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ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF PHNOM PENH

An Analysis of the Trickster Archetype as Represented by the Rabbit Character in Khmer
Folktales

A Thesis

Presented to the Committee of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Chor Chanthya

August 2004

**An Analysis of the Trickster Archetype as Represented by the Rabbit Character in
Khmer Folktales**

**Thesis submitted by
Chor Chanthya**

**for the degree of
Master of Arts in Cultural Studies**

Thesis Assessment Committee:

Prof. Dr. Teri Shaffer Yamada (Supervisor)

Prof. Dr. Khing Hoc Dy (External Assessor)

Dr. Penny Edwards (Internal Assessor)

Dr. Oum Ravy (Internal Assessor)

Dr. Som Somuny (Internal Assessor)

Mr. Ho Lat (Internal Assessor)

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

The Royal University of Phnom Penh

August, 2004

ABSTRACT

This thesis, *An Analysis of the Trickster Archetype as Represented by the Rabbit Character in Khmer Folktales*, illustrates and analyzes the rabbit personality as a trickster figure in Khmer folktales. It examines how his development may have been influenced by Indian and Buddhist culture and how in turn the rabbit trickster has influenced Khmer society. His influence extends to certain rituals (Water Festival) and his representation is currently used in public relations advertisements.

Cambodian folktales, similar to other folktale traditions, reflect social and cultural mores and customs; yet, they also manifest unique characteristics, including Khmer cultural values, a satirical sense of humor, and a keen appreciation for verbal cleverness. Cambodians believe that the themes of these rabbit tales have developed in their own local context. Nevertheless, this research indicates that the Khmer rabbit trickster has also developed a distinctive personality because of various outside influences: the Buddhist *Jātaka*, the *Milindapañha*, and the *Pañchatantra*.

An important part of this research has been the application of some western theoretical perspectives to the analysis of the rabbit personality in Khmer culture. The trickster theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss (binary complementarity) has been particularly useful in this context. I have applied it to explore the duality of the rabbit trickster's personality in the Khmer cultural context. Rabbit's personality is double-sided: both selfless and selfish. The positive side of his personality manifests itself in his roles as judge, benefactor and advisor. He intervenes in disputes through his admirable qualities as a clever and skillful mediator, serving to equalize social inequity. His selfish side is often identified with his mischievous comic and selfish buffoon traits.

In comparison to the "self-sacrificing" rabbit *bodhisatva* who transcends the world of ordinary human beings in the *Sasa-Jātaka*, the rabbit trickster in Khmer folktales mostly reflects the social reality of Khmer culture. He serves as the most skillful practitioner of common sense and intelligence in daily life. Hence the complex personality of the Khmer rabbit trickster reveals his importance as a social mediator in Khmer culture. His character does not act in the realm of myth in a primordial era but in mundane social reality.

Suggestions for further research include the need for a more fully developed comparative study between the rabbit trickster in Cambodia and the rabbit characters in other cultural contexts in terms of tracing the diffusion of the Judge Rabbit tales. There is

also a need to collect rabbit tales from any remaining oral traditions in the rural areas of Cambodia.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my deep gratitude to some institutions: the Heinrich Boll Foundation (HBF), Center for Advanced Study (CAS) and Open Society Institute (OSI), which have provided a scholarship to support my two-year Masters program and some funding on my thesis research. I would also like to thank the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) and the Buddhist Institute which have also cooperated in this program.

My greatest debt is to my thesis supervisor, Prof. Teri Shaffer Yamada. Without her assistance, this thesis would not have been completed. Her generosity of time and encouragement, and her provocative and helpful reaction to my work has been immeasurable. Moreover, her generosity has played a large role in sharing her stimulating ideas on comparative folklore study around the world and western documents, especially on trickster theories which I have used to complete my thesis. Her insightful advice and suggestions have enabled my work to become stronger and more substantial. My writing process was made possible through the support of her patient reading and editing. I would like to express my sincere thanks and special gratitude for her hospitality and academic contribution for a full month of June 2004 in Cambodia.

Dr. Khing Hoc Dy also has provided some ideas, comments, and suggestions in order to clarify my views and to strengthen my research, specifically on Khmer literature and the problem of Khmer transliteration consistency into a foreign language. I would like to thank him sincerely.

I would also like to express special thanks to Sandra Jones, research advisor at the Buddhist Institute, who has provided English language instruction during the spring of 2004 and has devoted many hours to the English editing of my dissertation.

I would also like to thank Penny Edwards and Pen Setharin, who provided me some materials related to my study. I also thank Thong Thel who provided some ideas in terms of improving my research.

Thanks as well to all my teachers: Peter Gallay Pap, Teri Shaffer Yamada, Steven Asma, Kate Crosby, Hema Goonatilake, Henri Loka, Ven. Seng Sumuny, Ven. I. Pannatssa, Ven. Mutitak, Hean Sokum, Neth Barom, Ang Choulean, Thai Soda, Heng Kimvan, Nouv Sun, Om Ravy, Som Somuny, Kim Sedara and other lecturers, who have taught me new subjects and guided my intellectual development.

Finally, I would like to thank all the friends who enabled me to do in this research, who have studied in the same class and also to my old friends.

This thesis also is dedicated to my totally supportive and understanding parents. I would like to express my deepest thanks to my father Ou Ngoun Chor, my mother Chea Seam Ly and my siblings who have always taken care of me and encouraged me at every stage of my academic success.

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List of Abbreviations

BSEI	Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises
CEDOREK	Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Civilisation Khmère
EFEO	École Française d'Extrême-Orient
EFMC	Fonds Pour l'Édition des Manuscrits du Cambodge
PRBK	Prajum Rīoe + Bre + Khmaer

Note

In this thesis, I have decided to follow the transliteration system developed by Saveros Lewitz in “Note sur la translittération du Cambodgien,” *Bulletin de L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tome 55, 1969: 163-169.

My translation of the title of Cambodian folktales is mostly done directly from Khmer titles. Some titles I have put in my own words based on the theme of the tales. For example, in the case of “Le Suphea lièvre,” I have entitled the last episode of this tale as “How the Rabbit Figure Came to Be on the Seal of Justice.”

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Animals have played a large role in all popular tales worldwide. Placing them in stories tends to indicate social satire as it makes it easy to reveal the faults and qualities in human behavior through the use of animals. Some animals that appear in oral literature, such as ravens, coyotes, hares or spiders, are associated with the trickster figure (Lundquist 1991:23). Many cultures have their own distinct trickster figure. The coyote, for example, is characterized as a trickster in Native American folklore whereas the mouse-deer is a trickster figure in Malaysian tales. Some tricksters, however, appear as the same figure across cultures. Brer Rabbit is a trickster in African American folktales; the rabbit trickster also appears in the folktales of other countries, especially in Southeast Asia.

In the Cambodian context, the rabbit figure known as Subhā Dansāy (Judge Rabbit) is a clever, skillful and witty character, popular with the public. He is the most important and popular trickster figure in the Cambodian context. His character also illustrates aspects of the Cambodian culture system as they are embedded in rabbit trickster folktales. The Cambodian rabbit trickster behaves somewhat differently from his western counterpart (Fable de la Fontaine). In the western context, the rabbit figure is really shy and a coward compared to the fox figure who is very cunning. (Midan 1986: 11). The popular shrewd rabbit figure in Khmer folktales is like the cunning fox. He caught the interest of a number of western scholars. His stories were republished and collected by French scholars in 1878 such as Etienne Aymonier, Paul Midan, and G. H. Monod.

Although these scholars collected and translated manuscripts about the Khmer rabbit character, to date there has been no study of the application of the trickster theory to this character in terms of international folklore studies, with the exception of Vandy Kaon's work. He has analyzed the rabbit character in terms of *Epicurism* philosophical theory (n.d: 6-7). This thesis is an initial attempt to apply the trickster theory as developed in international folklore studies to the Khmer rabbit character.

1.2. Problem Statement

Although oral tradition is an indigenous form of literature, it is still less studied than written tradition, specifically in the Cambodian context. Folk literature studies in Cambodia have not yet developed into a sophisticated discipline as in the west. Folktales in Cambodia began to be recognized as an important part of Cambodia's literary tradition by the Buddhist Institute as it began to publish folk tales recorded from storytellers in the 1930s and 1940s. The general attitude, however, is that folktales are bedtime stories used to help children fall asleep. This idea negates the function of folktales whose significance not only provides education, life lessons and entertainment but also reflects historical and cultural mores and customs (Yamada 1999: 599). Some people think that folktales are just fictitious stories that have been passed down over the generations without a specific author.

Because of the issues problematized above, this study will focus mainly on the rabbit character in Cambodian folktales. This research tempts to explore the trickster archetype as represented by the rabbit character and how he is a unique trickster character in the context of Cambodian folktales. From this study, the author hopes that the reader will understand and more clearly realize aspects of Khmer culture as they are reflected through the complex personality of the rabbit figure. This analysis will be the first full-length study of an important aspect of Khmer literature since the 1970s, the type of research that still needs to be revived in contemporary Cambodia; and it has also developed an area in the field of Cambodian culture.

1.3. The Aim and Objective of the Study

The research was undertaken as part of a Master thesis in Cultural Studies, at the Buddhist Institute. The main purpose of this thesis is to illustrate and analysis the rabbit personality as a trickster figure in Khmer folktales and to identify the possible sources that may have influenced the development of the rabbit character, and how in turn the rabbit trickster has influenced Khmer society.

In order to achieve this aim, the thesis will focus on the following objectives:

- 1) To provide a brief overview of Khmer folk literature.
- 2) To discuss the various trickster theories in order to establish a theoretical framework from which to analysis the rabbit trickster in Khmer folktales.
- 3) To identify the possible sources which have influenced the personality traits of the Khmer rabbit character.

- 4) To identify the trickster characteristic of Cambodian rabbit as represented by his various personalities.
- 5) To illustrate and identify the culture value system represented by the rabbit character.

1.4. Rational of the Study

Folktale studies have not been systematically studied in Cambodia as an important part of Liberal Arts. There has been no study of the application of trickster theory to Khmer rabbit folktales. The Khmer rabbit character plays not only the popular role of Judge Rabbit, *Subhā Dansāy*, but also serves as a trickster figure in terms of world folktale studies. Therefore, this thesis proposes to examine and explore the application of western theory to the Cambodian rabbit trickster in terms of analyzing the unique characteristics of the Cambodian rabbit trickster in the context of his cultural significance.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

This research focuses on analyzing the rabbit character in the context of some Khmer folktales. Because of many manuscripts and versions of rabbit stories, including collections by French scholars, the author will focus mainly on the version of Prajum Rioe + Bre + Khmer which was officially republished from the journal *Kampuja Suriya* from 1938 onwards. In general, the trickster theory as applied to this analysis just highlights the main characteristics of the rabbit character in order to provide the guideline for his analysis. The author also considers the complexity of the diffusion theory for rabbit folktales and compares the main themes of the Khmer rabbit stories to other stories found in the Buddhist *Jātaka*, *Malindapanhā* and *Pachatantra*. The comparison of the rabbit stories to Southeast Asian stories, including those from Burma and Malaysia, provides merely a clue for further research since the character of each culture's folktale tradition may or may not have a similar function to the one found in Cambodia. A more in-depth comparison of rabbit stories in other cultural contexts will require further research.

1.6. Background Study of Khmer Folktales

The folktale tradition in Cambodia, similar to many other countries, begins as an oral tradition. Oral traditions are indigenous forms of literature which have existed through the years and are ultimately developed into written texts. Folktales share in this

tradition with other forms of expression such as folksongs, ballads, proverbs, riddles, rhymes and so forth. As Stith Thompson notes, written traditions and oral traditions are impossible to completely separate but they are all traditional prose tales (1977: 4). As soon as people develop a writing system, they begin to record oral literature.

Among this oral literature, folktales have been mostly studied and collected since the nineteenth century. In the early years of that century, there was a strong interest in folktale and folklore study in Europe (Thompson 1977: 391). For instance, two German brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm¹, from 1807 to 1814, started to collect folktales from peasants who lived near Kassel, Germany. By collecting the tales, they believed that they were preserving the heritage of all Germans.

Around the same time (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries), a large number of Cambodian tales which we know now, made their appearance in a manuscript form called *sāstrā*², (sacred text). This may be *sāstrā sliḥ rit* “palm leaf manuscript” or *kram* ✦ “a folded paper manuscript” maintained in pagodas, the traditional libraries of Cambodia (Ly Theam Teng 1972: 12). With the arrival of French colonists in the nineteenth century, French scholars became interested in Cambodian literature, particularly folktales. Most folktales were recorded from palm-leaf manuscripts and published in book form. Etienne Aymonier was the first to publish Khmer folktales in 1878 as a lithograph entitled *Textes Khmers* in Saigon. He chose twenty stories divided into two parts *Rīoe* ✦ *Kmaer Niyāy Bre* ✦ (Folktales) and *Sāstrā Khmaer Pūrā* ☉ (Khmer ancient manuscript). Most of these stories were Cambodian favorites, selected to be recopied from traditional manuscripts (Jacob 1996: 184). Following Aymonier, other scholars continued to collect, study, and publish literature. The main purpose of their study of Khmer tales was to attempt to understand and explore the beliefs, culture, mores and customs, the way of life and the philosophy embedded in them, and to compare their contents with actual local activity. Understanding the local culture was a requirement of the colonial administration in order to control local populations in the region (Halib and Tim 1996: 73). Georges Cœdès

¹ The stories they collected became famous as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. There are 210 stories in *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Introduction by Padraic Colum, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

² Some manuscripts remaining after the war were preserved in some pagodas in Cambodia: Fonds Pour l'Édition des Manuscrits du Cambodge (FEMC), L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), National Library and other libraries in French. For example: “The Story of Mā Yoe ✦” (FEMC. 659), “Dansāy Sī Cek” (The Rabbit Who Eats Bananas) (FEMC. 627) are in Wat Phum Thmey Serey Mongkol, Srok Kang Meas, Kampong Cham Province. People believe that *sāstrā* is a sacred text, for it is a way of gaining merit especially as this text was only used by priests. Someone who shared his time and knowledge to record tales as a manuscript was performing a good deed which would bear fruit in this life time or in the next life. For example, during this research an elderly man named Thong, who has recorded some stories as manuscripts, stated that his good deeds had led to long life and happiness.

agreed that folktales and proverbial sayings were a certain means of mirroring the way of life, verbal speech and the positive emotions of Khmer people (1941: 9). Moreover Jean Przylusky also suggested that there are advantages from the study of folklore in Indochina in his preface to *Contes populaires inédits du Cambodge* by François Martini and Solange Bernard (1946). He mentions that studying folklore enables one to understand Khmer people's thinking before they had been influenced by India and China.

“Quelle était la mentalité des peuples qui habitent aujourd'hui l'Indochine, avant qu'elle eût été remodelée par les deux grandes civilisations de l'Inde et de la Chine? Seul l'étude du Folklore permettra de répondre à cette question” (Martini and Bernard 1946:7).

Although the main aim of the various French scholars in folktale studies was to discover and comprehend Khmer culture, they also have contributed to the diffusion of folktale studies by publishing folktales and their research on them.

1.7. Definitions

In Khmer, folktales are called *rīoe* ✦ *bre* ✦. *Rīoe* ✦ means “story, tale, or narration” and *bre* ✦ means “old, ancient, legendary or antique” (Headley, Jr. 1977: 682). According to Khing Hoc Dy, *bre* ✦ is derived from the verb “*re* ✦” in ancient Khmer called “*rya* ✦” which means “successor, in order, transmit” and *bre* ✦ can mean “tradition” (1990: 228). Therefore, *rīoe* ✦ *bre* ✦ is an old and ancient story occurring a very long time ago without a specific author or date.

Cambodians consider *rīoe* ✦ *bre* ✦ as *rīoe* ✦ *bre* ✦ and no more. They do not distinguish or classify an oral story because they do not pay attention to whether a particular story is from the *Jātakas* or any other collection except the *Vessantara-Jātaka*,³ the most popular one,⁴ which tells the story of the *Bodhisatva* Sakyamuni in his last life before enlightenment. Only researchers and scholars who are discovering the significance of Khmer tales are interested in analyzing folktale themes and classifying them into varieties, groups or genres.⁵

³ See details in Cowell 1995: 6, 246-305, and the Khmer version by Yok Them in 1944.

⁴ Its popularity is indicated by the frequency of paintings in temples and pagodas depicting its story. The most ancient painting appeared in Cambodia in 1877; see further information in Dupaigne, Bernard and Khing Hoc Dy ‘Les plus anciennes peintures dates du Cambodge: quatorze épisodes du Vessantara Jātaka (1877)’ 1981: 26-36.

⁵ The classification of Khmer folktales is carried out through individual studies and ideas. There are scholars, both Khmer and Western, who have tried to put folktales into different categories. Martini and Bernard divide them into seven categories (1946); Thierry selects only five groups (1976); Saveros Pou puts them into four categories; the Buddhist Institute and the Mores and Customs Commission (1974) categorizes the nine volumes of *Collection of Khmer Folktales* into seven categories; Ray Pok has classified

1.8. The Source of Khmer Folktales

Tracing the origin of Khmer folktales is quite difficult; it is however generally known that folktales were created by all Khmer people and not a particular author. Some stories are not entirely Cambodian as Cœdès mentions in his discussion about Khmer folktales:

“...When we investigate the plots of Khmer folktales, they might not wholly belong to Khmer culture, compared with neighbor’s tales which are taken from the Indian *Pañchatantra*. Yet the story of *Dhmeñ Jāy*, *Subhā Dansāy* and the *Puras Da Obaek Puon Nāk*’ are authentically Khmer” (Cœdès 1941: 9-10).

The outside cultural impact on Khmer tales includes influence on the plot, theme, mytheme and characters of the stories.

The style of Khmer folktales is informal and conventional. The words they use are mostly from Khmer colloquial language, not Pāli or Sanskrit. Judith Jacob claims, “Cambodian stories are narrated simply, conventionally and are repetitive, resembling a genuine, spoken performance” (1993: 253). Because most tales are short, their form is also simple with the introductory words, “Once upon a time,” or “A long, long time ago,” then the plot starts and finally the story ends with long life, happiness, and sometimes with a moral or proverb.

1.9. The Characteristics of Khmer Folktales

Folktales differ from novels, epics, and other literary genres, having their own characteristics. The characteristics of Khmer folktales include the significance and resolution of conflicts; themes, origins and characters specific to Cambodian culture; the form of the tale and its social values including the way of life of Cambodians and their philosophy.

