the crematory structure. There will be a white Wat Mony parasol, booths for charity in all eight corners, ten chickens for offerings, and crystal lamps hanging in a row. Simpili Krud (*Garuda*) will be at the base of each of the crematory supports and the ogres will have ropes run through their noses like wild animals. Kamphan holding a sword will be standing guard at the four gates to the crematory and elsewhere. Deities and angels will be everywhere."

Monologue by a Character:

Enthachit was leaving the palace of Langka. Quiet and sad, he was missing home. Turning toward the palace, he said, "Oh! my home, my original abode." Enthachit was weeping. "I miss my wife and children who were beautiful -- like thousands of stars surrounding a bright white moon; singing happily. Oh! Neang Sovan, my precious one, and Konthea Yeamea, my two beloved princesses, take care of yourselves, don't worry. I must go." Enthachit looked into the forest and saw a multitude of flowers. He said, "Oh! Langka city, my place of origin. Langka will be tarnished and vanquished. No one will rescue Langka if I do not return victorious. In the beginning, Langka was unparalleled, better than Heaven. In the beginning, Langka was a glorious palace. Now, Langka is sinking -- becoming a quiet forest. The people are leaving this old royal city helter skelter to live elsewhere. All the young maidens have gone looking for other places to live. This is sad, regrettable. When Grandfather was in charge of the army, everyone was afraid of Lanka. Of the thousands, millions, of people on earth, no enemies dared to

come near. Now, we are in decline, heading toward the end of our family." Enthachit was weeping, feeling sorry for himself, because his death was imminent.

Performing *Sbek Thom*

From ancient times, *sbek thom* has been performed at night in the open, in a rice field or a *wat* court yard. Before the performance starts, two bamboo or wooden poles are firmly driven into the ground. A sheet of white cloth is stretched from one to the other, to serve as a screen. Sometimes a piece of black cloth is attached to the bottom of the screen. Behind the screen, a low rectangular frame is built of banana trunks; it will contain the fire that will serve as the light source for casting the shadows of the puppets onto the screen. The raw materials for the fire are coconut shells or firewood.

Usually, before performing, all the performers, including the narrators, the figure handlers, and the musicians, hold a ceremony to ask for protection and blessing, and to thank their teachers. During the ceremony, the figures representing the three characters Siva, Visnu, and the Ascetic are placed against the front of the screen, with the Ascetic in between the other two. In front of these three, there are offerings along with burning candles and incense. The ceremony is accompanied by music and involves prayers. (See below for a description of this ceremony.)

When the ceremony concludes, the narrators invoke the spirits of Visnu, Siva, Rama, Ravana, their teachers, and others, and perform an act to drive out evil spirits. They handle the Visnu and Siva puppets to show power and carry burning candles about in the dark. At one point, the narrators order the holders of three torches to light the torches. They walk in crossing patterns toward the rectangular firepit. At the completion of these patterned processions, they light their three torches. The narrators shout the cue words, "Yak O," three times, and all the performers repeat these words. In shouting the cue

words, they use a spirit voice or gruff voice to frighten the spectators.

Before the Ramayana story begins, the performers stage a battle between the White Monkey and the Black Monkey. This battle, called "Sva Prachap," represents the fight between good and the evil. In the end good wins. The Black Monkey is captured and taken to the Ascetic, the supreme judge, to decide his fate. The Ascetic advises the White Monkey to let the Black Monkey go. (This event is described more fully below.) Then the Ramayana story can begin.

The music begins on the command of the narrators. The performers handling the figures are mainly responsible for two things: they have to make sure that the shadow of the figure projects well onto the screen; and their movements must properly represent the actions of the characters.

The Story in *Sbek Thom*

The Khmer Reamker is derived from the Ramayana tales of India. The Ramayana came to Cambodia along with Brahmanism and Buddhism, during the period Cambodia was called Sovannaphum. As time passed, Khmer gave their own geographical references and local popular characters to the stories.