Rīoe ✦ *bre* ✦ *Khmaer*, creative stories about human beings—Khmer ancestors from years ago—often reveal a Cambodian way of life and philosophy. The most crucial element of stories is the development of a conflict between characters and then its resolution. There are many kinds of conflicts entered into by all types of individuals, such as adultery, revenge, various complaints and differences of opinion, and problems with wealth. These issues are not always negative, but illustrate a part of life that human beings confront all the time. Some arguments are impossible to resolve. The authors,

them into seven different groups (1956: 1048-1049); and Leang Hap An categorizes the five volumes of Khmer tales into five groups (1966: 133-134), (cf., Khing Hoc Dy 1990: 96-97).

however, usually try to settle them in a non-violent way; and, in order to stop the situation from escalating, they often play the *peacebuilder*.

These conflicts reflect the actualities of a Khmer person's ordinary life. Most characters in the Khmer folktales work in or around the forest. They cut wood for building, collect creepers, set animal traps, fish, or dig for yams.⁶ Therefore, the relationship between Khmer people and the forest is very close, because the forest supports people's lives. Even animal characters in Khmer folktales, like the otter, chicken, tiger and rabbit, do people's work such as cutting thatch to build a house (cf., PRBK 2001: 2, 52-64).

Stories are frequently concerned with human behavior and sometimes with physically abnormal humans. There is a great deal of human behavior represented by both humans and animals such as cleverness, laziness, cruelty, cheating, honesty, innocence, malice, humor, virtue, generosity, as well as perfect and imperfect female behavior.⁷ Some characters are physically grotesque such as those in "Puras Da⊙baek Puon Nāk' " (The Four Bald Men, PRBK: 4,107-120).

There are also various types of characters in folktales. Humans are represented as magistrates, kings, queens, fortunetellers, priests, astrologers, ministers, head villagers, aristocrats, rich people, chiefs, poor people, townspeople, villagers, or orphans. Each individual has a different physical appearance, qualities and flaws (Ray Pok 1956: 1045). Furthermore, superhuman characters include not only deities, Brahma, giants, and Indra, but also *anak tā* (local spirits), evil beings and ghosts.

Animals also play a considerable role in tales. All the actions of animals assume a human quality. According to their nature, stories include a variety of Cambodian animals, including the elephant, crocodile, tiger, cat and rabbit. Among them, the rabbit figure is the hero, clever through his omniscience, and intelligence (Thierry 1985: 91). Ray Pok notes that animals and humans have a close relationship, for they have the same nature in that they are born, die and are reborn. The difference is in their attitude and their behaviors (1956: 1047).

Solange Thierry has divided Khmer folktale characters into two main groups. On the one hand, there are deities and mythical beings from the Indian pantheon, but integrated into local beliefs; on the other hand, there are physically eccentric human

⁶ See, "Manuss Bīr Nāk' Nau Phdah Jit Gnā" (The Two Neighbors, PRBK 2001: 1, 7-10), "Bas'Ke★ Ka★" (The Snake, PRBK 2001: 1, 1-3), "Mā Yā Srī" (Women's Wives, PRBK 2001: 1, 23-27), "Manuss Lobh" (The Greedy Man, PRBK 2001: 2, 1-2).

⁷ See, "Samlañ Bīr Nāk' " (The Two Friends, PRBK 2001: 1, 83-86).

beings who behave in a typically popular style (1972: 56). In other words, as Jacob states, Khmer characters with high positions such as ministers, judges and soothsayers were formed after the coming of Indian influence but the ordinary life of peasants is precisely represented in their real daily work (1996: 15). In short all characters occurring in Khmer folktales illustrate people who live and work in Khmer society.

Khmer folktales also include cultural and religious beliefs. Belief in the *anak tā*,⁸ appears mostly in stories whenever people are facing problems.⁹ A small cottage under the tree or a cave is a shelter for the *anak tā*. People always go to pray to them with offerings of food and fruits, especially a bunch of bananas. Besides this, Buddhism in Khmer folktales also demonstrates innocent and improper behavior for monks and others,¹⁰ although the discipline of Buddhism is not the principle theme in folktales as it is in *rīoe ★ lpae ★* (verse-novel), one of *sāstā lpae ★*¹¹(works for pleasure) focusing on the Dhamma, and the laws of karma (Leang Hap An 1967: 213-215).

Because the meaning and the form of folktales reveal Khmer culture, ideas, lifestyle and beliefs, their value has survived until the present time. One of the greatest values of Khmer tales is to provide moral guidance. They illustrate two didactic themes. First, they may criticize foolish and ignorant characters so that others will not behave like them.¹² Secondly, they also illustrate the proper behavior, qualities and good deeds needed to develop or reform one's character. The didactic style of Khmer folktales can be seen in the positive relationship between the advisor who is telling the tale and the listener, who both interact spontaneously with humor. As a result, over time Khmer folktales have had their meaning, form, and value altered along with social, political and cultural change.

Khmer folktales not only play an important role in the everyday lives of Cambodians as a form of entertainment, they have also played an important role in education. They have formed part of the school program from the time of the traditional pagoda schools in the Udong and Longvek periods (fourteenth-nineteenth centuries) until the state schools now. The children who attended pagoda schools needed to learn written

⁸ For further information see Ang Choulean 1986: chap xii, 201-231.

⁹ See, "Mā Yā Srī" (Women's Wives) (PRBK 2001: 1, 23).

¹⁰ See, "Krū Ni ★ Siss" (The Teacher and the Pupil) (PRBK 2001: 1, 46-50), and "Ā Lev" (PRBK 2001: 93-95).

¹¹ According to Khing Hoc Dy, *Lpae ★* (pleasure or entertainment) was divided into parts: *rīoe ★ bre ★* (folktale) and *rīoe ★ lpae ★* (long verse-novel). The most ancient *rīoe ★ lpae ★* is "Kya ★ Sā ★ kh" (The Shell) dated in 1729 (2003: 80-83).

¹² See, "Anda ★ Ve ★ Chna ★ Ve ★" (Long Eel Long Pot, PRBK 2001: 2, 87).

literature by heart, namely the multitude of *cpāp*’ (code of conduct), *sāstrā lpae* ✦ (verse-novels, folktales), treatises, *Abhidhamma*, *Jātaka* and the like, and to retell what they had learnt to others or to their teachers without thinking critically about the manuscripts or evaluating the meaning and themes of the texts (Sin Han 1959: 400). For example, an old villager about 78 years old at Phum Thmey, Rokakoy commune, Kong Meas district in Kampong Cham province also mentioned that:

....while he was being ordained as a junior monk, he learnt many literary texts. Initially, he learnt traditionally by memory all Khmer letters and then he learnt to recite the code of conduct *cpāp*’ so as to behave in the proper way. Next he studied longer texts more deeply depending on the level of the class...¹³

This illustrates how the tales may be transmitted orally as part of the educational system.

Having provided this general introduction, I will begin Chapter Two with an overview of the relevant literature and research on this subject. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the theoretical perspectives, mainly various trickster theories, which will be used to analyze the significance of the Judge Rabbit trickster in Chapter Four. In Chapter Four, I also provide a comparative background of Khmer rabbit stories, discuss some textual sources that may have shaped the Khmer rabbit’s personality, and analyze the binary characteristics of rabbit as a complex trickster character. In Chapter Five, I continue the discussion of the significance of Judge Rabbit in Khmer folktales by analyzing the outside Buddhist textual and cultural influences on the formation of the rabbit character and conclude the chapter with a discussion on the significance of the Khmer rabbit trickster in Cambodian society. In Chapter Six, I provide concluding remarks on the significance of this study and possible future areas for investigation.

¹³ Personal communication with an old villager named Ta Sren at Phum They, Khum Rokakoy, Srok Kang Meas, Kompong Cham province in 18 Feb 2004.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Study of the Khmer Rabbit Figure in Cambodian Folktales

This literature review provides a survey of the scholarship by Western and Cambodian researchers on the rabbit trickster figure. Only a few important scholars have studied the Khmer rabbit character in terms of comparative folklore study.

Vandy Kaonn has published some information on the Khmer rabbit trickster in *Vibhāgadān Knu ★ Kār Siksā Aksarsilp Khmaer* (The Contribution of Studying Khmer Literature). He has analyzed the various characteristics of rabbit's personality in Khmer tales such as his role as helper, judge, liar and cheat. Kaonn refers to this as *Epicurism*: showing real-life qualities. The Epicurian solves problems by himself, using his cleverness and brains, which excludes intervention from deities or any other magic power. Moreover, Kaonn's opinion is that rabbit's judgment is not objective justice because he employs psychological methods to judge in the context of showing some prejudice about a creature's behavior. In addition, Kaonn has written about the Khmer rabbit character in his article, *Vibhāgadān Knu ★ Kār Siksā Prāka ☉ Niyam Nī ★ A ☉taet A ☉tū ★ Nīyam* (The Contribution of Studying Realism and Romanism). Here he interprets the rabbit tale as a form of realism. He has claimed that the Khmer rabbit's traits reflect that of a realist because rabbit clearly realizes the true nature of life (1973: 5-6).

Paul Midan collected some rabbit tales from oral sources—monks and peasants—in his *Histoire du juge lièvre* (The story of Subhā Dansāy). In his introduction, he agrees with P. Cardon's theory about the diffusion of the story of "Subhā Dansāy" that it originated from the same ancient source as the Malay folktale *Pelandok*, whose trickster is a mousedeer with the Javanese name Kanchil or Kancil. He believes the source must be the same because the tricksters in these tales have parallel adventures; both also include a trickster character who is small, smart and cunning. Moreover, Midan has compared the story of "Subhā Dansāy" with the Roman tale of the fox. He argues that both characters have the same behavior and adventures because they employ ruses and their cunning to overcome difficulties. Finally, he claims that there is a relationship between the animals in Khmer folktales and those in the *Jātaka* tales (1933: i-vi).

According to Judith Jacob in *The Traditional Literature of Cambodia* there are many different adventures of "Subhā Dansāy" in the prose narratives. She mainly divides the rabbit personality into two parts: he is certainly a type of Brer Rabbit in a different setting, a famous character in African American oral tradition who uses his cleverness to

outwit others, and he is Judge Rabbit who frees the right man by unorthodox means (1996: 16).

Other scholars who have researched the Khmer rabbit character include Solange Thierry who has a rabbit tale in her work, *Le Cambodge des contes* (1985). She states that the rabbit is a hero and king of judges among other animal characters because of his omniscience and his tact. Furthermore, in the introduction to the rabbit story in *Le roman cambodgien du lièvre*, republished by Nouth Narang in 1986, Jacques Népoté notes that the story of rabbit plays an important role as didactic literature or entertainment in Khmer culture. Rabbit folktales reflect social satire and social morality while revealing the binary quality of rabbit's personality.

2.2 Textual Resources for the Story of Khmer Rabbit

There are many textual resources for the story of rabbit. “Subhā Dansāy” (Judge Rabbit) is one of the earliest published texts on this character. It was published in *Textes Khmers* by Etienne Aymonier¹⁴ in Saigon in 1878 from a handwritten manuscript and was accompanied by a French translation. It is divided into prose and verse parts, which have been translated into French and Khmer (Jacob 1996: 20). This is a major source for my thesis; however, it is not available in Cambodia. Although I am not able to consult this text, I have used other available texts that contain Aymonier's manuscript, which have been gradually republished by the Buddhist Institute and by some other scholars.

From 1932 the journal *Kambujasuriya* published a series of folktales including some rabbit tales. These were collected into a nine-volume series (248 stories)¹⁵ by the Buddhist Institute and published from 1959 to 1974 as *Prajum Rōe ★ Bre ★ Khmaer* (Collection of Khmer Folktales) and volumes 1, 2, 3 and 7 contain some rabbit tales.

Midan published the same text twice but under different titles. The first, “Le roman cambodgien du lièvre” was published in the magazine *Extrême Asie/ Revue Indochine* in 1927 (8): 276-92, (9): 315-34, (10): 365-82. It was republished in 1933 as “Histoire du juge lièvre,” in *BSEI*, VIII, 4. In 1975, the Buddhist Institute republished it as well. In 1986 Nouth Narang reedited *Le roman cambodgien du lièvre*, and it was

¹⁴ According to Khing Hoc Dy, some episodes of “Subhā Dansāy” were extracted from *Textes Khmers* and republished in Khmer by Institut de l'Asie du sud-est, *Textes choisis de littérature Khmer*. (Personal communication by mail in Oct 2003).

¹⁵ Some stories have not been published in PRBK's because some of them are immoral and contrary to Buddhist ethics such as “Ā Jāy Mīrat” (The Numskull Man). However it is part of Cambodia's oral tradition (Khing Hoc Dy 1989: 10).

published by CEDOREK with the preface by Nouth Narang and an introduction by Jacques Népote.

François Martini and Solange Bernard translated Khmer folktales into French in *Contes populaires inédits du Cambodge*, with a preface by M. Jean Przylyusky in 1946. This book contains two rabbit tales: “Histoire du tigre, du singe et du lièvre” (The Story of the Tiger, the Monkey and the Rabbit) (219-27) and “Histoire du lièvre et deux compagnons” (The Story of Rabbit and his Two Companions) (228-31).

In 1966, Song Siv also compiled a collection of Khmer folktales known as *Prajum Rīoe ★ Bre ★* (Collection of Folktales) which contains three rabbit tales: “Ā Lambāy Ni ★ Khlā” (The Man and the Tiger) (15-20), “Trī Krañ’ Klā Hān” (The Courageous Fish) (83-89) and “Kraboe Ramil Gu ★” (The Ungrateful Crocodile) (99-105).

There is a collection of folktales from an unknown source republished by CEDOREK in 1985 known as *Contes Khmers*, translated by G.H. Monod. It contains a rabbit story “Sophéa Tonsay or Le Sophea lièvre,”¹⁶ which has nine episodes (21-48) (See Appendix 1).

Thierry translated some Khmer folktales from many sources in *De le rizière à la forêt: contes khmers* in 1988. This text has three rabbit stories : “Le tigre, le singe et le lièvre” (The Tiger, the Monkey and the Rabbit) (77), “Le histoire du juge lièvre en prose” (The Story of the Judge Rabbit in Prose) (89-107) and “Le histoire du juge lièvre en vers” (The Story of the Judge Rabbit in Verse) (109-122).

Khing Hoc Dy translated into Khmer and French some Khmer folktales taken from the Buddhist Institute’s texts, manuscripts at EFEO, and from the Khmer chronicles, entitled *Contes et legendes du pays Khmer* in 1989. This book also includes four stories relating to rabbit: “Le vautour qui voulait tromper l’éléphant blanc” (The Vulture Who Wants to Cheat the White Elephant) (87-90), “Le grand ascète qui avait ressuscité le tigre” (The Great Hermit Who Saves the Tiger’s Life) (91-98), “Le crocodile et le charretier” (The Crocodile and the Carter) (99-110), and “Histoire du lièvre à l’arrière-train collé à une souche résineuse” (The Rabbit’s Buttock Sticks on the Tree Stump) (161-167).

Oknhā Suttantaprijā In composed the *Gatilok*, a large collection of folktales (112 moralistic stories) from Buddhist stories, the French fables of La Fontaine, *Pañchatantra* and *Hitopadesa*. It was first published in the journal *Kambujasuriya* from 1927-1931 and

¹⁶ This title is from the original book; therefore I have not changed its form of transliteration into *Subhā Dansāy*.

republished as a ten-volume series by the Buddhist Institute in the first edition in 1959. Volumes 3, 5, and 8 contain rabbit stories: “Kraboe Ni✦ Anak Parradeh” (The Crocodile and the Carter) (3: 65-74), “Satv Dansāy Ni✦ Me Khlā” (The Rabbit and the Tiger Mother) (5: 83-89), and “Dansāy Ni✦ Phlae Bnau” (The Rabbit and the Palm Fruit) (8: 64-70).

Dik Keam translated some Khmer tales selected from some publications of the Buddhist Institute and from the *Gatilok* known as *Nidān Rīoe ✦ Bre ✦ Khmaer Jā Bhāsā An’gles: Cambodian Short Stories*, in 1962. The rabbit tales included in his collection are “The Rabbit and the Palm Fruit” (1-3) and “The Two Neighbors” (50-53).

David Chandler translated some Cambodian tales into English, *Two Friends Who Tried to Empty the Sea : Eleven Cambodian Folk-tales*, in 1976 containing three stories related to the rabbit. They are “The Duplicated Husband” (13-14), “The Kind Man and the Tiger” (22-23), and “The Vulture, the Elephant, and the Hare” (27).

I was also able to locate a palm-leaf manuscript with two rabbit stories: “Sāstrā Dansāy Sī Cek” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Eats Bananas) (FEMC 627) and “Sāstrā Dansāy Crūt Spūv” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Cuts Thatch) (FEMC 628) at Wat Phum Twey Serey Mongol, Kang Meas district in Kampong Cham province. It had been recopied in 1932. There were many manuscripts at Wat Phum Twey Serey Mongol with the same story. The manuscript of “The Rabbit Who Cuts Thatch” is the same version found in *Prajum Rīoe ✦ Bre ✦ Khmaer*, vol., 2: 52-64 in 2001. There is a different version of “The Rabbit Who Eats Bananas” found in the same volume in verse (65-74). This version contains a much longer introduction and ending. It contains specific themes about religious and cultural beliefs, which frame the main story about the rabbit eating the bananas.

2.3 Textual Resources for the *Jātaka*, *Pañchatantra* and *Malindapañha*

The textual sources I have used to establish outside cultural influence on the Khmer rabbit trickster include the *Sasa-Jātaka* from E. B. Cowell’s translation of *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, published in 1995; Anthur W. Ryder’s translation from the Sanskrit of the *Pañchatantra*, published in 1956, and “The Questions of King Milinda (The Milindapañha)”, edited by N.K.G. Mendis *The Questions of King Milinda: An Abridgement of the Milindapañha* and published in 1993.