From early times, Reamker was a well-known story. Reamker episodes and characters are pictured in sculptures on temple walls and lintels, and also in large sculptures displayed inside temples that predate Angkor Wat, such as Koh Keh, Ba Puon, and Banteay Srey. Almost the entire Reamker was sculpted on the walls of the west corridor of Angkor Wat, starting from the west main gate to the north and on the western part of the north corridor. These reliefs are matched by another famous Indian story, depicting a great battle between brothers, inscribed on the walls of the west corridor, starting from the main gate to the south. The story of the great battle between

brothers, which we believe to have had a tremendous influence during the Angkor period, has disappeared in Cambodia since that time. Only a few Khmer still remember the story. But the Reamker story, which had great influence on the Khmer society in ancient times, has remained influential in present Khmer society, in spite of the many dark periods in Khmer history. Besides the sculptures or reliefs on walls of those temples that are in existence today, the Reamker is embedded in traditions, in customs, and in performing arts such as *sbek thom*, the masked dance, and the royal ballet.

Ta Krud, a Storyteller:

In the past, the Reamker was often told to audiences of hundreds and thousands of people by famous storytellers, such as Ta Chak and Ta Krud. Between 1950-1960, I had many opportunities to hear the story told by Ta Krud at the Lycée Sisowath in Phnom Penh. Although nearly fifty years have passed, I can still vividly see Ta Krud's movements and hear clearly the tones of his voice. Ta Krud sat on a pillow, on a bamboo platform, placed on a stage of made of wooden planks supported by empty gasoline barrels. Near him on the stage was a set of offerings for Visnu that included a hand of bananas, a candle, and a glass of water. There was also a bouquet of flowers for his teachers, a bowl of water for himself, and (later in the decade) a microphone and loud speaker. Ta Krud singlehandedly told the story to the thousands in the audience. They attentively listened, were moved and excited, and often laughed until they had tears in their eyes. One very funny part I remember was Ta Krud's movements imitating Hanuman harrassing the ogres at Langka.

Singing the Reamker:

In addition to this kind of storytelling, there is another way to tell the story, that is, to sing it, accompanied by a two-string bowed lute, *chapei*. In this type of performance, only small sections of the story are presented.

The Khmer Reamker and Other Khmer Arts

The Reamker serves as the theme for traditional frescoes. Frescoes of Reamker are found on the walls of temples in many *wats*, such as *wat Po* in Siem Reap Angkor where the most refined frescoes of the Reamker are found. Khmer frescoes showing the entire story of Reamker are also found on the gallery walls of the Silver Pagoda at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh.

There are many Khmer written works on the Reamker: such as Prince Chhayavadhanavong's 15 volumes published by Buddhist Institute and Ms. Saoruos Peov's studies at the French Far East Institute on the Reamker of the 16-17th century. The Reamker has also taken root in the life of the Khmer people today, in such crafts as fortune telling.

We have already discussed the dramatic pageants in which the Reamker is presented: the two principle forms are the masked dance and the *sbek thom*. In neither form is the Reamker shown sequentially or in its entirety. Only isolated episodes are shown: for example, the episode of Enthachit's (*Indrajit's*) battle, followed by the scene in which Preah Ream (*Rama*) magically creates Preah Lak (*Laksmāna*). Apparently the choice of episodes and the order in which they were shown differed from region to region in Cambodia. This custom of regional differences in the choice of scenes performed from the Reamker is also found in other places around the world where the Ramayana is used as the basis for dramatic productions.

In 1986 and 1989, two Ramayana festivals were staged in India, in Uttar Pradesh state at its capital city of Ayudhya, not only the city where Preah Ream was born and where there are many sites associated with the Rayamana, but also the city where there are many temples or shrines to remnants of Buddha's existence. During these festivals, troupes of artists from all over India -- the south, west, north, and center -- performed the Reamker story. Although they were all of Indian nationality and performed the same Ramayana, their customs, decorations, and

music were different, as were the scenes they chose to perform: for instance, some showed the battle between Sokkrip (*Sugriwa*) and Peali (*Vali*), some performed the scene in which Preah Ream raised his army. The same process of choice of scenes occurs in Cambodia. Study of the practices of an older *sbek thom* troupe from Siem Reap shows that, although there are more than 150 figures from the Reamker story in this collection, they did not perform the entire story: only the battle between Enthachit and Preah Lak, a section which they called the Battle of Enthachit. It took them from four to five nights to finish this part of the story. It was divided into sections named for the main events in the battle. They were as follows:

1. Neakabas: Enthachit's powerful arrow that is transformed into a dragon that coils around and constricts Preah Lak and the monkey soldiers. They are rescued by King Simpili Krud (*Garuda*), at the request of Preah Ream.
2. Promeas: an arrow that Enthachit shoots at Preah Lak. On the orders of Pipek (*Vibhisana*), the astrologer, Hanuman finds medicines for the wound. Pipek mixes them together and uses the mix to remove the arrow.
3. Poan: Preah Lak's powerful arrow which, when it hits Enthachit, multiplies into a thousand arrows. Enthachit is able to remove all but one, so he flies to his mother, Neang Mondokiri, for the milk from her breast with which to dissolve the arrow.
4. The last act of the battle, when Enthachit dies. His head is cut off by a Sar Promeas arrow shot by Preah Ream. The head falls onto a tray that Angkut (*Angada*) is holding. Preah Ream then shoots another arrow to send the tray with the head to Tak Sen planet, saving the earth from total destruction.

Sbek Thom Performance in Siem Riep

Ta Ty Chean, from the third district in Seam Reap province, teaches Bamnol poetry for *sbek thom* in Siem Reap. His colleagues there in the instruction of the Khmer arts include Ta Chum of Phum Ta Phol; Ta Pouch, a teacher of *phleng thom* (large [ensemble] music) and composer of ancient (traditional) music (who uses his knuckles to compute musical notation); Ta Chhoeung and Ta Chet, teachers of *sralay thom* and *sralay touch* (large and small flutes), and Ta Dep, who teaches the movement of the leather figures in the show and who is an expert in making *sbek thom* leather figures. From 1970 to 1975, Ta Dep worked for the National Conservation of Pageantry in Phnom Penh and taught students and artists in Phnom Penh to make *sbek thom*. Ta Ty Chean and his colleagues said that the Enthachit battle played by the Siem Reap set of *sbek thom* figures requires four to five nights for a full performance. This is a précis of one such performance.

Homage to the great teachers (*sampeah kru*):

The following are the ceremonial accessories for the showing of homage to the teachers:

- A pair of *baysey* with three tiers (ritual accessories made from sections of a banana trunk, supported on bamboo legs and decorated with food, flowers, and foliage);
- A pair of *baysey* Pak Chham;
- A pair of *slathor* (a ritual accessory made of betel leaf and slices of areca);
- Two pig's heads;
- Two chickens;
- Two trays of food;
- Two trays of desserts;
- A pair of *chorm* (ritual accessories made of a conical section of a banana trunk decorated with betel leaf and areca);
- 38 Riel (Cambodian money); and
- Eggs to be stuck on each *baysey*.

Sometimes performances begin without the ceremony to honor the teachers, in which case, the following ritual accessories are present:

Four *chorm*;

Four *riel*;

A bowl of polished rice;

A bowl of cooked rice;

A pair of *slathor*;

A pair of *baysey* Pak Chham;

A bowl of scented water; and

Fruit, displayed to the left and right of the other accessories.

After the candles and incense are lit, the figure of Preah Phleng (Preah Eyso [*Siva*] shooting an arrow) is displayed in the dark -- that is, before the screen is illuminated. The musicians and narrators offer thanks and show respect to the supernatural beings in the world and heavens; to the lakes, rivers, creeks, and mountains of the ancient world; to all the teachers of music, drawing, carving, and acting in *sbek thom*; to the Reamker story; and to the figures of Preah Eyso (*Siva*, the god who created the world and all in it), Preah Ream (the incarnation of Preah Nearay [*Visnu*]), and Preah Lak. They ask the supernatural beings to come and destroy all evil, to bless the *sbek thom* pageant, and to grant them a life of peace and happiness. The narrators then say, "We are here. Hasten to light the fire behind the screen." Then the fire is lit. This signifies that our world is born, thanks to the power of Preah Eyso and Preah Nearay. The nothingness before the world was born has been replaced by nature and light, and along with this, conflicting phenomena have arisen, such as hot and cold, good and bad, mean and pleasant, tall and short, and big and small.