2.4 Work on the Trickster Theories

There are many resources dealing with trickster figure theories by many western scholars. Ake Hultkrantz in *Theories on the North American Trickster* discusses the interpretation of the various scholars on the North American trickster figure focusing on its role in ethnic folklore, myth and society (n.d., 1-15). Paul Radin in *The Trickster* presented the trickster cycle of myths that are found among the Siouan-speaking Winnebago of central Wisconsin and eastern Nebraska (1972: xxv). Stith Thompson in *The Folktale* also discussed the trickster cycle. He examined the trickster figure of Native American Indians based on the four areas: Central Woodland, Plains, Plateau, and North Pacific Coast (1977: 319-325). Mac Linscott Ricketts in “The North American Indian Trickster” explained the reason for the combination of trickster’s various personalities such as clownish, heroic and divine elements into one figure based on the number of theories that have been proposed (1966). Michael P. Carroll in *Lévi-Strauss, Freud and the Trickster: A New Perspective Upon an Old Problem* disagreed with Lévi-Strauss’s statement that the coyote and raven are the most important tricksters in North America (1981: 302-305). William J. Hynes and William G. Doty’s *Mythical Trickster Figures* contain many articles about the fascinating and the perplexing trickster figure, the historical overview of the trickster problem, trickster characteristics and so forth (1992). *The Trickster: A Transformation Archetype* by Suzanne Evertsen Lundquist mainly discusses the educational theories of various scholars, and the practical experience surrounding the teaching of Radin’s *The Trickster* (1991: preface). William Courtland Johnson in “The Trickster on Trial: The Morality of the Brer Rabbit Tales” concludes that many scholars have focused on the irrationality and amorality of Brer Rabbit (Johnson and Jersild 1996: 65). Kimberly M. Blaeser’s work on “Trickster: A Compendium” (Lindquist and Martin 1993: 49-55) provides an overview of the trickster including the historical traditions of trickster, and the function and characteristics of the ambiguous trickster.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Research Design

In this study I use a qualitative method to produce an analysis of primary and secondary sources. Data collection of various rabbit tales is the initial step. All available manuscripts of rabbit tales from libraries and document centers in Cambodia have been collected. In particular, all Khmer rabbit tales that were published from 1878 until the present time will be analyzed. Rabbit tales from other cultures will also be utilized for a comparative analysis.

Literary publications, including journals, research papers, books, and articles, have been used to provide the theoretical perspectives for an analysis of the trickster character in folktales. Online research and electrical sources also provide some necessary materials which are not available in Cambodia, such as the analysis of trickster theories. Other relevant historical, cultural and psychological research has been included in the bibliography since they are used as supplemental material.

3.2 Theoretical Perspectives

It is important to give a brief overview of trickster theories. I will discuss these theories from a variety of sources in order to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the various forms of the trickster archetype as represented by the rabbit character in Khmer folktales.

The term ‘trickster’ was invented by scholars in America in order to characterize a certain type of aboriginal mythical and folk being, according to Sam Gill’s statement cited by Ake Hultkrantz (n.d., 1). The first use of the term appears in the *Oxford Dictionary* in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Benjamin Disraeli employed the term to describe lying political opponents. Simultaneously, the concept of the trickster has been a technical term for certain character types in figures from European literature as well as for non-European ethnological studies, particularly in North America and Africa (Hynes and Doty 1992: 14).

Trickster means more than merely “one who deceives and cheats.” It goes beyond this into a technical meaning particularly in literature. Because many scholars are interested in this area of study—including folklorists, and anthropologists as well as psychologists—there are a variety of interpretations of the trickster figure. This thesis,

however, focuses on the human aspects and representation of the trickster figure, specifically the rabbit trickster in Khmer folktales.

For the anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, well known for his theory of binary opposites, “Trickster is the embodiment of all complementary opposites” (cited by Hynes and Doty 1992: 20). From this point of view, trickster contains two notable characteristics which often are opposites—such as good and bad, clever and stupid—and the trickster figure himself can be seen both as a selfish buffoon and as a culture hero who makes human society possible. He is often associated with animals (Carroll 1981: 301). Moreover, Franz Boas adds that the trickster is not only a buffoon but can also be a “transformer,” a person who models the earth after it has been created. These two figures, the trickster and the culture hero, were emphasized by Boas as probably unsuitable aspects to find in a single character since he argues that, “With the conception of the so-called culture hero the difficulty disappears of uniting in one person the benevolent being and trickster. He helps man only incidentally by advancing his own interests” (Hultkrantz n.d., 3-4). However, there is still some debate between Europeans and Americans about their interpretations of the North American trickster. Europeans have proceeded from the culture hero aspect rather than from the multifarious trickster; consequently, they have had the same difficulties as their American colleagues in bringing together the two apparently contradictory sides of their object of study (7).

In the same field, British anthropologist Mary Douglas also states that the trickster phenomena has “... a social function of dispelling the belief that given social orders are absolute and objective.” She also mentions the theory of binary opposition, the main approach of Lévi-Strauss. He argues that “... the various trickster presentations that reflect repeatedly strong autonomies (male vs. female, good vs. evil) are caught into a single figure” (Hynes and Doty 1992: 21).

Scholars in the disciple of psychology have also developed various interpretations of the trickster in terms of the human personality and its process of individuation. In Jungian psychology the trickster figure is interpreted as equivalent to the shadow. Andrew Samuel asserts that:

“The trickster is a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals; however, his appearance is more than evidence of a residual trace inherited from primitive forebears.”(Samuel 1992: 273-274).

This short passage illustrates the Jungian interpretation that the trickster represents the dark side or, generally speaking, the negative human or cultural traits which arise from

the inner psyche of each individual. It should also be noted that in Jungian psychology an integration of one's own shadow, including trickster characteristics, is an important part of developing a mature sense of self.

In furthering the argument from a mythological perspective, the American mythologist Joseph Campbell sees "the trickster story as an earlier and less developed paleolithic form of the hero archetype" (Hynes and Doty 1992: 21). This is similar to the psychological perspective of Jung when he talks about "the trickster as a primitive 'cosmic' being of a divine-animal nature..." (Gifford 1980: 195).

All these interpretations from many different disciplines about the term trickster concern the psychological and cultural development of human beings. Many of these theories are somewhat subjective and ambiguous. What is important to realize is that the term trickster is applied in the context of interpretations on myths and folktales or in the context of human traits reflected in one culture. Therefore, to understand the trickster figure in stories, we need to respond first to the following questions: what is a trickster tale, its structure, and its characteristics?

Trickster tales are a type of folktale which springs from oral stories of a culture, handed down by word of mouth over the generations. The definition of trickster tales is straightforward in folktale studies. They include a trick and other clever tactics. This is the common definition of a trickster tale: a story of deceit, magic and violence, often perpetrated by a mythical animal or human (*Trickster Tales, Culture Heroes and Fools*: n.d., 6). Another definition is "tales of a notorious character who is clever, most of the time deceitful and cunning" (Tossa 2002: 6). Indeed the meaning of trickster tales is not very different from folktales, which reveal how people think and live, even when the characters are portrayed by animals.

The most well-known trickster tales come from two continents: North America and Africa. There, the trickster seems to be a combination of two independent personalities: one which is indeed a selfish buffoon and the other which is a "culture hero" (Carroll 1981: 305). However, the trickster tales in North America, Africa and Europe reflect more deeply what was said above—most trickster tales are involved in the sacred mythology of a people. As Stith Thompson who studied the trickster cycle of North American Indians states, trickster tales are mainly *mythological stories* that deal with creation, transformation and connections with supernatural astral powers (319-323). William G. Doty explains the various facets of myth as: "... the words to rituals, or myth as dependent upon ritual which is explicated; and myth explaining origin, belief,

collective experiences or value” (9). Other scholars have analyzed the meaning of trickster tales. Kimberly M. Blaeser, who has produced a compendium of trickster tales and analyzed their general aspects, explains that, “Some stories depict the creation or the origin of certain elements of the world namely the sun, the moon, the seasons, or death. Some serve as a heuristic tool in tribal society. Some provide a release for frustrations stemming from social restrictions. Still others seem pure entertainment, telling of the outrageous antics of Trickster” (50).

Besides this sacred mythology, trickster tales also give accounts of hunger and sexual desire which occur in every human being. These problems are an essential part of the trickster stories; he will do anything he can to fulfill his own interests. One way is by using all his cunning to obtain what he wants. As Paul Radin points out, “A trickster is someone who is obsessed with satisfying his almost constant hunger or his seemingly uncontrollable desire for sexual intercourse” (cited in Carroll 1981: 305).

As a result, the problems of food and sexual desire, contrasted with stories of the creation of the world, transformation, magic and so on, express the mixture of meaning of myth and ordinary life, and so some scholar’s essays divide trickster tales into two categories. There is the mythic trickster or sacred stories¹⁷ which deal with the culture hero figure on the one hand, specifically as a transformer making the world habitable for humans by ridding it of monsters or by providing vital things such as fire; and on the other hand, there are the secular or profane trickster tales, which are stories focusing on the popular views of reality and ordinary life (Blaeser 1993: 4-5).

There are several functions of the trickster tale in society. Firstly, it serves as a tool of entertainment and amusement derived from the account of the various personalities and outlandish behaviors, cleverness and stupidity of the characters. Secondly, it plays a notable role in maintaining cultural norms which describe the trickster figure’s activity in primitive society, that is to say the type of society which has not yet received any outside influence from other cultures or religions. Likewise Blaeser states that the main purpose of the trickster tale goes far beyond entertainment as it serves the individual and societal needs of tribal people and contributes to the survival of the culture, acting as a teaching tool of liberation and as a repository of tribal history and tradition (1993: 55). A good example of cultural hidden meaning is found in “Maui Goes Fishing.” This tale is about Maui, the Maori New Zealand trickster. Carl Strang has

¹⁷ Sacred stories: stories which can only be told at certain time, by certain people and only after specific ritual preparations have been made (Blaeser 1993: 49-50).

interpreted this tale, stating that the “jaw” of Maui is a metaphor for Maori culture. Strang believes that it particularly represents the critical speech which is derived from the ancestors, because speech is a crucial element of the transmission of culture which is passed down from generation to generation (Wilson 1932: 1).

Moreover, trickster tales can enable a symbolic level of wish fulfillment. Most of these tales include characters played by small weak animals. Readers gain some satisfaction through hearing the tale when a large and powerful adversary is defeated by a smaller and often weaker creature. One example is the trickster tales of tribal Africa transferred to American soil. They not only gave slaves a sense of pride and hope for the future, but also served as social protest and psychological release because they showed that the weak could conquer the strong (*The Role of Slave Trickster Tales*: 1). Finally besides these functions, trickster tales act as a dynamic teaching tool. The lesson is embedded in the stories through the examples they provide. The lesson or moral of trickster tales differs from other types of tale because it frequently tells of the shortcomings of people and the negative actions of events, that is to say the shadow of the trickster.

There is still some debate about the impact of the trickster tale on audiences and students, according to Lundquist in *The Trickster: A Transformation Archetype*. Some students agree that hearing about the shadow of the trickster is a good way to learn, using stories of bad experiences to change or at least recognize the dark side of individuals. In contrast, some disagree with Lundquist and say that learning through trickster tales is not a good heuristic device because his shadow side and humor cannot successfully teach audiences, unless they are able to understand the role of the shadow personality or the unconscious (Lundquist 1991: 71-75).

In terms of the identity of the trickster, there are different types of trickster characters. Trickster figures are often associated with certain types of animals such as the rabbit, coyote, raven, spider, blue jay, fox, tortoise, mousedeer and so forth (Blaeser 1993: 49). The animal trickster varies from area to area depending on the culture. For instance, coyote is best known to the tribes of California, whereas the Judge Rabbit trickster is a favorite in Cambodia and Burma.

Why there are zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures in trickster tales is a question with a variety of academic answers. Some scholars tell us that the trickster was one of the ‘first people’ in Native American tradition, one of those who were in the world during mythic times before there were humans. In addition, tricksters have magic power,

including the ability to change shape (Blaeser 1993: 50-51). Another scholar, Mac Linscott Ricketts, has also spoken of the trickster as neither a god nor a spirit but a mythic being, a person of mythical age in a primordial era (1966: 343).

Thompson has identified the ambiguous trickster role in North American Indian tales. Sometimes a trickster acts in a devious way and sometimes in a helpful way. He behaves as a teacher, survivor and fool, creator, destroyer, swindler, and culture hero.¹⁸ All these characteristics are found in North American tales; for example, coyote plays a number of these roles. Some scholars have identified the trickster as an anti-hero, bungling host, clever hero, clown, confidence person, demiurge, lord of the animals, stupid person, old man, rogue, selfish buffoon, and selfish deceiver (Hynes and Doty 1992: 24). Furthermore, Blaeser claims the trickster is neither wholly this, nor wholly that; he acts in numerous ways. The trickster is neither solely good, nor bad; neither completely wise, nor only foolish (1993: 51). He is sometimes the wily perpetrator of tricks and sometimes the buffoon who falls victim to his own pride; sometimes he is the tribal benefactor and sometimes a bungler who spoils some aspect of the world of men.

This multitude of trickster characteristics, according to Hynes and Doty, has to include at least six traits in order to establish an initial guide or typology of this character (34-44). These are the most common traits found in the trickster figure. Firstly, the *Ambiguous and Anomalous* personality of the trickster is a fundamental trait. The trickster can be aware of and understand facts and events in abnormal ways because of his trickery, ability and cleverness. Following from this is the *Deceiver/ Trick-Player* trait. In this role the trickster commonly appears in tales as a lying, cheating, tricking, or deceiving character in order to cause disruption and disorder. Thirdly, as a *Shape Shifter* the trickster can alter his shape or bodily appearance in order to facilitate deception. Relatively minor shape-shifting through disguise may involve nothing more than exchanging clothes with another character. Next the trickster can take the role of *Situation-Inventor*. This means that he has the ability to overturn any person, place, situation or belief. Fifth, his roles as *Messenger and Imitator of Gods* positions him as a midway mediator between gods and humans, which allow him to function as a culture

¹⁸ A culture hero is a historical or mythological hero who changes the world through invention or discovery. A typical culture hero might be credited as the discoverer of fire, or agriculture, songs, tradition and religion, and is usually the most important legendary figure of a people; sometimes he is the founder of its ruling dynasty. *Culture Hero*, (online), [http://www.fact-index.com/c/cu/culture hero.html](http://www.fact-index.com/c/cu/culture%20hero.html), (April 30, 2004).

transformer. The last trait of trickster is his role as *Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur*.¹⁹ This role is closely associated with the most profane type of lewd story telling. Not every trickster possesses all these characteristics. Still, more often than not, a particular trickster will play many of these roles.

The character archetypes²⁰ in folktales include the hero, the villain, the wise old man, the fool, the trickster, the young beautiful virgin, the heroine, the crone, and the helper in overcoming an obstacle. The archetype approach was created and used by Karl Jung (1875-1961) who was one of the early psychiatrists to cite myth, folklore, and legends as a reflection of our inner selves. Jung began to use his concept of the archetype in 1919 to describe the symbolic life of the soul and instinct in the form of an “unloaded image” which may be traced back to ancient and archaic levels of the psyche (Hyne and McGuinness 1992: 59-61). He suggested that the term “archetype” was very helpful for the study of the unconscious, which deals with primordial types, that is, with universal images (Lundquist 1991: 22).

Moreover, archetypes relate to inherent, instinctual and primordial images and symbols in all human beings which often find an unconscious outer expression in religion, art, mythology, folktales, fairy tales and dreams (Hyne and McGuinness 1992: 60-61). Hence archetypes can serve an important role in analyzing the trickster character.

In conclusion, the above general overview of trickster theories, which explains the basic characteristics of tricksters, will be a crucial analytical tool for the study of the rabbit trickster archetype in Khmer folktales. I will use these theoretical concepts, specifically Levi-Strauss’s theory of complementary opposites, as the main theoretical perspective of this thesis.

¹⁹ The term “bricoleur” for the trickster was first used by Lévi-Strauss. The English used to call this figure a “rag-and-bones man,” meaning someone who can break and fix something again and find lost objects. He is also the handyman who recycles such goods (Lévi-Strauss 1998: p. ix).

²⁰ Generally speaking, the concept of archetype implies that there is a common pattern in all cultures.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter, I will analyze the data (Judge Rabbit tales and their sources of influence) and present the results in terms of the cultural influences on the rabbit trickster and his characteristics. I begin by briefly presenting some historical background for the rabbit trickster in world folklore. I then describe the types of manuscripts, both oral and written, for the Khmer rabbit stories. Then I go on to provide information on the cultural background which may have influenced these rabbit tales. These include possible influences from the Buddhist *Jātakas*, the *Milindapañha* and the *Pañchatantra* and well as local culture. Next I analyze a wide variety of Khmer folktales with rabbit as a character to provide the results of rabbit as a trickster figure with both positive and negative characteristics.

4.1 Historical Data: Comparative Background of Khmer Rabbit Stories

Before presenting the Cambodian rabbit story's background we will look at the different aspects of the rabbit, a mammal appearing almost everywhere in the world.²¹ Each culture has a different purpose in placing the rabbit character in folktales. In the African American oral tradition, Brer Rabbit is a famous trickster character. With guile and cunning he repeatedly uses his small appearance and unimposing character to outwit and triumph over his more powerful opponents. Moreover, the rabbit symbolized the black slave's identity as well (Johnson 1996: 52). In the Native American context rabbit or hare is sometimes said to be the son of Earth Maker since the creator made him with his own hands (Dieterle n.d., 1). He is not only famous for founding the medicine rite, but he is also responsible for another important institution. Rabbit was considered to be the one to start making love to women in their menstrual lodge. Moreover, he became responsible for giving human beings life and for rescuing humanity from enemies who threatened their existence (2).

Some cultures such as those of Cambodia and Burma consider the rabbit trickster as a wise judge rather than as a malicious, cruel and mischievous trickster. That is to say the qualities of the wise rabbit figure have overcome his shortcomings and in these cultures, as a result, he is valued as a wise and fair judge. In other words, his cleverness is

²¹ There are different types of rabbit species on earth. Some rabbits are bred as domestic animals and others live in nature. The most crucial difference between rabbits and hares is: rabbits are gregarious and hares are solitary (see details in Chernow and Vallasi 1993: 1193, 2264 – 2265).

admired in his role as a wise and clever hero²² and savior. The rabbit trickster personality changes somewhat based on local people's perception in each country; but he is a popular trickster character in folktales and myths around the world.

Cambodian folktales, like other folktale traditions, contain trickster tales. But this kind of tale is not considered a separate type of Khmer folktale. There are a number of trickster stories in Khmer folktales containing both human and animal characters; yet Judge Rabbit is the clever hero of a large collection of Cambodian tales. Stories of his famous trickster actions were first collected and published by a French scholar in 1878.²³

Before being publishing, those stories had been passed down by word of mouth amongst the people. In this sense, they equate with the 'little tradition' which was perpetuated by common people for recreational and educational purposes. Later on, rabbit stories were recorded on palm-leaf manuscripts, a material for documents in pagodas. According to the classification system of EFEO-EFMC the manuscripts about folktales, including rabbit tales, are in the group called *sāstrā lpae* ✦ (works for pleasure), one of the six main groups of literature. *Sāstrā lpae* ✦ is then divided into two parts: the classical novel and moral tales (de Bernon 2003: 4-7).²⁴ Therefore the rabbit stories are in the *sāstrā lpae* ✦ subgroup of tales with a moral purpose.