After the showing of Preah Phleng is finished, the music begins, and the battle of the monkeys is performed as a preamble to the sections from the Reamker. The monkeys fight until the white monkey defeats and captures the Black Monkey, and takes him to Preah Muni Eysi, their great teacher. Preah Muni Eysi advises them to stop fighting and learn to help each other because they both are from the same order of being; they must

wait for the arrival of an omnipotent figure and serve him as his soldiers. He tells the White Monkey to set the Black Monkey free. Then, the performance of the Reamker begins.

A Synopsis of the Story:

After the bridge linking Langka to the mainland is built, Preah Ream (*Rama*) sets up a bivouac, where, the next morning, he holds a meeting with his military and civilian officials, including Preah Lak (*Laksmana*), Pipek (*Vibhisana*), Sokkrip (*Sugriva*), Angkut (*Angada*), Hanuman, Champupean, Khanil, Khanul, and Nilkhan to discuss the war plans. Preah Ream orders Champupean to post lookouts along the shore.

Athikam Athikamlang, a Langka guard, sees the bridge to Langka, and human beings and monkeys on Langkan soil. He mounts his horse and dashes to inform Krong Reap (*Ravana*), who is in the midst of a meeting to discuss war matters with his military and civilian leaders, including Kumphaka, Kamphan, Kamphoan, Vonreach, Aphikay, and Mohakay. When Krong Reap is informed of the situation, he sends Nunthaso to summon his son Enthachit (*Indrajit*). With his wife, Enthachit comes to meet his father. They discuss the war, and Krong Reap gives his son orders to call up soldiers to destroy Preah Ream and his army at his new installation. Enthachit then leads his army to engage in battle with Preah Ream.

Preah Ream, while reminiscing about his wife Seda (*Sita*), hears the ogres' war cries. He goes to the meeting tent and asks Pipek, "Whose soldiers are they?" Pipek says that it is Enthachit, son of Krong Reap, and his army. Preah Ream orders Preah Lak to lead an army to fight Enthachit.

The two armies are facing one another. Enthachit shouts, "What are you here for?" Preah Lak says, "We are here to take Seda back to Preah Ream. Krong Reap stole her." Enthachit responds, "Seda lost her way and was picked up by Krong Reap and carried in a chariot to Lanka." Having heard that, Preah Lak is upset and starts insulting Krong Reap, saying that Enthachit's father is sinful. Enthachit orders his army to attack Preah Lak.

News of the war reaches all the deities, who together wish for Preah Lak to be victorious. Enthachit is losing the battle, but says to Preah Lak, "It's not fair for me to fight you. You are not at my level. Go and tell Preah Ream to come and fight me instead." Enthachit then withdraws.

At the audience with his father, Enthachit says, "Preah Lak's army was overwhelming. There were many monkeys. Their weapons were only tree branches and stones. They tossed them at us and killed many of us." Enthachit asks his father for permission to depart for Noruchanti to learn about the Neakabas arrow recommended by the dragon king.

Following Enthachit's departure, Krong Reap gives an order to free Pohankay, his niece (the daughter of Pipek and Socheata [*Trijata*]), from prison. The prison guard escorts Pohankay to Krong Reap. Krong Reap wheedles her to transform herself into Seda's dead body and float on the sea, to make Preah Ream believe that Seda is dead so that Preah Ream will withdraw. Because Pohankay has never seen Seda, she asks Socheata, her mother, to take her to Seda. She meets Seda and carefully observes her. As she is returning to Krong Reap, she thinks that if she goes to him in her original form, he will not believe that she will not be able to transform herself into Seda. Therefore, she uses her magic to turn herself into Seda, and she goes to meet him in that form. Krong Reap believes that she is the real Seda, and he falls in love with her. Seeing him in this situation, she says to him that she is not the real Seda, turns herself back to her original form, and leaves him to carry out her assignment.

Preah Ream is bathing in the ocean while Preah Lak holds the fort. Preah Ream sees a body and believes that it is Seda, his wife. He retrieves it and holds it until he becomes unconscious. When Preah Ream does not return to the fort for a long period of time, Preah Lak calls his army and goes after his brother. He sees him lying unconscious on the beach and is worried. Hanuman sprinkles water on Preah Ream's face, and Preah Ream regains consciousness. When he opens his eyes, he sees

Hanuman, Sokrit, and Angkut. He becomes furious and says, "You three did more than I had ordered you to. Hanuman, you burned Krong Langka; Sokrit, you destroyed Krong Reap's parasol; and Angkut, you flattened Krong Reap's crown. Because of these things, Krong Reap became angry and killed my wife." In a rage, Preah Ream orders the three to be decapitated.

Hanuman looks closely at the body and sees no marks of violence on it, and he suspects that it is an ogre transformed. He asks Preah Ream permission to test the body by cremating it. If the test determines that the body is that of Seda, he will accept the sentence.

Hanuman has his military leaders and monkey soldiers with him during the test and tells everyone to stand alert. He orders Sokrit to set fire to the body, and sends Angkut to watch from the ground while he himself watches from the clouds above.

Pohankay, as Seda's body, unable to stand the heat of the fire, tries to escape upward in the smoke, but is intercepted by Hanuman. Hanuman then orders his soldiers to take her way and beat her to get information. Finally, Pohankay confesses that she is Pohankay, daughter of Pipek, who is now serving Preah Ream. She had come from Krong Langka on the order of Krong Reap, and had transformed herself into Seda in order to trick Preah Ream into thinking that Seda was dead so he would withdraw from Langka.

Hanuman, Sokrit, and Angkut give all this information to Preah Ream. Preah Ream orders Hanuman to take Pohankay back to Krong Langka and tells the others to keep all the information about Pohankay secret for fear that Pipek will be angry. Hanuman then escorts Pohankay back to Krong Langka. While travelling to Krong Langka, Hanuman courts Pohankay, and, arriving there, he asks for her hand. With her consent, they make love.

Preah Ream asks Pipek where Enthachit is, because all is quiet. Pipek uses his seer's sense and informs Preah Ream that Enthachit is now at the Noruchanti tree learning about the Neakabas arrow. He advises Preah Ream to send Chumpupean to disrupt Enthachit's learning session or there will be trouble. Preah Ream orders Chumpupean to do as Pipek advises. Chumpupean transforms himself into a huge bear, who bites the tree, surprising Enthachit and routing him from his learning session.

Later, Enthachit asks permission from his father to go to a new battlefield. He wants Virulamuk Koma to come along. On the battlefield, Enthachit orders Virulamuk Koma to transform himself into Enthachit to fight the battle with Preah Lak, and Enthachit himself goes up in the clouds above and watches the fighting. When Enthachit has a good shot at Preah Lak, he shoots the Neakabas arrow and hits Preah Lak and the monkey soldiers. Enthachit meets Pipek and scolds him, saying that he is a traitor for siding with the enemy. He chases Pipek, with the intention of beating him.

Pipek escapes and goes to inform Preah Ream about the situation of Preah Lak and the monkey soldiers. Preah Ream then comes to the battlefield with Pipek and sees Preah Lak and the soldiers with the Neakabas arrow coiled around them. He weeps until he becomes unconscious. When he regains consciousness, he asks Pipek what to do to free them from the arrow. Pipek advises Preah Ream that the only solution is to send a message to Simpli Krud, Preah Ream's godfather, asking him to come and help.

Simpili Krud receives the message and comes down to meet Preah Ream and consult with him. Afterward, Simpli Krud goes to the battlefield, frees Preah Lak and the soldiers from the arrow, and flies back to his palace. Preah Ream is happy with Simpli Krud's help, thanks him, and then leads Preah Lak and the soldiers back to his camp.

The ogre guards see that Preah Lak and his soldiers are out of danger and inform Krong Reap, who sends for Enthachit. Krong Reap tells Enthachit about Preah Lak and his soldiers coming back to life. Enthachit asks his father's permission to go and learn about the Promeas (*Brahman*) arrow at Nunthachak Mountain. Krong Reap gives this permission to his son.

Arriving at the mountain, Enthachit tells his soldiers to cut trees to build shelters. The spirit of the forest is angry with the soldiers and makes all them sick. Realizing that the spirit is upset, and unable to bear the pain of the illness, they organize a ceremony giving the spirit food and begging it for peace. Afterward, they all recover and Enthachit starts to learn about Promeas arrow magic.