4.2 Texts and Manuscripts of Khmer Rabbit Folktales

²²The term "hero," Virak Jun in Khmer means someone who is great person, brave or courageous and devotes his life for the country or for other people's benefit. This type of person has always been admired and given great honor by the common people in Cambodia. For example, the historical personage Anak Ta Klan Mien appears in Cambodian folktales as a hero because he sacrificed his life in order to protect his country from oppression by Siam. In contrast to this type of historical hero, I describe the rabbit character of Cambodian folktales as a clever hero based upon his actions compared to other characters in Cambodian folktales. The term "culture hero" in folklore studies is used to indicate a specific type of trickster protagonist that often helps mankind. Rabbit's personality is somewhat similar to the trickster hero of other folktale traditions. I use the term "secular hero" to describe rabbit based upon the characteristics of the positive side of a trickster such as secular hero, clever hero and culture hero, etc. (see detail in section 4.4.). The term "secular hero, clever hero, culture hero, trickster, archetype" are difficult to translate with the exact equivalent into Cambodian. The meaning of these terms is based upon the explanation from the context of folklore studies.

²³ Cf., Aymonier, *Textes Khmers publiés avec une traduction sommaire* (Saigon: 1878). He divides the stories of rabbit into two parts: prose (Cambodian text: pp. 132-59; translation pp. 30-3) and verse (Cambodian text: pp. 112-32; translation pp. 33-41). P. Midan, 'Le Roman Cambodgien du lièvre' in *Extrême Asie/ Revue Indochinoise* 1972. (8) 8: 276-92; 9: 315-34; 10: 365-82. Now it is republished by CEDOREK in 1986. And P.Midan, 'Histoire du Juge lièvre. Recueil de contes Cambodgiens traduit et annotés par...' in *Bulletin de la Société de l'Études Indochines* (Saigon: VIII, 4, 1933). pp.1-116.

²⁴ There are six categories: (1) *sāstrā upadesa* (Textes didactique), (2) *sāstrā Lpae* ✦ (Textes agreement), (3) *sāstrā desanā* (Textes religieux) (4) *pravatti* (Textes historiques), (5) *gambir pūrān* (Textes traditionnels), (6) *kpuon pūrān* (Manuels traditionnels) and other two are pāli and divers. Cf., Jacob (1996: 14), Khing Hoc Dy (1990: 25) and Saveros Pou (1984: 4).

There are two main divisions of stories about rabbit in Khmer literature: a trickster cycle and individual stories. The trickster cycle is known “Subhā Dansāy.” It is a collection of episodes which varies depending on the manuscript. To date I have located two palm-leaf manuscripts, two print manuscripts published by the Buddhist Institute and a French translation of “Sophéa Tonsay or Le Sophea lièvre.” A list of the contents of these trickster cycles is found in Appendix 1.

Both palm-leaf manuscripts (FEMC 627, 628) were located in Wat Phum Thmey. Each has a different verse version of the cycle of episodes. “Sāstrā Dansāy Crūt Spūv” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Cuts Thatch) FEMC 628 verse version is the same as the print verse version of “Subhā Dansāy” published by the Buddhist Institute in 1938. “Sāstrā Dansāy Sī Cek” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Eats Bananas) FEMC 627 verse version has some episodes similar to the prose version of “Subhā Dansāy” published by the Buddhist Institute in 1938, for example both contain the episode “The Rabbit Who Wants to Eat Bananas.”²⁵

The French translation called “Le Sophea lièvre” (Subhā Dansāy) is quite different from the two palm-leaf manuscripts and the Buddhist Institute texts. There are two episodes—“The Rabbit’s Buttock Sticks on the Tree Stump” and “The Rabbit Who Wants to Eat Bananas”—which are found in the Buddhist Institute’s versions of verse and prose. “The Rabbit Who Wants to Eat Bananas” is also found in FEMC 627. The French version, a translation by G. H. Monod, has many stories that I have located as individual texts published in various sources.²⁶ His cycle of stories depicts rabbit in a very clever and positive role unlike rabbit’s depiction in the other versions.

The Buddhist Institute versions (prose and verse) first appeared in manuscript form, then were recopied and published as books. The title of this cycle of stories is “Judge Rabbit” (Subhā Dansāy), however, in all of them he is more of a deceptive, mischievous and cunning character than a wise judge; Jacob called him a Brer Rabbit who escapes from death many times by using his wits (1996: 16).

Besides occurring in the “Subhā Dansāy” cycle of tales, the rabbit story appears in the form of individual tales that have only a motif or incidental character of the rabbit. But these single episodic stories are rarely in palm-leaf manuscript form. In them the rabbit figure is usually represented as a wise judge who often saves other’s lives by his

²⁵ Other similar episodes are: “The Rabbit Cheats the Crocodile,” “The Crocodile Cheats the Rabbit,” “The Rabbit is Caught in a Trap Two Times and the Toad Is Deceived by the Rabbit,” and “The Rabbit is Caught and He Pretends to Be Dead.”

²⁶ Midan’s collection “Histoire du juge lièvre” still needs to be analyzed in this regard.

judgments. It appears that Monod may have used four of these for his version.²⁷ Two in Monod's collection are so unique that I have not found them in any other source: "The Crafty Man Borrows Money from Another Man," and "How His Figure Came to Be on the Seal of Justice."

Further research in this area will require a more in-depth comparison with other manuscripts, which can be located. For instance, a comparison with Midan's "Subhā Dansāy" with its cycle of stories needs to be incorporated into this analysis of manuscript versions. Given time constraints I have focused mostly on the Buddhist Institute collection of rabbit stories. There are still other sources waiting to be discovered and compared.

4.3 Possible Sources of Influence for Judge Rabbit Folktales

It is difficult to trace the source of these Judge Rabbit stories. Only an analysis of the themes, mythemes or content of the stories will enable us to trace any possible source of influence. Thierry has divided themes in folklore into two basic types: universal themes found in world folklore such as the origin of animals, magical objects and so forth, and culturally specific, non-universal themes found in (local) folklore traditions. In the Southeast Asian context, Thierry has given an example of the non-universal theme by using the story of rabbit from the Malaysian novel *Pelandok* (Le Roman de Pelandok le Chevrotain) as well as some Cham and Vietnamese tales. She also mentions the possibility that Khmer tales are taken from a large collection of Indian stories, namely the *Pañchatantra* and *Jātaka* or that they may be taken from local traditions (Bernard 1948: 377-378).

If we make a comparative study between some values expressed in Buddhist stories and Judge Rabbit, we can see some parallel themes. For instance, the way that rabbit makes his judgments in Khmer folktales might be influenced by *The Mahā-Ummagga-Jātaka* (*Mahosadha-Jātaka*), a story reflecting the *pañña parimi* (the perfection of wisdom). There are adventures in this *Jātaka* similar to those found in Judge Rabbit tales. For example in *the Mahā-Ummagga-Jātaka*, the King attempts to test Sage Mahosadha by posing nineteen cases of enigmas. Mahosadha has the ability to answer

²⁷ These four are: "The Rabbit Saves the Fish's Life," "The Two Neighbors Set Traps," "The Poor Man Loves the Rich Man's Daughter," and "The Fruit Seller and the Magistrate."

these philosophical problems.²⁸ A few cases of the way in which Mahosadha answered some of the nineteen cases are similar to the way Judge Rabbit behaves in certain folktales such as in one episode of “Le Sophea lièvre” (Judge Rabbit),²⁹ “Rīoe† Manuss Bīr Nāk’ Nau Phdah Jit Gnā” (The Story of Two Neighbors),³⁰ and “Tmāt Pok 𑀓a𑀓rī Sa” (The Buzzard Cheats the White Elephant).³¹ For instance in “The Buzzard Cheats the White Elephant”, the rabbit makes up a dream in response to the buzzard king who has dreamt of eating the elephant. The rabbit responded, “While I was sleeping, I dreamt of loving your wife so please give her to me.” And he said, “If you do not agree with my dream, how can I agree with your useless dream!” This is a parallel mytheme to the fifteenth, the sixteenth and the seventeen cases of enigmas posed by the king to Mahosodha. For example, the sixteenth case (the tank) is: “The king attempts to disport himself in the water, so the people in the East Market Town must send him a new tank covered with five kinds of water lilies.” Mahosadha makes up a plan. He sends several clever men to speak to the king:

“We have brought a great tank to suit your taste; but she being used to a life in the forest, no sooner saw the town with its walls, moats, and watch-towers, than she took fright and broke the ropes and [ran] off into the forest, ...Give us then the old tank which your majesty is said to have brought from the forest, we will yoke them together and bring the other back. The king will say, ‘I have never had a tank brought in from the forest...’ and you must say, ‘if there is so how can the villagers send you a tank’ ”(Cowell 1995: 6, 169).

In this sense, the resolution of Sage Mahosadha with the King and the response of Judge Rabbit to the buzzard king are similar in terms of depicting the protagonists’ cleverness.

Responding to the above examples, Midan, who collected and published rabbit stories, also asserts that some were possibly influenced from the Jātaka tales.

“La rapprochement avec les Jātaka n’est cependant pas intérêt. Si l’on pouvait suivre assés loin dans le recules temps certaines histoires du lièvre, ou s’apercevrait...n’est que le résultat d’une série de transformations et de déformations de contes des Jātaka qui out glissé dans le peuple par l’intermédiaire des prêtes boudhiques”(Midan 1933: 5).

²⁸ See further in *The Mahā-Ummagga-Jātaka* (N₀ 546), Cowell 1995: 6, 156-246 and Khmer version in *Mahosadha-Jātaka* which was recopied from a palm-leaf manuscript by Im Phorn and published by the Buddhist Institute in 1962.

²⁹ In Monod 1985: 45-48, see Appendix 2: Story 7.

³⁰ In PRBK 2001: 1, 7-10, see Appendix 2: Story 3.

³¹ In PRBK 2001: 7, 1-2.

There are also some thematic influences from the Buddhist text, the *Milindapañha* (The Questions of King Milinda).³² In this text, the dialogue between King Milinda and Bhante Nāgasena about the concept of the name “Nāgasena” and “chariot” has a philosophical meaning similar to the doctrine of non-self, the most philosophical and metaphysical teaching in Buddhism, one which is very difficult to understand.

In the *Milindapañha*, Nāgasena offers his name to illustrate that no real person can be apprehended, just a mere name. Then King Milinda asks him if he is not a real teacher or instructor, what then is “Nāgasena”? Are perhaps the hairs of the head, the body, the skin, the bone etc. are they this “Nāgasena”? The king cannot discover Nāgasena at all. Then Nāgasena explains through analogy. He compares “Nāgasena” to the king’s chariot. He asks the king to explain what a chariot is, but the king can not find any parts called the “chariot.” Finally, the king realizes his point. Nāgasena explains that he is the same as the chariot, Nāgasena depends on the thirty-two parts³³ of the body and the five *skandhas*³⁴(aggregates) which arise through karma (Mendis 1993: 29-32).

This theme also appears in “Kaṭṭhoh Pīr Nāk’ Ca Pān Prabandh Ge” (The Two Men Who Want Another’s Wife). The poor man in this folktale surely knew the physical appearance of a chariot, but he did not think philosophically about how the chariot was actually just a concept. As a result, he agreed to put his beloved wife up for a bet. Thus a dispute happens over the concept of “chariot” and “wife” which are both mere conventions for naming things whose existence is illusory. Only a man with higher knowledge has the ability to think of these terms in a philosophical way, such as Judge Rabbit. He says to the two men who want the poor man’s wife, “Which parts can be called the total wife? If you are able to find it, the wife will belong to you. If not, the wife will belong to her husband.” The two men could not find any part that equaled the total wife. The rabbit said, “All these components such as the head, the foot, the hair and so forth incorporate what is indicated by the name ‘wife’, like the ‘chariot’ depends on the pole, the axle, the wheel, the framework, etc.” (PRBK 2001: 1, 57-62).³⁵ This folktale

³² The *Milindapañha*, one of the most popular and authoritative works of Pāli Buddhist literature, was probably written around the beginning of the Christian era. It unfolds as a dialogue between the Bactrian Greek ruler, King Milinda and the Buddhist sage, Bhante Nāgasena (see, Mendis 1993: 1-13).

³³ The hairs of the head, the hair of body, the nails, the teeth, skin, muscles, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, serous membranes, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrement, the bile, phlegm, pus, blood, joints, urine and the brain in the skull (Mendis : 30).

³⁴ Feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*sannā*), mental formation (*sangkā*) and consciousness (*vinnāna*), mind (*nāma*).

³⁵ There is another version in “Le Suphea lièvre.” A fruit vendor (selling grapefruit) and a magistrate bet a “chariot” and a “head”. The magistrate asks the vendor, “What is this sound?” The vendor knew this sound

clearly has been influenced by *Milindapañha*. Judge Rabbit represents Bhante Nāgasena who answers and convinces King Milinda in the *Milindapañha*; or rather, it contains a Buddhist mytheme.

Besides the Buddhist *Jātakas* and the *Milindapañha*, the other possible influence on Khmer rabbit stories is the Hindu *Pañchatantra*,³⁶ whose motif stories spread far beyond India, and include Southeast Asian countries. Some examples of its wide diffusion are “The Tiger in the Cage” or “The Tiger the Brahmin and the Jackal” which are found in Southeast Asia and as far as Africa (Knappert 1999: 217). This story is similar to the Khmer folktale “Mahā Īsī Proh Khlā” (The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger’s Life)³⁷ and “Puras Ceh Thna 𑄓 Bis Bas’ ” (The Kind Man and the Tiger).³⁸

The plot and character change in the Khmer folktale; for example, the tiger dies through a snakebite or in some versions, the man saves him. The jackal is occasionally replaced by the rabbit or the mousedeer³⁹ in the Malaysian and Indonesian cultural context. In other words, there are some stories in the *Pañchatantra* that contain the rabbit character such as “Numskull and the Rabbit” (Ryder 1956: 81-98) and “How the Rabbit Fooled the Elephant” (308-315). Both stories illustrate the rabbit’s wit in overcoming strong powerful animals such as the lion and the elephant in order to escape death. In “How the Rabbit Fooled the Elephant” a rabbit named Victory (Vichaya) fooled the elephants who wanted to dwell on the banks of a lake where the rabbits lived. The rabbit cheats the elephants through frightening speech. He climbs up a tall and jagged rock pile and says: “I am an envoy and a servant of the blessed Moon. Now you have sinfully violated the lake of the Moon...And here you have slain rabbits who are under my special

so he immediately responded, “It is the sound of a chariot.” Because the vendor could not find any part which was called a chariot, he lost the bet. He must give his head to the magistrate. Luckily the wise rabbit helped him. He said to the magistrate, “Indeed you can cut off the vendor's head, if you can find which parts are called a head.” So the magistrate lost the bet. He was forced to give some money to the vendor (Monod 1985: 37-40). For my translation of this story see Appendix 2: Story 4,

³⁶ The *Pañchantra* consists of the five books containing stories compiled by Vishnusharman. This Brahmin was told by the king to educate the prince who would be the ruler. These are the five books: (I) “The Loss of Friends,” (II) “The Winning of Friends,” (III) “Crows and Owls,” (IV) “Loss of Gains,” and (V) “Ill-considered Action.” This text falls into the category of Indian literature known as *niti-shastra* or book concerning the wise conduct of life. For further details, see Ryder (1956: 1-16).

³⁷ In PRBK 2001: 3, 1-2, see Appendix 2: Story 5.

³⁸ In PRBK 2001: 1, 32-33.

³⁹ It is an animal about the size of a cat, and it lives in the jungles of Africa, Asia, and many Pacific islands. It has the legs and tail of a deer and the face and the body of a mouse but it is not really a mouse or a deer. There are different names for this favorite trickster: In Indonesia it is called *Kanchil* and in Malaysia *Pelandok*. See Shepard. *The Adventures of Mouse Deer*. (Online). <http://www.aaronshep.com/stories> (Feb 27, 4).

protection, who are of the race of the rabbit-king whom I cherish in my bosom..." (312-313).

This story contains a parallel mytheme to "Cacak" (The Jackal). In "The Jackal" the rabbit helps some fish through his clever speech (PRBK 2001: 2, 4-6). The influential mythemes from non-Cambodian sources can be the plots, the characters or other motifs. Knappert claims that "Cambodian literature, fable, is based on the Indian model of the *Pañchatantra*, although much original Khmer folklore has been added over the centuries" (161). There are some contents of Khmer tales that have changed through the influence of Indian tales, both the *Jātaka* and the *Pañchatantra*. Some scholars, however, believe that certain stories are purely native to and originate in Cambodia. Cœdès notes that the story of "Subhā Dansāy," "Dhmeñ Jăy," and "The Four Bald Men" are genuinely Khmer (1941: 9-10).

Some scholars like P. Cardon in his work "Le Roman de Pelandok, le chevrotain, seigneur de la forêt (d'après les contes Malais)" have discussed the origin of the rabbit. He suggests that the story of the Cambodian rabbit and similar stories from Malaya and Indonesia are possibly from the same source, but he is not sure what it might be (Midan 1933: I). There is also a striking similarity of themes, adventures, and plots between the Judge Rabbit stories of Burma and Cambodia. For example, the episode of the Cambodian version of "The Rabbit Who Wants to Eat Bananas"⁴⁰ is similar to a version in Burmese.⁴¹ Another example is the Cambodian⁴² and Burmese⁴³ versions of "The Rabbit Is a Wise Judge" and the Cambodian episode of "The Rabbit and the Tiger and the Monkey Who Tied Their Tails Together"⁴⁴ and the Burmese one.⁴⁵ This causes us to wonder whether both rabbit story traditions come from the same source or whether they appeared separately in each country. These questions are relevant when comparing countries with stories in which rabbit plays a similar role. This important question, however, is beyond the scope of this present research.

In conclusion, it is possible to suggest a hypothetical origin of some rabbit tales from changes made to stories in the Buddhist *Jātaka*, the *Milindapañha*, and the *Pañchatantra* and influences from local traditions; although, Cambodians feel that the plots of these tales actually developed in their own local context. Because of the large

⁴⁰ In PRBK 2001: 2, 62; see Appendix 2: Story 11.

⁴¹ See Aung 1959: 35-37.

⁴² In PRBK 2001: 1, 1-3.

⁴³ See Aung 1959: 21-23.

⁴⁴ In PRBK 2001: 1, 98-104.

⁴⁵ See Aung 1959: 13-17.

number of rabbit tales, different personalities have developed and have been integrated with the local culture. The multitude of the Khmer rabbit trickster's characteristics will now be discussed by analyzing his personality.