After Enthachit's departure for his magic-learning, Krong Reap sends his military officers, Nunavek and Veyvek, for Kamphan, his nephew, so that he can discuss the war with him. Kamphan and his wife come to be with Krong Reap, who then sends Kamphan to clear up the trouble caused by the human and monkey soldiers. On the battlefield, the ogre soldiers begin shouting war cries that claim victory.

Preah Ream hears the noise and consults with Pipek, who, after using his oracular sense, informs Preah Ream that it is Kamphan and his soldiers. Preah Ream should send Hanuman to fight them, and a victory will be achieved. Preah Ream follows Pipek's advice. Hanuman enters the battlefield with his soldiers, and defeats Kamphan and his soldiers. Hanuman stabs Kamphan to death, then grabs his two feet and swings him into the sea. Hanuman returns to Preah Ream victorious. Preah Ream is happy. Realizing that everyone has been fighting a long war and is tired, he allows them to rest in the forest.

The ogre security guards see the defeat of Kamphan and Hanuman throwing his dead body into the sea. They send the news to Krong Reap. When the news reaches Krong Reap, he sends Kakphesa and Kumphalya to get Enthachit to return.

Kakphesa and Kumphalya arrive at the Nunthachak mountain while Enthachit's learning session is in progress. They interrupt the session and give Enthachit the message from Krong Reap.

Enthachit tells his army that they will go together directly to the battlefield. This time, Enthachit transforms himself into Indra riding Erawan (*Airavana*), the elephant, and orders all his soldiers to transform themselves into deities, angels, Apsara dancers, and musicians playing music in order to trick Preah Lak's army.

Preah Ream hears the songs and music. He tells Preah Lak to go out and look.

Indra (Enthachit) meets Preah Lak and tells Preah Lak that he is leading a dance troupe from Heaven to perform for Preah Lak's enjoyment.

Hanuman, suspicious of Indra, advises Preah Lak not to observe the performance, but Preah Lak refuses to believe him. Realizing that Preah Lak is absorbed in watching the performance, Indra (Enthachit) shoots and hits Preah Lak with his Promeas arrow. Hanuman rushes to pull out the arrow but fails to do so. He then rushes to break Erawan's neck. Indra hits Hanuman with his bow. Hanuman falls unconscious on the head of Erawan. Leaving his guards on the battlefield to monitor the situation, Enthachit and the rest of his men return victorious to Krong Langka.

Khanil and Khanul, Preah Ream's intelligence men, report the situation to Preah Ream, who then goes to the battlefield with Khanil and Khanul as his guides. On the battlefield, he sees Hanuman lying motionless on the head of the elephant and Preah Lak lying on the ground with the Promeas arrow lodged in his body. The arrow grows into a tree with extending branches. Preah Ream tries to extract the arrow but fails. He laments over his brother, and loses consciousness nearby.

Pleased with the situation on the battlefield, the ogre guards mount their horses and rush to tell their master in Krong Langka.

Krong Reap, very happy with the news, orders his military officer to tell Seda of the news, emphasizing that Preah Ream is dead. Feeling sorry for her husband and his brother, Seda weeps as she discusses with Socheata, the wife of Pipek, whether her husband is really dead. Socheata says that Preah Ream is not dead yet and if Seda does not believe her, she can make a wish that if Preah Ream is really dead, the litter she is on should fly and crash into a mountain; if he is not dead, the litter should take her to the battlefield that very night. After making the wish, Seda and Socheata get on the litter, which takes them to the battlefield. On the battlefield, Seda walks past dead soldiers, looking for her husband and his brother. She finally sees them lying side by side and believes that they are really dead. She then weeps for them. Socheata also believes that they are dead, but advises Seda to make another wish that if they are dead, the litter should fly them out of world, and if they are not dead, it should fly them back to the palace. The litter then flies Seda and Socheata back to the palace.

Pipek, on his return from rest-and-relaxation in the forest, does not go straight to the camp. Instead he asks those soldiers with him to accompany him to the battlefield instead, because he has heard someone shooting an arrow. On the battlefield, he sees Hanuman lying unconscious on the head of the elephant. The monkey soldiers are weeping, feeling sorry for Hanuman. Pipek uses his magic to call the wind to enter Hanuman's mouth. Hanuman comes back to life and gives Pipek an account of the events and leads him to Preah Lak's body.

Near Preah Lak's body lies Preah Ream. Hanuman is surprised. He does not know how Preah Ream came there. Pipek dabs some water on Preah Ream's face. Preah Ream regains consciousness and asks Pipek what to do. Pipek advises Preah Ream to send Hanuman to look for medicines in a cave in the Nunthachak mountain.

On Preah Ream's orders, Hanuman leaves for the mountain. There, he calls out for the angels guarding the mountain, but there is no answer. He enters the cave to look for the medicines by himself. On entering the cave, Hanuman is hit by a discus from the mountain guards and immediately dies. The guards are suspicious and look around. They see a monkey lying dead. They then bring him back to life and ask him why he has come there. Hanuman tells them that Preah Nearay has sent him there to look for medicines to cure Preah Lak's wound from the Promeas arrow.

Upon hearing about Preah Nearay, the angels lift the mountain and fly it to Preah Ream immediately. The medicines in hand, Pipek sends Hanuman to the Hembopean (Himalaya) forest to look for semen from the bull, Asop. After getting the semen, Pipek asks Preah Ream to send Hanuman to get the grinding stone at Brahmithuda (the Brahman world). Hanuman flies to Brahmithuda and gets the stone.

When everything needed for the medicine is at hand, Pipek asks Preah Ream to send Hanuman to delay the sun from rising, because the leaves of the tree from the Promeas arrow will wilt when the sun hits them, and the medicine will not dissolve the wilted leaves.

Hanuman obeys the order. When the sun (Surya) sees Hanuman, his son, he asks why he has come. Hanuman says, "Preah Ream sent me to ask you not to light up the world yet, because Preah Lak has been wounded by Enthachit's arrow. If you light up the world now, the leaves of the arrow will wilt and the medicines will not dissolve them." The sun god responds, "We have a duty to light up the world on time. We can't stop being regular." Upon hearing the response, Hanuman rushes to break the tongue of the sun god's chariot and then returns to the battlefield. Pipek has all the ingredients of the medicines he needs, and he dissolves the arrow in Preah Lak. Preah Ream becomes happy and leads the army back to the camp.

Seeing these developments, Athikam and Athikamlang mount their horses and rush to tell Krong Reap, who, thus informed, sends for Enthachit. Enthachit gets his father's permission to release Sokacha from prison so Sokacha can transform himself into Seda and they can ride a chariot onto the battlefield together.

Sokacha asks Krong Reap's permission to see Seda, because he does not know what she looks like. He receives the permission. Instead of going directly to Seda's palace, Sokacha takes the opportunity to visit his home to see his family and to say good bye to them, because he knows he will not return from the battlefield -- he will die. After taking leave of his family, on the way to Seda's palace, he transforms himself into a maid. The maid tells Seda that she is there to pick flowers for Krong Reap to use as a sword. When the maid (Sokacha) has learned enough about Seda's appearance, she (he) bids her goodbye and departs for Krong Reap. Before reaching Krong Reap, he turns himself into Seda. When Krong Reap sees Seda, he falls in love with her, and tries to convince her to love him. Sokacha tells Krong Reap the truth, and Krong Reap asks Sokacha to prove it, which Sokacha does by transforming himself back into a man.

Afterward Sokacha rides with Enthachit to the battlefield. As they arrive, the ogre army shouts a victory cry. The cry shakes the earth. Preah Ream realizes that it must be the ogre army and he orders his brother Preah Lak to go to the battlefield with his army and fight the enemy.

The two armies face each another on the battlefield. Enthachit says to Preah Lak, "Preah Lak, you can come and take Seda to Preah Ream." Preah Lak responds, "Enthachit, if you really meant it, it would be more appropriate that you yourself take her to him." Seda (the transformed Sokacha) begs Preah Lak to do as Enthachit has suggested, otherwise Enthachit will kill her.

Enthachit, seeing that Preah Lak is intransigent, grabs Seda, pulls out his sword, and chops off her head in front of the