4.4 Trickster Theories and Their Application to the Characteristics of Judge Rabbit

This section will mainly focus on an analysis of various personalities of the Khmer rabbit trickster archetype by using data examples from the original texts of Khmer folktales. I will apply some aspects of Lévi-Strauss' binary approach to the personality of the rabbit character in Khmer folktales in order to analyze his characteristics.

According to an analysis of the multiple and often conflicting personality traits of tricksters found in North American Indian mythology, the trickster archetype seems to have two distinct personalities: one a selfish buffoon and the other a culture hero (Carroll 1981: 305). There are similarities here with the binary theory of Lévi-Strauss which talks about human character in terms of contrasts (Doty 1986: 200). Using this binary approach, the Khmer rabbit personality can be analyzed in two ways. First, the positive side of rabbit is that of a wise judge whose key strategy is his clever ability to make fair decisions. Second, the contrasting side of this wisdom used to help others is the deceitful trickster who is good at using his wits to escape from his powerful enemies or to get what he wants. Moreover, the tactic of trickery will be explored in looking at how cunning the rabbit is. These two analyses are based on the six shared trickster traits as mentioned in Chapter Three (see, pp. 21-22). Another form of structural analysis of Khmer folktales has been undertaken by Solange Thierry. Although this type of analysis is not the focus of this thesis, its value for further research is noted and several rabbit stories using this approach have been included in Appendix 4.

4.4.1 The Positive Side of the Judge Rabbit Trickster

Rabbit trickster, who is considered a smart and intelligent creature, is the most popular character in Khmer tales. He is full of trickery and has a sharp wit that he uses to tackle difficult problems. We see this kind of characteristic in "Subhā Dansāy" (Judge Rabbit). However, before turning to the analysis of the text, we need to look briefly at the semantics of the Cambodian term *subhā* which the Khmers use to refer to the rabbit figure, in the same way as the African Americans refer to their rabbit trickster as Brer Rabbit.

Subhā comes from *sabhā* (assemble, assembly or court). It refers to the one who discusses the case or judges the case or the one who observes the process of cases (Buddhist Institute 1967: 2, 858). Generally speaking, Khmer consider *subhā* as a judge or the one who is full of sharp wit. In literature this term is only used for the rabbit, *Subhā Dansāy*, even though some incidents in stories also show him as a deceitful trickster.

The Khmer rabbit trickster reveals his positive side in his role as a judge, a benefactor and a savior, an advisor and a mediator. In performing these roles, he intervenes between animals and men or with both in terms of saving a victim or the right person's life. His keen discernment in the service of others not only occurs among common people in everyday disputes but also in the official court system symbolized by the head judge of the country. For example in “Niyāy Pīr Dansāy Jā Cau Kra^①” (The Rabbit is a Judge) rabbit shows his superior intelligence (Midan 1986: 72).⁴⁶ This folktale begins with a man who writes a request to some magistrates. None of them understand the request and say it is a stupid letter. Only the rabbit is able to discern the message. All the magistrates and the men then recognize that the rabbit is an intelligent judge.

“The request: A few months ago, my buffalo was stolen. It is neither a male nor female buffalo. It was stolen neither last year, nor this year, and the thief is neither my relative, nor a stranger. What is his sex? Who has stolen my buffalo and when?”

The wise rabbit answers: The buffalo is castrated; it was stolen during the night of last year before passing into the New Year and the brother-in-law is the thief” (72).⁴⁷

The above folktale illustrates Judge Rabbit among people. In another story, “Cacar” (The Jackal), the rabbit is found among animals (PRBK 2001: 1, 4-6). The reputation of the ingenious rabbit is discussed by fish, crabs, snails, and small shrimps when they find themselves in trouble. They believe that only the rabbit can help to save their lives. In “The Jackal” the *trī krāñ*⁴⁸ volunteers to ask for rabbit's help even though he will risk his life out of the water to do so. However the risky adventure does not fail

⁴⁶ For my English translation of this story see Appendix 2: Story 1.

⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that this theme of “the test” is similar to the one found in the questions between the king and Mahosadha in the *Mahā-Ummagga-Jātaka*, specifically the fourteenth case concerning ‘the boiled rice’: how to cook boiled rice under eight conditions. The message: “The people of the East Market Town must send us some boiled rice cooked under eight conditions and these are: without rice, without water, without a pot, without an oven, without fire, without firewood, without being sent along a road either by a woman or a man.” Mahosadha said, “Take some broken rice, for that is not rice; snow, for that is not water; an earthen bowl, which is no pot; chop up some wood-blocks, which is no oven; kindle a fire by friction, instead of a proper fire; take leaves instead of firewood; cook your sour rice, put it in a new vessel, press it well down, put it on the head of eunuch... leave the main road and go along a foot path, and take it to the king” (Cowell 1995: 168).

⁴⁸ A kind of fresh water fish.

because he is kept safe by rabbit's trickery. After the rabbit's triumph, all the animals admire his sharp wit and recognize him as a *grū ācāry* (highest master) of animals.

The remarkable reputation of rabbit not only appears amongst animals and men, but also in the king's court system. It appears in the "Le Sophea lièvre" (Monod 1985: 45-48).⁴⁹ In this role, he helps the king from losing both his beloved daughter and his kingdom. As a result, rabbit is appointed as head judge for the whole country. His image is kept on the seal of justice, symbolizing the justice system from that time onwards.⁵⁰ The rabbit's prestigious name was well known for his perfect knowledge and for his unselfish service to humankind.

It is noteworthy that in the story the rabbit is the wisest judge among other judges in the same way as the king is the greatest judge in the *sāstrā kīn kadrai* (The Collection of Justice Tales).⁵¹ Rabbit is a non-biased judge among other animal magistrates such as the parrot, cow, monkey, or wolf. He always solves legal cases for the right person through his intellect and wisdom. Moreover he often humiliates the judges who take bribes or who have inadequate ability. Two examples of this occur in the stories of "Manuss Pīr Nāk' Nau Phdah Jit Gnā (The Two Neighbors)⁵² and "Puras Daṅṅṅ Prabandh" (The Man Who Engages the Wife),⁵³ which show how rabbit overcomes bribed judges like Judge Parrot and a magistrate. Judge Rabbit shames both of them. They make decisions unreasonably and inconsiderately because they have been bribed. In the last story the poor man was losing his case because he was poor. It clearly shows that Judge Rabbit is a fair judge compared to the parrot and the magistrate. He helped the right person so that the poor man finally won the case. Moreover, both sides agreed with rabbit's judgment. This story critiques the use of bribes in the current court system of the time. The wise Judge Rabbit personality is a model for other judges in all societies, especially the Khmer justice system at the time this story developed.

Another example of Judge Rabbit's independent and fair judgment is illustrated in "The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger's Life" (PRBK 2001: 3, 1).⁵⁴ Here, rabbit judges

⁴⁹ For my English translation of this story see Appendix 2: Story 7).

⁵⁰ "How the Rabbit Figure Came to Be on the Seal of Justice" is in Monod's redaction of "Le Suphea lièvre." This episode has not been located in any other source.

⁵¹ These tales are in *Prajum Rīoe ★ Bre ★ Khmaer*, vol., 3. There are 53 stories about justice where the judge is almost always the king, but volume three also includes a story of Judge Rabbit in "The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger's Life," p.1.

⁵² In PRBK 2001: 1, 7-9. For my English translation of this story see Appendix 2: Story 3.

⁵³ In PRBK 2001: 2, 16-17.

⁵⁴ For another version of this tale, see "The Kind Man and the Tiger" (PRBK 2001: 1, 32-33). There are two judges, a horse and a buffalo. They were prejudiced by fear. In a different but similar folktale, "The

without bias the case of the great hermit and the tiger. This folktale describes a great hermit who saves the life of a tiger bitten while sleeping in front of a snake's hole, but the ungrateful tiger wants to eat him anyway. Therefore, they go off to find a judge who will settle their dispute. The first judge is a jackal. His bias is partially caused by love or desire (*chandāgati*). He says to himself, "If I judge the tiger and lose the case, I won't be able to depend on his power in this forest." Not accepting this judgment they go to the second judge, a cow. He is prejudiced by fear (*bhayāgati*). He reckons that, "If I do not help the tiger, he will hate me and eat me." Being dissatisfied with that judgment, they go to the third judge, a monkey. His bias is caused by hatred or enmity (*dosāgati*). He thinks that, "In the past, a man had fallen into a well and my father helped him, however that crafty man ate my father." Disagreeing with that judgment, they go to the fourth judge, a buzzard, who is prejudiced by greed or desire (*lophāgati*). He thinks that, "Today I frequently get my food from the remains of the tiger's meal. If I judge that the tiger should lose the case, he will be angry with me; and how can I get the food from him?" Being dissatisfied with that discernment, they go to the fifth judge, a tree spirit. He is prejudiced by delusion or stupidity (*mohāgati*). He decides that, "People walking to the forest and taking shelter always break and cut off the leaves so I will judge that the tiger wins the case." The last judge is the rabbit who is independent and neutral (*sugatigamanam*). He orders the tiger to go back to where the original event had taken place and if the tiger remains unbitten by the snake, he wins. Rabbit was not intimidated by the tiger's physical power. He judged wisely, excluding love, hatred, greed, and delusion. It is clear that these four concepts are taken from the Buddhist ideas of how to be a good ruler or king. That is to say the good king and ruler must conduct his duties according to them (Payutto 1996: 24). A comparison between Judge Rabbit and the other animals and supernatural judges—cow, wolf, buzzard, tree spirit, and monkey—indicates that only the rabbit is an impartial judge. He represents the wisest one.

Besides humiliating the corrupt and biased judges, the rabbit also disgraces inept ones. This is exemplified in the folktale "Le Suphea lièvre" (Monod 1985: 43-45). It begins with a crafty man borrowing money from another man and promising to pay it back whenever there are two full moons. The first magistrate is unable to outwit and

Ungrateful Crocodile," Song Siv narrates how the kind man helped the tiger. There are five judges but they are different compared to "The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger's Life." In "The Ungrateful Crocodile," a fisherman has a bias based on fear; a man with a broken hand has a bias based on dislike; the lizard judge has bias based on like; and a monkey judge has bias based on delusion or ignorance; and finally the rabbit judge has bias based on the right way (Song Siv 1966: 99-105). For my English translation of this story see Appendix 2: Story 5.

judge the crafty man: “Because he looks at the sky and there is only one moon and the debtor has promised to pay back the money whenever there are two moons” (43). When the rabbit enters this case, he easily solves the dilemma. The debtor is ordered by the magistrate to pay his debt to the creditor because there are indeed two moons: one in the sky and the one reflected on the water.⁵⁵ The unfair judgments of the inferior magistrates are caused by incompetence, the four biases (love, fear, hatred and delusion) and bribery. These characteristics do not appear in Judge Rabbit’s personality in the folk literature. Thus, he has kept his name as *Subhā Dansāy* until today.

Besides being a wise judge, rabbit is also a benefactor. He spontaneously helps those in need, especially the poor and the weak, and those treated unfairly by others. This characteristic of rabbit illustrates a kind of reciprocity relationship which has existed in Khmer society from long ago according to Khmer folktales. This kind of help is reflected in “The Buzzard Cheats the White Elephant.”⁵⁶ In this tale, by making up a dream the benevolent rabbit rescues a white elephant who has been mistreated by a buzzard. Moreover, in “The Jackal,” a jackal intends to eat all the fish in a pond. Fortunately, the rabbit saves their lives through his tricks when the fish ask him for help. In folktales of this type and “Kraboe Ni ✦ Anak Parradeh,” (The Crocodile and the Carter)⁵⁷ rabbit teaches people to be cautious in their actions toward the cruel, predatory carnivores such as the tiger and crocodile. Generosity is a very important trait for people, but they need to be aware of how to use it best, in particular matching it with wisdom, like in the “Sanjiva-Jātaka.” A youth who has learnt the charm for restoring the dead to life tries it on a tiger, with fatal effects to himself.⁵⁸ From these stories also come Khmer proverbs about the attitude of the tiger and crocodile. For instance, “kraboe va ✦ ve ✦ pi ✦” (literally, “the crocodile lost his pond”) refers to a mean and ungrateful man.

Meanwhile the wise rabbit plays a role as a mediator which is an important trickster function in other cultures as well. The wise rabbit serves as a mediator between the underdogs (the poor) and those who are powerful and rich in terms of re-establishing

⁵⁵ This content can not be seen in other rabbit story sources, but it appears the same the episode of “Two Moons and Defeat” (111-113) in *Tales of Sri Thanonchai: Thailand’s Artful Trickster*, 1991.

⁵⁶ In PRBK 2001: 7, 1-2. A similar version can be found in “Le Suphea lièvre.” A poor man dreamed of marrying a rich man’s daughter. The uncompensated magistrate judged in favor of the poor man. Judge Rabbit made up his own dream: “I also dreamt of sleeping with your wife so you need to give me your wife” (Monod 1985: 40-43).

⁵⁷ In PRBK 2001: 7, 13-18, see Appendix 2: Story 6. Another version of this tale is found in “Puras Ubuk Ni ✦ Kūn Cuop Ni ✦ Kraboe” (Father and Son Meet the Crocodile) in PRBK 2001: 3, 42-43. Here Judge Rabbit is replaced by a king who is also an advisor.

⁵⁸ For information on this, see Cowell 1995: 1, 319.

a sense of justice between the different social classes. Babcock has described the “reflective-creative function” of the trickster tales in which social distinctions are leveled (cited by Blaeser 1993: 57). “The Man Who Engages the Wife” illustrates how rabbit serves to reestablish a sense of justice as a wise rabbit mediator. In it rabbit enables a young man to marry the daughter of parents who have treated him unfairly.

In summary, the positive side of rabbit trickster, which appears in Khmer rabbit folktales, includes his role as judge, benefactor, savior, advisor and mediator. This characteristic shows the rabbit’s quality as the clever hero in Khmer surroundings. With this interpretation, Népote also claimed that, “The rabbit is not an asocial immoralist because of two reasons: he acts for other’s profit and he unknots the situation’s conflict while restoring social peace and distributing justice” (Midan 1986: 3). The Cambodian rabbit trickster is not usually considered as a culture hero who is a transformer, as in North America. In order to understand his positive characteristics in greater depth, I will now explore the principle strategies he uses in his positive role and how he uses them to advantage.

4.4.2 The Main Strategies of Rabbit Judgment

To more fully understand the wise Judge Rabbit trickster, we need to explore his character by observing and analyzing the strategies he uses to judge human beings. There are different rabbit methods of judgment depending on the situation. His chief methods are a play on words, humiliation, the use of “spiritual forces,” and using a ruse against a ruse.

The main method he uses is a play on words or an argument that depends on clever wording. Also it includes the evidence of a mature response to the circumstances. For instance can a fish fly? In the story “The Two Neighbors,”⁵⁹ the man who set a trap on the top of a tree caught a four-footed animal that could only walk on the earth. He won the case because he bribed the parrot judge with some presents. The poor man who set the trap on the ground was disappointed and disagreed with the judge’s reasoning. He then met Judge Rabbit and told him his case. Rabbit promised to help him and solved the case with the following response:

⁵⁹ For another version of this tale see “Niyāy Bī Dansāy Jaṅrah Kṭī Aoy Manuss Mnāk’ ” (The Rabbit Judges the Case) in Midan (1986: 74) and see “Le Suphea lièvre” in Monod (1985: 32-37). In the former, the first man set a trap in some water, and the second man, who set a trap on top of the tree, caught a fish that could only swim in the water. The two versions are almost similar except the first magistrate character, who is a man, has been replaced by Judge Parrot.

“We are very late because we went to see fish flying, eating the leaves at the top of the tree. From the time of our ancestors, I have never heard that he who set the trap on the top of the tree can catch an animal that walks on the ground” (PRBK 2001: 1, 3).

This technique also emerges in “The Man Who Engages the Wife” (PRBK 2001: 2, 16-17). In this story a man loses his fiancée because he is cheated by the girl’s parents. They say they will allow the young man to marry their daughter if he is able to remain standing in a pond for three days. They decide that he was trying to warm himself with the flames from a distant hill while in the pond and thus had not fulfilled their conditions. The rabbit helps the young man through his logic and cleverness. He requests that the parents provide an unsalted meal with the salt provided in a separate dish. During the meal, when someone complains about the soup having no salt, rabbit says:

“The fire on the top of the hill, far away from the young man, was supposed to warm him up. How is it that salt for the soup, which is placed far from the soup, does not flavor the soup?” (17).

With this analogy, rabbit declares that the young man should win the case.

This sophistry, which develops out of rabbit’s discernment, precisely reveals the actual reality in society. It is the natural order of things that fish do not fly and that one cannot get warm from a distant fire. As a result, rabbit was able to use natural arguments to defeat the other’s judgment, based upon the specific conditions of the case.

In response to another situation, however, Judge Rabbit uses other methods. In the story of “The Jackal” and “Anak 𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀺𑀓 Pīr Nāk’ 𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀺𑀓 Gnā 𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀺𑀓 Ka𑀲tāl” (The Two Men Who Want to Sleep in the Middle)⁶⁰ there are different kinds of animals involved, including predatory and carnivorous animals. The best means of overturning a bad situation in these cases is to employ spiritual forces which go beyond the natural world so as to frighten the animals. Rabbit does not hesitate to use the concept of Indra plus what immediately surrounds him in the natural world, such as an insect bitten leaf, to invent a message from Indra, a new way to threaten predatory animals. He not only uses the term Indra, but also pretends that he himself is Indra’s messenger. Rabbit pretends to read a letter from Indra composed of insect bites on a leaf when he says:

“This strange animal’s name is Yogī Yogā, Brah Indra has ordered him to kill all the animals, including me. Hearing this, all the animals quickly fled and ran over

⁶⁰ PRBK 2001: 2, 110-113, see appendix 2: story 2. Versions of this tale can be found in “Niyāy Bī Dansāy Juoy 𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀺𑀓 Dukh Manuss Puon Nāk’ Aoy Ruoc Bī Khlā Sī” (The Rabbit Who Saves the Four Men’s Lives) (Midan 1986: 68-69) and PRBK 2001: 3, 11-12 “Puras Bīr Nāk’ Jhloh 𑀓𑀲𑀭𑀺𑀓 Ta𑀲nek Gnā” (Three Men Who Want to Sleep in the Middle). In the latter story, the rabbit was replaced by the king.

each other. Some ended up with broken legs and broken arms. Some were slightly wounded. Others died (PRBK 2001: 2, 113).

“My Bothers, listen to me. Brah Indra will descend to break the eagle’s leg, to cut off the jackal’s head and to pull out the tusks of white elephants” (PRBK 2001: 1, 12).

According to rabbit’s message, it is obvious that all those in the animal kingdom, which apparently represents the Khmer people, believe in Indra. Moreover, rabbit realized the effectiveness of using this concept to frighten the carnivorous animals.

However, in Buddhism Indra represents the king of deities (*devatā*) living in *trai tri* ✦ (the thirty-third paradise). He has great power in the superhuman world and is a deity who can assume human form. According to Buddhism, there are seven virtues which one needs to practice in order to be reborn as Indra.⁶¹ Therefore when Indra appears in a Buddhist context he is associated with positive virtues.

The Indra figure who appears in the *Jātaka* stories often plays the role of a mediator. The intervention of Indra happens with his intention to help the *Bodhisatva* Sakyamuni achieve his perfections. For instance, in the *Sasa-Jātaka*, Indra changes his shape into a Brahmin because he wants to test the rabbit’s character by asking him for food, subsequently allowing the rabbit *bodhisatva* to fulfill his perfection of giving.⁶² Spiritual characteristics not only appear in Cambodian rabbit trickster tales but generally exist in all tricksters who are skillful in order to trick others based on the circumstances.

Another way to understand rabbit’s method of interdiction is to reconstruct what happens to both the accused and the victim through rabbit’s trickery and persuasion. An example is his response to the tiger and crocodile, whose lives are saved by the two kind men in the folktales “The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger’s Life” and “The Crocodile and the Carter.” The rabbit re-enacts the events to illustrate that what they did was because of their nature as carnivorous animals. For example in “The Crocodile and the Carter” a kind man saves a crocodile who has nearly died because of a drought. In return the crocodile wants to eat him. The rabbit asks each of them their version of what happened. Then he cleverly says, “We cannot judge now; Brother Crocodile, return to the cart and let the man tie you up again.” As soon as the man ties him tightly, rabbit orders the man to kill him with his axe (PRPK 2001: 7, 13). According to Oknhā Suttanaprijā In, this

⁶¹ These are: 1) to support their parents, 2) to respect their elders, 3) to speak only that which is polite and pleasant to the ear, 4) to abstain from slanderous or malicious speech, 6) to speak what is true, and 7) to refrain from anger (Om Nacry 69-70).

⁶² For information on this see Cowell vol., 3 1995: 34-37.

clever method of Judge Rabbit reveals that the one who possess *satisampajañña* (clear discernment) is able to recognize wicked and ignorant intentions (Hansen 1999: 95).

Likewise, this same approach of clever means is also present in “The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger’s Life” and “The Kind Man and the Tiger”. In the latter story, the rabbit intervenes between the tiger and a man. The man, who knows the charm for restoring the dead to life, has saved the tiger who had been lying dead on top of a snake’s hole after being bitten, but the ungrateful tiger attempts to eat him. In response, the rabbit tells the tiger: “Thus you must go back to the place where you were sleeping. If you wake up alive, you can do what you like to the man.” He tricks the greedy tiger into the same situation as a form of punishment for his ungratefulness.

Judge Rabbit seriously punishes the ungrateful tiger and crocodile with death; whereas in other cases, he just sentences the guilty by having them lose the case. There is no serious punishment involved. This type of action seems to mirror a Cambodian dislike of ingratitude and the belief that those who display it are enemies. According to Vandy Kaonn, rabbit’s judgment in this case is a prejudiced judgment based on the nature of the tiger and crocodile. Both animals are carnivorous and predatory; therefore, the rabbit does not believe in deceitful idealism. For how can a tiger and crocodile give up their carnivorous nature? In this context Vandy Kaonn concludes that rabbit’s discernment responds to the circumstances of reality (n.d., 29-33). Yet, however moral, this judgment seems to be not right because it leads to the victim’s death. This type of story may be more of an example of the nature of mankind rather than how one is supposed to help them.

Perhaps the most sophisticated technique used by rabbit is “a ruse against a ruse.” In “The Men Who Wanted Another’s Wife,” (PRBK 2001: 1, 57-62) he uses it against a couple of crafty men who want to take advantage of an honest one. In this story two men use the concept of a “chariot” to bet with a young man in order to get his wife. The two men thought that they would obtain the young man’s wife because he would not be able to find any part called a “chariot.” Judge Rabbit foiled their ruse by turning it back on them by using the term “wife”. If the two men could find any part to indicate “wife,” they could win. As a result, the two men lost their case with embarrassment because they could not find any part that indicated the total wife.

4.4.3 The Selfish Side of Rabbit

Apart from the positive “selfless” aspects of rabbit’s personality, there are also his negative or selfish traits that prove also to be fruitful for his success as a rabbit. In some Khmer folktales, he is identified as the mischievous comic and the selfish buffoon who does everything for his own interest.

There are two main conditions for which he frequently tricks beings for his own benefit: in playfulness and pleasure, and when confronted by the dilemmas of life. In the former situation, he likes to play with larger and more powerful animals, especially the tiger. An example of his playfulness is evident in “Subhā Dansāy Jā Bāky Kāby” (The Story of Judge Rabbit in Verse).⁶³ In this folktale the tiger is ordered to carry both the thatching material and the rabbit on his back. While the tiger is walking, rabbit makes a fire, burning both the thatch and the tiger’s back. This mischievous attitude reveals rabbit’s childlike playfulness. At other times, when rabbit is in dire trouble, he frequently needs help. Yet he is never straightforward when asking for it and often uses trickery, including lying and cheating.

As for the second condition, the dilemmas of life, rabbit is often confronted with the possibility of death. He uses various ways to escape death, depending on the situation, and on the need and the nature of the helper. For instance in “Dansāy Jāp’ Gūd Nī✦ Gal’ Trāc” (The Rabbit’s Buttock Sticks on the Tree Stump)⁶⁴ rabbit gets stuck on a tree stump. To remove himself from it, he provokes a mother elephant into pulling him out of the stump through his persuasive speech.

He often promises to “give a reward” to escape death. One example of this occurs in “Subhā Dansāy Jā Bāky Rāy” (The Story of Judge Rabbit in Prose).⁶⁵ Here he gets caught in a trap on a plantation. In this situation, he would have died without any help. A toad comes along and the rabbit trickster cheats him twice by helping him into the trap. As a persuader, he is really good at using words. The toad is cheated again and again even though he knows what is going to happen. For example, the first time the rabbit gets caught in a trap, he persuades the toad to get him out by promising to cure his scurvy.⁶⁶ The second time the rabbit gets caught in a trap; the toad refuses to help him. But the rabbit persuades him anyway by promising to arrange a date for the toad with a pretty girl at Angkor (PRBK 2001: 2, 68-70). In “Niyāy Pī Dansāy Jih Kraboe Chla✦ Danle”

⁶³ In PRBK 2001: 2, 50-61, see Appendix 2: Story 10.

⁶⁴ PRBK 2001: 7 5-6. This story can be seen in the prose version of “Subhā Dansāy” by the Buddhist Institute 2001: 2, 68 and in “Le Sophea lièvre” by Monod 1985: 21-23.

⁶⁵ See Appendix 2: Story 11.

⁶⁶ This technique was also used by the rabbit on the crocodile in order to cheat him into helping cross the river (PRBK 2001: 2, 66).

(The Rabbit Ferries the Crocodile Across the River),⁶⁷ and “Niyāy Bī Dansāy Nī + Babae Chla + Danle” (The Rabbit and the Goat Cross the River),⁶⁸ the rabbit also persuades the crocodile to help him across the river two times, the first time by promising to take him to the sweet water and sweet land, and the second time by promising to give the crocodile a goat to eat (40). Because of his ambitions, crocodile helps the rabbit, but he receives nothing in return, not even a *thank you*, only some ridiculous words. These tales show the rabbit’s skill at testing the psychology of human beings. We often consider how a situation will benefit us before we decide to help, just like the story of the toad.

Besides his skill at testing human psychology, rabbit shows that he can think for himself. In the folktales about the foolish tiger and the crocodile, rabbit invents a situation involving the natural surroundings and the tiger’s and the crocodile’s needs. In the version in prose of “Subhā Dansāy,” the clever rabbit escapes twice from the vengeance of the crocodile (PRBK 2001: 2, 67-68). In one case the crocodile pretends to be dead, looking like a log floating on the water. The crocodile is still defeated by his wit when rabbit says: “If it is a real crocodile, it will float across the river. If it is a log, it will float back down the river.” In another case, the crocodile pretends to be dead with his mouth open on the ground near the bank of the pond. Unluckily, the rabbit is swallowed and ends up in the crocodile’s belly. Yet, he faces this danger bravely and escapes death with the following witty words, “Oh, how lucky I am. I want to eat all these coiling bowels.” And then he put his nails into them causing the crocodile to throw him up (68). This shows that rabbit does not easily believe anyone without thinking for himself first.⁶⁹ Furthermore in the prose version of “Subhā Dansāy,” the tiger is tricked by rabbit trickster through his clever words. First, he deceives a strong tiger by telling him he has eaten five elephants and then stating that some eggplant had made his throat sore. “I need a tiger’s liver to soothe it”, he says scaring the tiger away. Second, in the presence of a monkey, he says: “Hem! Hem! Brother Monkey has owed me money for a few years.

⁶⁷ In Midan 1981: 18.

⁶⁸ In Midan 1981: 40.

⁶⁹ It is interesting to note that there are similar plots and characters related to this mytheme in which the rabbit is replaced by a monkey. The *Sumsumāra-Jātaka* tells of a birth of the *Bodhisatva* who was reborn as a monkey, and the crocodile as his enemy, Devadatta. In this story, the crocodile’s wife wants a monkey liver so her husband promises to bring it for her. The male crocodile conceals himself on a rock on the sandy bank, looking like a real rock. Fortunately, the monkey recognizes the crocodile’s intention and shouts out, “Oh what a marvelous rock! Now you have grown taller! How have you managed this?” He repeats it three times. Finally, the crocodile replies “I have indeed grown”. So the monkey eventually escapes (Cowell 1995: 2, 110-112).

Now why do you pay back only an old thin tiger?”(71) Therefore the creative power of rabbit trickster’s cleverness enables him to fool the most powerful and strong.

“Cooperation with others” is also the way out of danger. In the same “Subhā Dansāy,” (74) when the fish and rabbit were captured by the farmer, the rabbit cooperates with the fish in order to accomplish rabbit’s own plan.⁷⁰

“The rabbit told the fish to pretend to be dead, floating with its stomach upper most, and then jump into any water there was, swim about and pretend to be dead again, then they will take the trap from me to put over you” (Jacob 1999:145)

This illustrates that the rabbit’s clever plan can save both the rabbit and the fish because the fish has cooperated and followed what the rabbit has told him. As a result they can be easily freed. It can be said that this folktale illustrates that there is “strength in unity.”

Besides cooperation, rabbit uses spiritual concepts to help himself. In this context he uses both *devatā*⁷¹ (deity) and *anak tā* (local spirits). These concepts are used in the context of rabbit’s interaction with natural surroundings, including a bumblebee, bamboo, and the *sa ★ghār* tree.⁷² *Devatā* is a most powerful concept when deployed against the foolish tiger, in spite of tiger’s past negative experiences with rabbit. Hence rabbit uses the religious belief in *devatā* as a means of escaping death and punishing the tiger.

Another example of rabbit’s negative character occurs in the verse version of “Subhā Dansāy” (PRBK 2001: 2, 63-71). He pretends to be ill because he is lazy. He does not want to work hard and he goes to sleep while the hen, tiger, eagle and otter are out working. It is his turn to cook but he cannot find any food so he puts his dung into the pot, making some food he calls Prahuk (a traditional Khmer food). In another story “Niyāy Bī Dansāy Phsah Phsār Bhe Bīr Prān” (The Rabbit Reconciles the Two Otters) there is an example of the rabbit’s capacity to exploit others (Midan 1986: 58).⁷³ In this story, he helps two otters share the fish the otters have caught by dividing it into three pieces: the head, the tail, and the body. The head he gives to one otter and the other otter receives the tail. Rabbit gets the body as payment for such tiring work. Another

⁷⁰ The episode of “The Rabbit Cooperates with the Fish” can be found in the individual tale “Hor Ni★ Tā Cās’ Ni★ Ōūn Cās’ ” (The Fortune Teller and the Older Man and Older Women). This story focuses more on the Cambodian popular belief of the fortune teller in day life rather than the rabbit trickster.

⁷¹ Spiritual concepts refer to Cambodian popular belief in daily life. They believe that *devedā* will always protect and help them. In response, they frequently worship and respect such deities by offering fruits or candles to the abode of the *devadā* called *Rān devadā* which is in front of the house as part of their daily activity. The *devadā* are worshipped annually by Cambodians at the traditional New Year Festival. See further in Hem Chan 1968: 11 and the Buddhist Institute 1957: 1, 1-30.

⁷² See Appendix 2: Story 10.

⁷³ See Appendix 2: Story 9.

shortcoming of rabbit trickster appearing in “Subhā Dansāy in Prose” is that he looks down on other animals like the toad and the crocodile (PRBK 2001: 2, 62-63). Both of their appearances are ugly. The rabbit trickster does not thank either of them for their help, and he also ridicules toad’s appearance, telling toad he has “scurvy” since its skin is disgusting and rough. This mirrors a type of discrimination between people that occurs around the world. Finally in “Krapī Sruk Nīn Krapī Brai” (The Wild Buffalo and the Domestic Buffalo) the rabbit plays the role of a provocateur who separates the two close friends because of their buffalo (PRBK 2001: 7, 14-16).

Rabbit can also be shown as a fool. This aspect of his character is revealed when the typically ingenious rabbit loses to a smaller and weaker animal such as a shellfish or a tortoise. In one tale in particular “Subhā Dansāy in Prose,” rabbit looks down on the ability of the shellfish who is smaller and weaker than him. One’s physical appearance and force can be measured through weight and strength, but the force of intelligence is not so easily measured other than through actions like those of the shellfish. The clever and skillful rabbit is cheated by the shellfish because of his arrogance, forgetfulness, and carelessness (PRBK 2001: 2, 66).

A second example of rabbit’s foolish behavior is found in “Prāñā Atoek” (The Wisdom of the Tortoise). Although the tortoise recognizes the intelligence of rabbit, he does not find it difficult to verbally overcome him. Thus, the rabbit is afraid of the power of tortoise who pretends to be an ambassador of the King Bārānasi. So he agrees to find animals with one leg for the tortoise. Moreover, the notable thing is that the intervention of rabbit as a helper does not entirely succeed (PRBK 2001: 7, 65-69). This is presented in “Cacak Nin Atoek” (The Jackal and the Tortoise). The jackal loses a bet with a tortoise as he does not have the ability to trace an animal with one leg. He needs the rabbit’s help. Unfortunately, the rabbit’s penis gets bitten while he is sitting on the tortoise, another unsuccessful ending (23-26).

Another example of the rabbit as fool occurs in “Dansāy Ni Phlae Bnau” (The Rabbit and the *Bnau* Fruit). In this story, the wise rabbit who is usually full of self-confidence, becomes panicked by the *Bnau*⁷⁴ fruit falling while he is sleeping under the *Bnau* tree. The rabbit thinks that there is an earthquake so he runs without stopping until he feels completely exhausted. When he meets a tiger, the tiger asks what has happened and starts running with him until a *devadā* intervenes (Midan: 1986: 26). In In’s version

⁷⁴ A kind of fruit tree.

with the same title, the rabbit ends up with many animals—a cow, a pig, a deer and an elephant—running after him and without even knowing why until the intervention of the lion *bodhisatva*. The *bodhisatva* says that those animals did not possess *satipañña* (mindfulness), that is to say they easily believe whatever anyone tells them (Oknhā Suttantaprijā In 1962: 8, 64-70).⁷⁵

Finally, a less positive trait of rabbit is his gluttony, a trait he shares in common with other trickster figures in world folklore. In the prose version of “Subhā Dansāy,” there is an episode about the rabbit and an old lady.⁷⁶ He sees an old lady coming down the road with a basket of bananas on her head and pretends to be dead by the roadside. Thinking he is dead, she puts him in the basket she is carrying on her head, where he eats all the bananas. When she finally reaches her home and puts the basket down, he runs away.

Rabbit is caught in traps many times while searching for food. In another episode in “Subhā Dansāy in Prose” he is almost killed by a farmer who has trapped him. However, the hunger of rabbit is not cruel like some other tricksters. His hunger does not lead him to kill for food because he is an herbivorous animal. In contrast, the crocodile and the tiger, carnivorous animals, are dead at the end of their stories.⁷⁷ Perhaps these stories indicate the fundamental problems of hunger in the animal and the human realms. This is the nature of animals: when they are hungry; they need food to fill their stomachs no matter where they may get the food from. This is part of the rabbit trickster personality.

There is a series of rabbit stories that deal with this trait. All mankind needs to eat. “Hunger for food, sex, and love are the basic human desires that are considered in *lokadhamma*” (Hansen 1999: 193). The purpose of presenting the starvation problem is to emphasize that the causes of disputes, cheating and deception are all from hunger in these cycles of rabbit stories.

In this chapter I have presented the data for an analysis of the Khmer rabbit trickster. This includes an analysis of the manuscripts and traditions that may have

⁷⁵ Suttantaprijā In notes that this story is taken from the *Mahāsamayasutta* treatise. But actually I cannot find it in the Khmer Pali version of the Tripitaka.

⁷⁶ This episode appears in other versions: “Sāstrā Dansāy Sī Cek” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Eats Bananas, FEMC 627) and “Le Sophea lièvre,” of Monod’s work. In the latter version, there are different characters: the man is replaced by the old lady. The man does not put the bananas on his head but he carries two clusters of bananas on a shoulder pole (Monod: 1985, 32).

⁷⁷ This theme is represented in In’s work by “The Crocodile and the Kind Man” as “taṅrā” (abstracts or summaries) of “hunger-for-food-ignorance” (3: 65-74).

influenced his development in Khmer folktales. Finally, I have analyzed a wide variety of Khmer folktales with rabbit as a character to show the positive and negative characteristics of rabbit as a trickster figure in Cambodian folktales.

To summarize, the trickster in Khmer tales reflects a complex personality, especially in his ambiguous and anomalous methods of dealing with different situations. This type of trickster also appears in other cultures. In brief, the Khmer rabbit's methods of judgment are a mixture of good and deceitful ways to respond to specific circumstances. When he judges between men, he does not seriously punish the accused. He just sentences the guilty party by having him lose the case. However, carnivorous animals like the tiger and crocodile are heavily punished by a sentence that leads to their death. The strength of rabbit is his ability to tackle a problem with ingenuity and wisdom. He cannot use brute force because of his small size. He always realizes how to manage the situation even though he is facing a physically stronger animal such as a tiger or a crocodile. His confidence with his cleverness is the best way for him to overcome a complex problem. The value of rabbit's ingenuity is that it eliminates corruption and partiality; especially, it can fool even the spirits as in "Niyāy Bī Dansāy Pañchot Khmoc" (The Rabbit Cheats the Spirit Ghost).⁷⁸ Judge rabbit's resolution is portrayed as acceptable and fair to both victim and the guilty in Khmer folktales. And it appears that is why the wise trickster rabbit is valued in Cambodian thought (Midan 1986: 78).

⁷⁸ This version can be found in *Gatilok* 1962: 9, 59-61 and Khing Hoc Dy 1989: 111-115. But these versions do not have the rabbit as a judge. Only a man plays the clever judge.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 The Buddhist Influence on the Rabbit Trickster and His Influence on Cambodian Society

The discussion in this section will be divided into two main parts. First, I will compare the rabbit trickster in world folktales, by developing material presented in the previous chapter with the rabbit figure in the Buddhist *Sasa-Jātaka*. This will enable us to understand the differences in personalities between the typical rabbit trickster in folktales and the rabbit character in the *Jātaka*. This analysis will help to explain how the Judge Rabbit character in Cambodian folktales takes on some Buddhist influence. Secondly, I will explore the influence of the rabbit figure on the beliefs, rituals and daily life in Cambodian society. And finally I will discuss Khmer cultural value systems and the rabbit trickster.

5.1.1 Rabbit Personality in the Buddhist *Sasa-Jātaka*

In the previous chapter there was some mention of the characteristics of the rabbit trickster in world folktales. These characteristics can be summarized as follows: 1) dual nature; 2) social significance as corrective of class injustice; 3) humorous entertainment.

The rabbit personality in the *Jātaka* tales is somewhat different. I would like to begin this discussion by first contextualizing the *Jātaka* tales as a form of literature. The *Jātaka* tales are a collection of 547 stories about the previous lives of the Buddha before he reached his enlightenment. They contain themes of treachery and ingratitude, cruelty and savagery, courtesy and chivalry, love and friendship, loyalty and devotion, quick-wittedness and ingenuity, self-sacrifice, endurance, patience, and care and affection for others: wife and children, parents and friends (Horner 1993: ix). In his previous lives the Buddha was called a *bodhisatva*, one who seeks enlightenment. He was born in many forms, including various species of animals and types of human beings. In one of his lives, the *bodhisatva* came into existence as a rabbit (hare) who fulfilled his highest perfection by immolating himself so that he could roast his own flesh as a gift of food to the beggars. What follows is a summary of the *Sasa-Jātaka* (N_o 316):

Once upon the time when Brahmadata was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta came to life as a young rabbit and lived in a wood. The hare had three friends, a monkey, a jackal and an otter. They lived together and each of them got his own food in his own hunting-ground. Those four wise creatures decided that they

would practice the perfection of generosity, teaching that alms are to be given, moral law to be observed, and holy days to be kept. So the next day, the otter brought seven red fish that he had found on the bank of the Ganges. The jackal had captured a lizard and a pot of milk-curd from someone's hut. The monkey brought some mangoes. But the rabbit, out browsing the grass as usual, felt that the grass was impossible to offer to any beggars, so after some thought, he decided he would give his own flesh as an act of generosity.

Lord Sakka (Indra), the king of gods, on reflection discovered the cause and resolved to put this royal hare to a test. He disguised himself as a Brahmin and went up to each of those four animals to ask for alms. The hare was the last. He was greatly delighted at the opportunity to practice his ultimate act of Generosity, so he asked the Brahmin to pile together logs of wood, and kindle a fire so that he could roast his own body as a gift of food. Fortunately, the fire became icy cold. So impressed was Lord Sakka, that he revealed himself, saying "Oh wise hare, be thy virtue known through out a whole aeon!" Then with the juice of mountain, he marked the figure of a hare on the face of the moon. And these four wise animals dwelt happily and harmoniously together. (Cowell 1995: 4, 34-37)

This story illustrates the perfection of generosity (*dānapārami*)⁷⁹ which expresses the giving of the rabbit *bodhisatva*. The action of the rabbit in sacrificing his own body for the beggar is the highest form of giving beyond what ordinary people can accomplish. According to the nature of herbivorous animals, rabbits eat only plants. In this story he ate only grass and did not have the ability to find oil and rice. The best way to fulfill his perfection of generosity was to offer his own flesh as meat for the satisfaction of the starving beggar. The other forest creatures had the ability to find delicious food to give the beggar; the otter found red fish, the jackal captured a lizard and milk-curd, and the monkey gathered some mangoes. So the only food the rabbit could give was himself.

This action of the rabbit figure in this *Jātaka* story is somewhat different from the behavior of the rabbit trickster in the folktales. In the *Sasa-Jātaka*, the rabbit figure sacrifices himself by falling into the midst of the burning flames to satisfy someone else's hunger. By contrast, Judge Rabbit in "Subhā Dansāy in Verse" and in "The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger's Life" punishes and tricks the hungry tiger in various ways in order to protect himself from death or to save some other victim. He would not let himself be killed easily by the tiger or in the case of "The Crocodile and the Carter" and in "Subhā Dansāy in Prose" by the crocodile. In these folktales the animals are carnivorous just like the beggar was in the *Jātaka* tales. But in the folktales, Judge Rabbit does not sacrifice himself.

⁷⁹ It also appears in the popular *Vessantarajātaka*. "It tells of the *Bodhisatva* in a past life as Prince Vessantara, who was so joyful and unstinting in generosity that he gives whenever he is asked for anything including his own children and his wife" (Harvey 2000: 63-64).

This difference between the rabbit figure in the *Jātaka* and the Judge Rabbit of those folktales mentioned above is symbolic of the differences in the social reality behind the folktales and the *Jātaka* tales. The *Jātakas* are based on a religious value of complete self sacrifice. The perfection of the generosity or giving is the first of the ten perfections in both the Mahāyāna and the Theravāda traditions (Harvey 2000: 63). On the other hand, the folktales indicate everyday social reality. Human beings need to have self-protection in various ways. They may need to use trickery, cleverness or other tactics based on the circumstances. These are modeled by Judge Rabbit's behavior in the folktales. In everyday society, most people are not able to sacrifice their lives like the rabbit in the *Jātaka* tales.

Even though Judge Rabbit has not performed the highest Buddhist sacrifice of giving by immolating himself as the rabbit figure did in the *Jātaka* story, he uses other methods of giving. He depends on his own ability to save someone's life or to protect himself. He uses his wisdom, skillfulness, fitness and trickery. He tackles the dispute by responding to the situation but he does not risk his life to solve it.

From the Theravāda Buddhist perspective, Judge Rabbit's act of giving is not the highest because he did not sacrifice himself. This concept relates to the Buddhist notion of "non-self" or *anattā*. Because the rabbit figure in the *Jātaka* was not attached to his own physical body, he satisfied the perfection of giving (*dānapārami*). In this regard, Peter Harvey has mentioned that, "The idea of not-Self does not deny that each person has an individual history and character, but it emphasizes that these are compounds of universal factors...particularly the suffering and emphasizes that we are not in control of our own minds as we would like to think also adds a leavening of humility..." (36). In contrast, human beings are caught in a web of delusion about the "self." Everything is "me, I or mine." As a result, human beings are attached to love, hatred and greed. These attachments produce disputes involving trickery and deceit. This type of deceitful action appears only in the story of Judge Rabbit since he mirrors the social reality of everyday life.

One more comparison between the two is their heuristic quality. The rabbit figure in the *Jātaka* shows wisdom through preaching and advising the other animals to practice the perfection of generosity on the up-coming fast day. He shows his moral virtue and thus provides merit to his three companions. This can be compared to the Judge Rabbit character in "The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger's Life" and in "The Crocodile and the Carter." He tries to advise people to avoid being generous with

ungrateful carnivorous beasts such as the crocodile and the tiger, because in return they will kill you without thinking about your good actions. In this context Judge Rabbit shows how in human society good deeds do not always immediately produce positive results. Judge Rabbit teaches us that we need to think critically before helping others.

In conclusion, the mytheme of the rabbit trickster in folktales mostly reflects the social reality of a specific culture. In most cultures he is valued as the most ingenious and skillful animal in the realm of animals and people. His qualities include those of Judge Rabbit who intervenes between humans, and animals and both. That is to say in the Cambodian context, Judge Rabbit of the folktales is more similar to a culture-hero archetype that we seen in other cultural traditions. He is somewhat different when compared to the rabbit figure of the *Sasa-Jātaka*, whose self-sacrifice represents the fulfillment of the perfection of giving in Buddhism. Yet, although Judge Rabbit of the folktales does not play the same role as the rabbit figure in the *Jātaka* who sacrifices himself, he serves as the wisest judge of the underdogs and the highest courts, and the one who is the most skillful practitioner of common sense and intelligence in daily life. The rabbit figure in the *Jātaka* is a spiritual type, one who is more sacred and who transcends the world of ordinary human beings. When the rabbit figure of the *Jātaka* is compared to the western rabbit trickster, he is completely different, for example, when compared to Brer Rabbit. One avoidable condition of humankind is death (Ricketts 1966: 349). This is a condition which the Khmer rabbit trickster, Judge Rabbit, and the Brer Rabbit trickster fight against for themselves and others by using their wits. In contrast death is the highest virtue for the rabbit figure in the *Sasa-Jātaka* since it symbolizes the religious act of selflessness.

5.1.2 The Influence of the Rabbit Character in Khmer Society

The rabbit character in the *Sasa-Jātaka* and the Judge Rabbit of the folktale tradition have been a source of influence on Khmer society. This influence not only extends to folk literature but also to the belief system of Khmer culture, including certain rituals, the daily belief system, astrology, media education spots in mass communication, and elsewhere.

There are many different versions of Judge Rabbit tales in Cambodian folklore, showing their popularity. Some of the best known are the two different versions of “Suphea Tonsay” (prose and verse), “The Crocodile and the Carter,” and “The Two Neighbors.” These are sometimes used in elementary school textbooks.

Next under discussion is the area of influence of the rabbit figure and Judge Rabbit on Khmer rituals. The Water Festival is one of the festivals related to the rabbit figure. It is celebrated annually on the fourteenth, fifteenth days and the first day of the twelfth lunar month (14 koet, 15 koet and 1 roc of khae kattik). The Water Festival (Puoy Uodük Paetaet Pratip Saobah Brah Khae and Ak Apuk) includes a lot of activities. The one associated with rabbit is praying to the moon on the fifteenth full moon day of the twelfth lunar month (kattik).

Saobah Brah Khae (Praying to the Moon) is held on the fifteenth full moon day of *kattik* at midnight. This ceremony is not only practiced among Khmer common people, but also by the king and his royal relatives at court. The main purpose of doing this is to commemorate the *bodhisatva* who was born as a rabbit. All Cambodian Buddhists know that the origin of this celebration is the *Sasa-Jātaka* (Keo Narom 1995: 176). According to the *Sasa-Jātaka*, the rabbit figure is marked on the face of the moon where we can see it today and recall the rabbit's great sacrifice. As a result, the rabbit *bodhisatva* is prayed to every year on the fifteenth of *kattik*. During the praying, Buddhists prepare candles, incense, bananas, coconuts, dried rice (apuk) and fruit for blessing to the moon.

Another use of rabbit is in the context of astrology (kpuon tarā). The rabbit figure in this context is called *thoh* in Khmer. The Khmer calendar year is based on the twelve animal zodiacs, including year four of the cycle, the rabbit (thoh).⁸⁰ Poreé Maspero in *Le Cycle des douze animaux dans la vie des Cambodgiens*, notes that the twelve animals are employed to mark the times, the days, the months, and the years (1962: 315). She also concludes that those animals play an important role for dating and defining influences on human life, specifically on the Cambodian practices of magic and philosophy (322). Moreover she mentions that there is a certain reason for determining and inventing the cycle of animals which differs somewhat in Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, Laos and China. The selection of animals apparently was determined by various considerations. For instance the rabbit in the moon parallels the Khmer version of the *Sasa-Jātaka* (325-329).

The rabbit figure was used as the name of one year in the twelve-year cycle in Khmer, the year of the rabbit. Those who are born in this year usually consider themselves as clever people in the Khmer context. According to the horoscope manual

⁸⁰ In the Vietnamese version of the twelve-animal zodiac, the rabbit has been replaced by the cat. In China the dragon symbolizes *yang* (sun, heat) and the rabbit represents the moon as *yin* (Maspero 1962: 325).

in Khmer, a person born in the year of the rabbit has *dhāt jhoe* (wood element)⁸¹ and belongs to the category of humans. Their characteristics are goodness, tolerance, gentleness, and cleverness (Kang Phan 1972: 16). The rabbit figure in the *Jātaka* serves an important role in Khmer society both in rituals and in the beliefs surrounding the calculation of the horoscope for life activities.

In addition, the rabbit figure plays an important role in the daily belief system of Khmer people.⁸² They believe that the head of the rabbit and the wax melon which is put inside the pillar of the house have the ability to protect or reduce the spread of disease. Another belief about luck and rabbits is that if one takes the bone of a rabbit which has died naturally and puts it into the *ka Otol* tree, it can stop a heavy prolonged rain (Chhin Khoun 1995: 31).

Besides these, the rabbit figure is currently being used in the media in an advertisement spot for education. For example, CMAK uses it in a television ad for educating and raising the awareness of the dangers of land mines, specifically to influence children in rural areas.

To summarize, the Buddhist influence of the rabbit figure plays a notable role in Cambodian society. One can see its influence in the ritual and belief system. Especially noteworthy in this context are the rabbit figure taken from the *Sasa-Jātaka*, who is the main source of the Water Festival and the year of the rabbit.

5.2 Some Further Discussion of Cultural Value Systems and the Rabbit Trickster

The Judge Rabbit trickster is embedded in a Cambodian belief system. The rabbit trickster archetype is part of the cultural belief systems in other countries as well. Spiritual terms and the belief systems they represent are employed by the trickster figure as a mean of protecting himself and others. In addition these specific terms and systems can be used to identify and specify the individual trickster and his culture. Hynes and Doty indicate this in their essay: "...the belief that important aspects of a trickster figure can be identified across several different cultures" (1992: 2).

The rabbit trickster in Cambodian folktales uses some spiritual terms that represent Cambodia's religious system. The concepts of Indra, *devadā* and *anak tā* are related to superhuman power in the local belief system. *Anak tā* is a local spirit that had

⁸¹ There are three types of races in the yearly cycle of the Khmer animal calendar: human, *devadā* (deity) and *yaky* (ogre). And there are four kinds of elements: water, heat, wood, and earth (cf., Kang Phan: 1972).

⁸² In American popular culture, the rabbit foot is believed to be 'lucky'. *The Rabbit Foot*, <http://www.luckymojo.com/rabbitfoot.htm> (Online).

great influence on people's thinking even before the spread of Buddhism and Brahmanism. The term *anak tā* was mentioned once in the story "Subhā Dansāy in Verse" by the rabbit in order to frighten the tiger and to escape death. The rabbit told the tiger that, "If you eat me, the *anak tā* will cut off your head" (PRBK 2001: 2, 58). The terms Indra and *devadā* are used in Buddhism and Brahmanism (cf., Saveros Pou 1995: 141-161). These terms were employed by the rabbit trickster in the verse and prose version of "Subhā Dansāy" and for two purposes: to save himself and to save others.

Another example is the use of the term Indra in the "The Two Men Who Want to Sleep in the Middle" and in "The Jackal." These represent the skillful quality of rabbit. He also invents a situation through using ambiguity. He declares that he is Indra's messenger, but indeed he does not disguise himself by a change of shape through some magic power. He remains a rabbit and fools everyone anyway by creating ambiguity. Moreover in the same folktale, the Khmer rabbit trickster can be referred to as a bricoleur. This is because he is able to use anything around him, such as a leaf with insect bites, or a hill, to play a trick by using the term Indra in order to establish a completely new situation. The way he uses these terms in the context of the Cambodian belief system and in terms of the six main traits of a trickster (see, Chapter Three) are mostly similar to other trickster types in world folktales. Only the sexual and lewd trait normally found in the trickster character is not present in the Khmer rabbit trickster perhaps due to the influence of the rabbit *bodhisatva* in the *Sasa-Jātaka*. The belief system of Khmer culture is embedded in the folktale. It is not only employed by the rabbit trickster but also serves as a mirror of Khmer culture, one of the seven functions of folktales.

Besides identifying specific religious terms to indicate the belief system embedded in the rabbit trickster folktales, there is another approach that can be used to interpret the cultural value embedded in them: Lévi-Strauss' binary analysis. The main personality of rabbit explored in Khmer tales, accordingly to Lévi-Strauss, is Judge Rabbit and trickster rabbit, a two-sided personality, because we live as dualists (good and bad). Both wise rabbit trickster and deceitful trickster rabbit have the same capability, namely cleverness, but they use it in different ways. The wise rabbit trickster uses his cleverness to rescue others; deceitful rabbit trickster uses it to defend or to trick others. Judge Rabbit represents the person who always helps others, whereas the trickster rabbit represents one who is deceptive and a clever cheater. These characteristics appear mostly in different settings, that is to say the wise rabbit trickster and the deceitful trickster do not exist in the same place nor are they active in the same incident. For example, the

deceitful trickster only appears in the series of “Subhā Dansāy” folktales in the prose and verse versions published by Buddhist Institute, in two palm leaf manuscripts: “Sāstrā Dansāy Sī Cek” and “Sāstrā Dansāy Crūt Spūv” and in many episodes of Midan’s collection.⁸³

Furthermore, “the binary theoretical approach” can be effectively used to understand the Khmer value structure through Khmer rabbit stories. For example, the rabbit and tiger represent the smart and the strong. The rabbit represents cleverness while the crocodile and the tiger represent the foolish. The jackal is characterized as a powerful, mean creature who always mistreats the weaker animals, such as the fish. From this binary analysis one can ascertain the value structure of Cambodian culture. It includes honesty and cleverness as positive values.

From these examples of the Cambodian rabbit trickster personality one can see his two main traits: the wise rabbit and the deceitful rabbit. The most important point in the Cambodian context is that the rabbit is a judge who intervenes between the creatures. He solves their problems through his own capacity and his own strategy. He is not the transformer or type of culture hero who creates the world with magical superpowers as we see in other trickster figures in world mythology. If there is any magic power in a story about the Khmer rabbit trickster, it will only be presented through the concepts embedded in that power through the rabbit trickster himself because he does not have the ability to change into another form. This characteristic is similar to what the scholar Ropo Sekoni explains in *Features of Yoruba Trickster Tale Aesthetics*. He argues that the Ijapa (tortoise) trickster is a secular trickster, not on the mythological level as a culture hero, because most of the tortoise’s personality represents common people in the tribe. Sometimes this Yoruba trickster is interpreted as a rebellious character or protagonist because he is so small he can outsmart and overcome the other characters (n.d., 4-8). From this point of view the many aspects of rabbit’s personality are similar to the Yoruba tortoise trickster since he acts as an intermediary between the most powerful creatures and the underdogs. His personality acts spontaneously according to the circumstance without objectively thinking in terms of any moral law. Moreover, this capacity allows us to learn a moral lesson from rabbit’s negative and positive flexible actions for *savoir vivre*. We learn especially from the rabbit’s negative traits or his errors. As Blaeser notes the trickster saves us from the mistakes by making them for us and in the story he teaches

⁸³ The rabbit appears as a judge mostly in individual tales and in Monod’s redaction.

us how to think by leaning how to think himself (56). This is exemplified in “The Rabbit Reconciles the Two Otters” and “The Wild Buffalo and the Domestic Buffalo.” Both stories reveal that two close friends do not have confidence in each other and do not have a sense of unity so that the rabbit trickster, who plays the roles of a bad mediator, always exploits them. Hence there is a moral lesson embedded in the tales: do not act like the two buffalo and the two otters.

In conclusion, the complex personality of the Khmer rabbit trickster reveals his importance as a social mediator in Khmer culture. His character does not act on the realm of myth in a primordial era but in the realm of mundane social reality. As mentioned by Ricketts, the myths are sacred because they establish and explain the reality of things (344). Rabbit stories are rarely about the origin of things. There is one example in the “Subhā Dansāy in Prose” folktale that explains why the rabbit never drinks water from a pond, only dew (PRBK 2001: 2, 66) or the reason why the tiger has stripes (cf., Monod 1985: 27-32). In brief, the complex nature of the rabbit personality is associated with the profane trickster type found in folktales that are used for examining and viewing social reality and ordinary life rather than to explain the creation of things. It can be said that the rabbit trickster is the “clever hero.”

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1. Conclusion

This research has developed an area of study in the field of Cambodian culture which has been largely neglected in Cambodia since the 1960s, with the exception of Vandy Kaonn's work *Vibhāgadān Knu ★ Kār Siksā Aksarsilp Khmaer* (The Contribution of Studying Khmer Literature). Even though his analysis is not very critically developed in the context of contemporary literary analysis, it is an initial step in establishing folklore studies in Cambodia. His study also incorporates western theory into the study of the Khmer rabbit trickster, thus making this research important in terms of world folklore which focuses on an analysis of the trickster character.

Much of my research is an analysis of the duality of the Khmer rabbit personality based upon concrete examples from folktale collections. In the process of collecting manuscripts I discovered four versions of the story known as "Subhā Dansāy." Some contain similar episodes, some contain unique episodes. This brings up the issue of diffusion both within Cambodia and by foreign scholars who could be creating their own cycle of folktales. The two palm-leaf manuscripts (FEMC 627, 628) and the Buddhist Institute Prose and Verse versions show many similarities. In contrast Monod's cycle of Judge Rabbit stories, with the same title "Subhā Dansāy" (*Le Suphea lièvre*) could have been his own creative collection. This is a fertile area for further research.

A new perspective of this thesis has been the application of western trickster theories to an analysis of the Khmer rabbit personality. I have examined the binary theory of Lévi-Strauss as a suitable approach to deconstructing the rabbit personality as a way to understand the Khmer social value system. The rabbit character's positive side is seen in his role as Judge Rabbit. His role as judge reflects personal qualities valued in Khmer society: fairness, cleverness, skillfulness, the ability to solve problems, and a keen sense of humor. These qualities are reflected by Judge Rabbit's actions in many of the folktales we have discussed. His perverse side is also found in some tales: the lazy rabbit, selfish glutton and prankster. Besides the two main oppositional qualities of the rabbit trickster, the wise rabbit and the deceitful rabbit, I also explored the complex nature of rabbit personality. I associate him with the profane trickster type found in folktales that are used for examining and viewing the realm of mundane social reality and ordinary life rather than to explain the creation of things in the realm of myth in a primordial era.

The rabbit trickster, with his double-sided personality, uses ambiguous and anomalous methods of dealing with different situations. His chief methods are a play on words, humiliation, the use of “spiritual forces,” and using a ruse against a ruse. In brief, the Khmer rabbit’s methods of judgment are a mixture of good and deceitful ways to respond to specific circumstances. In this way he serves to equalize social inequity. One can see how he also reflects the Cambodian religious belief system in the clever way he uses some spiritual terms such as Indra, *devadā* and *anak tā* to fool others.

The Khmer rabbit trickster is similar in many ways to other tricksters in world folklore in both his positive and negative attributes, but in his positive role he is not a culture hero who creates new worlds but a secular hero interested in social equity. In his negative role he avoids the lewd sexual aspects of most tricksters in other cultures. I suggest that this may be due to some Buddhist influence from the rabbit *bodhisatva* of the *Sasa-Jātaka* but this is an area for further research.

I found that the action of the rabbit figure in the *Sasa-Jātaka* is somewhat different from the behavior of the rabbit trickster in Khmer folktales. In this *Jātaka* the self-sacrifice of the rabbit figure represents the fulfillment of the perfection of giving in Buddhism. He is a spiritual type, one who is more sacred and who transcends the world of ordinary human beings. In contrast, the rabbit trickster in Khmer folktales mostly reflects the social reality of Khmer culture. He serves as the most skillful practitioner of common sense and intelligence in daily life. A transcendent religious character, not a trickster, the rabbit of the *Jātaka* tale is completely self-sacrificing. His influence may have ameliorated some of the rougher negative aspects of typical trickster traits in the folktales.

Other outside cultural influences and texts besides the *Jātaka* may have shaped the development of Khmer folktales and the rabbit trickster: the *Milindapañha*, and the *Pañchatantra*. Although Cambodians believe that the themes of their folktales have developed purely in their own local context, a closer analysis shows that this is not always the case.

Otherwise, the influence of the rabbit stories in Khmer Society can be considered it as a part of a cultural heritage due to its important role in the educational system, social development and in influence of the justice system. In the area of education and literature studies, rabbit stories serve as a model text for students to develop critical thinking on the consequences of good or bad experiences, not to not just accept everything without questioning it. For example rabbit stories have been selected as part of the educational system in the “Khmer Language Course,” from first to tenth grades,

and sometime even at the university degree. Moreover, rabbit stories show various forms of conflict, a part of social life. The different kinds of conflict often appear in the daily lives of ordinary people. In the context of the folktale, the conflict generally is created by mean, strong, and powerful characters such as a tiger or crocodile, and the conflict is resolved by Judge Rabbit, who is small and physically weak but very smart. From understanding the conflict and resolution of the rabbit stories especially about the complexity of rabbit's personality, one can develop and understanding about how to face difficult circumstance and find a solution. Building peace from one's mind-set is an important contribution of conflict resolution. Judge Rabbit serves as a role model in this respect. The rabbit stories not only play a role in social development but also in the justice system in Khmer society since the rabbit is still used as the symbol of justice. There is explicit evidence of this in the rabbit float representing the Ministry of Justice in the fiftieth anniversary of Independence Day in 2003 (see appendix 3, figure 1 and 2). In conclusion, the rabbit stories are part of Cambodia's cultural heritage. They have influenced the educational curriculum and literature studies, social development, and the justice system.

6.2. Suggestions for Further Research

There are a number of areas for future research. Most deal with the need for a more fully developed comparative study between the rabbit trickster in Cambodia and the rabbit character in other cultural contexts in terms of tracing the diffusion of the Judge Rabbit tales. Firstly, the source of the "Subhā Dansāy" cycle and of the Judge Rabbit character calls for further research. There are Judge Rabbit stories in Burma but not in Thailand and Laos, as one would suspect. Further research needs to be done on folktale manuscripts in all three countries. Such study would confirm the similarity of Judge Rabbit tales in Burma and Cambodia and suggest some possible source of diffusion. It would also verify that there are no Judge Rabbit manuscripts in Laos and Thailand thus leading into an area of discussion about why this is so. Moreover, P. Cardon has suggested that the mousedeer trickster in Malaysian and Indonesian folktales and Cambodia's Judge Rabbit may have come from the same source. This is an intriguing question which requires further research.

I would like to mention two last considerations for further research. Currently, there is no fieldwork on the oral tradition in Cambodia focusing on the rabbit stories in the rural areas. This is an important area for future investigation especially since there is

an indication that the oral tradition may be in jeopardy due to the introduction of mass media in rural areas. The second area for further research has been mentioned by Jacques Népote regarding the use of rabbit's figure on the Seal of Justice in Cambodia. What is the relationship between the rabbit figure and the ancient political system? For this area of investigation we would have to explore historical archives related to the administrative system and court system in Cambodia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of the Contents of Rabbit Trickster Cycle

1. PRBK Verse: “Rīoen Subhā Dansāy Jā Bāky Kāby” (The Story of Judge Rabbit in Verse)⁸⁴ (PRBK 2001: 2, 52-64) is the same as “Sāstrā Dansāy Crūt Spūv” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Cuts Thatch) FEMC 628.
 - The rabbit, the hen, the tiger, the eagle and the otter go to cut thatch.
 - The rabbit makes a fire on the tiger’s back
 - The rabbit is on the tree (*toem sanghār*).
 - The rabbit is on the vine.
 - The rabbit is on the bamboo tree.
 - The rabbit sits on the bumblebee hive.
 - The rabbit falls into the well.
 - The rabbit calls for villagers to kill the tiger.
2. PRBK Prose: “Rīoen Subhā Dansāy Jā Bāky Rāy” (The Story of Judge Rabbit in Prose) (PRBK 2001: 2, 65-74).
 - The rabbit wants to eat bananas.
 - The rabbit and the shellfish.
 - The rabbit cheats the crocodile.
 - The rabbit enters the buffalo’s belly.
 - The crocodile cheats the rabbit.
 - The rabbit’s buttock sticks on the tree stump.
 - The rabbit is caught in a trap two times and the toad is deceived by the rabbit.
 - The rabbit frightens the tiger and the monkey dies.
 - The rabbit is caught and he pretends to be dead.
 - The rabbit is caught again and he cooperates with the fish.
 - The old couple has nothing to eat.
3. Wat Phum Thmey version (FEMC 627): “Sāstrā Dansāy Sī Cek” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Eats Bananas).
 - The elder couple plants the bananas (in long narration).
 - The rabbit desires to eat bananas.

⁸⁴ A type of versification. see, Ing Yeng (1972: 44-47).

- The couple is very angry, they set a trap.
- The rabbit is caught in a trap the first time; the toad is cheated by the rabbit.
- The rabbit is caught in a trap the second time, he pretends to be dead.
- The rabbit makes friends with the goat.
- The rabbit saves the goat's life
- The rabbit deceives the crocodile to ferry him across the river
- The crocodile pretends to be dead in the water.
- The crocodile pretends to be dead on the earth.
- The rabbit escapes death and lives happily with the goat.

4. G.H Monod's versions of "Sophéa Tonsay or Le Sophea lièvre" (1985: 21-48):

- The rabbit sticks on the tree stump.
- The rabbit saves the fish's life.
- The rabbit and the tortoise show their power to the tiger.
- The rabbit wants to eat bananas.
- The two men set traps.
- The fruit seller and the magistrate.
- The poor man loves the rich man's daughter.
- The crafty man borrows money from another man.
- The reputation of the wise rabbit and how his figure came to be on the seal of justice.

Story 1: *Niyāy Bī Dansāy Jā Cau Kra* (The Rabbit Is a Judge)⁸⁵

One day, a man said to himself: “I heard that Judge Rabbit (Subhā Dansāy) is very intelligent, so I want to test him.” Thinking that, he wrote a request to some magistrates for him to solve.

The request: “A few months ago, my buffalo was stolen. It is neither a male nor female buffalo. It was stolen neither last year, nor this year, and the thief is neither my relative, nor a stranger. What is its gender? Who has stolen my buffalo and when?”

Then the man sent this request to the magistrates to help him. None of them could understand this request. They threw it away saying: “It is a stupid letter. The person who wrote this letter is really crazy.”

The wise rabbit looked at it and explained, “This is not a stupid letter and the one who wrote it is also not crazy. A buffalo who is neither a male nor female is a castrated buffalo. That it was stolen neither last year nor this year means that the buffalo was stolen during the night of last year just before passing into the New Year. The thief who is neither a relative nor a stranger is the brother-in-law.

Hearing his answer, all the magistrates and the man who wrote the request appreciated and respected rabbit’s intelligence.

⁸⁵ From Midan (1986: 72).

Story 2: *Anak Daṅṅoer Bīr Nāk' Daṅtoem Gnā Tek Kaṅtāl* (Two Men Want to Sleep in the Middle) ⁸⁶

Once upon the time, there were two men traveling on a long journey. It was getting dark so they decided to sleep in the jungle where they were. Both of them wanted to sleep in the middle of their bedroll but they did not know how to do it. Then they thought, “We should sleep with our legs entwined.” After that they fell asleep.

Suddenly, a tiger arrived and saw the men covered with cloth and sleeping with their legs entwined. He really wondered what it was. Therefore, he called some other animals— cattle, deer, rhinoceroses, monkeys, jackals and elephants— over to see it. None of them recognized what it was. After they had gathered, the animals asked: “Are all the animals here now?”

“Only a rabbit who is famous for his cleverness and trickery isn’t here yet,” responded some animals.

“Therefore let’s appoint Brother Elephant to ask rabbit to come see it,” said one animal.

The elephant saw the rabbit sitting on the tree stump. “Brother Elephant! Why do you come here?” yelled the rabbit.

The elephant answered. “Brother Rabbit! There is a strange animal that no one can identify, so I ask you to see it with me.”

“What does it look like?” the rabbit asked.

“The animal has a huge top, huge bottom and is small in the middle. It is about 5 arm lengths (5 hāta),” responded the elephant.

“Oh! Don’t worry!! I will identify it, but I need to ride on the top of your head,” responded the rabbit.

The rabbit sat on the elephant’s head. When they arrived, the rabbit took a leaf covered with insect bites that looked like a script. He pretended to read this letter out loud: “All animals listen to me. I am a servant of Indra. He has sent me to bring this message to you.”

Then the rabbit, after climbing to the top of the hill, pretended to read the letter further: “The name of this strange animal is *Yokī Yokā*, Indra orders him to kill all the animals, including me.”

⁸⁶ In PRBK 2001: 2, 112-115.

Hearing this, all the animals quickly fled, chaotically running over each other. Some ended up with broken legs and broken hands. Some had other types of wounds and others died.

The two men who had been sleeping woke up and realized that all the animals had been scared by the rabbit and had run over each other. The men got up and gratefully paid their respect to the rabbit who had saved their lives.

The two men said, “You are very smart. With your ability, you deserve to be Subhā (Judge).”

Then the two men took with them some animal flesh left on the ground. While they were walking, they met a thin tiger with a broken leg so they walked along with him.

A carter stopped and asked the two men, “Why do you have a lot of meat?”

The men answered, “This dog with a broken leg found it. He is good at finding animals in any jungle. Hearing this, the naïve carter believed it and asked them to sell it to him because his village was full of animals.

Both men pretended to be reluctant to sell it saying, “If we sell this dog to you, we’ll lack food; but since we met you, we will sell it to you.”

The men asked, “How much will you pay for it?”

The carter said, “I have only this pair of cows with the cart. I want to exchange my cows and the cart for your dog.”

The two men were secretly elated. Feigning their reluctance they said, “We do love our dog. When you take it, please take good care of it and feed it well.” After receiving the ox cart, they immediately went away.

The carter fed the thin tiger who had a broken leg. When it was better, the tiger ran away into the forest. The carter deeply regretted that he had given away his cows and cart. The foolish carter and his wife sadly returned home with nothing.

Story 3: *Manuss Bīr Nāk' Nau Phdah Jit Gnā* (Two Neighbors)⁸⁷

Once upon a time, there were two men who were neighbors. One day those two men decided to set traps in the forest. After deciding that, they departed later in the afternoon.

When they approached the forest, the first man said: "I will put a trap at the bottom of the tree because animals always come to eat the fruit that has fallen there." And the second man said: "I also want to put my trap at this place; however, now you have put it there so I will put my trap at the top of the tree. Then we will wait until tomorrow morning. We will see." Saying this, one put his trap at the bottom of the tree and the other put his trap at the top of the tree. Then they went back home.

When the man who set his trap at the top of the tree arrived home, he and his wife talked: "Since the time of my ancestors, I have never heard of anyone catching a four-footed animal by setting a trap at the top of a tree. Now I have put my trap at that place; how can I catch an animal from it! So I had better go early in the morning. If I see a four-footed animal trapped at the bottom of the tree, I will transfer it to my trap. When morning arrives, I will go with the man who set his trap at the bottom of the tree. If he doesn't agree with what's happened, I will give some meat from the animal in my trap to Judge Parrot; and Judge Parrot will help me to win the case." After coming up with this plan, the husband and wife fell asleep until early morning.

As soon as the first cock crowed, the second man got up and left home to go to the forest. When he arrived, he saw that a deer was trapped at the bottom of the tree; and he transferred this animal to his trap at the top of the tree. Then he returned home.

At dawn, the one who had set his trap at the bottom of the tree called out to the second man to go see what was in the traps.

The second man pretended not to know anything and said, "Don't be in such a hurry. I don't think I caught an animal because my trap is at the top of the tree. Your trap must have caught an animal. If so, please share it with me."

When they approached the place where they had put their traps, they saw that an animal had been caught in the trap at the top of the tree. The man who had set his trap there mocked the other man saying, "Oh look! If you had just listened to me before you

⁸⁷ This version is from PRBK (2001: 1, 7-9). It can be found in Midan, with some different mythemes. In Midan's text, the man puts his trap in the water and another puts his trap at the top of the tree in order to catch fish. The first judge is a magistrate and the second judge is the rabbit (1986: 74).

put your trap at the bottom of the tree, you would have gotten the animal." Then he undid the trap and got the deer. They all went back home.

The man who had the deer hurried to give Judge Parrot some meat from the animal and told him that, "Another man and I went to set traps. I put my trap at the top of the tree, and the other man put his trap at the bottom of the tree. I am dishonest. I know that he will come to you. So please do what you can. Help me to win the case. I will show my gratitude to you in the future."

As soon as Judge Parrot received the deer meat, he replied, "Go buy areca and betel and give them to me early tomorrow morning. If that man files a complaint with me about this case, I will order him to get the areca and betel. If he comes late with them, I will judge that he lost the case. So you hurry back home."

When the man who put his trap at the bottom of the tree arrived home, he was so disappointed that he disagreed with this situation. He went to Judge Parrot who ordered him to do exactly what he had told the other man. The next morning the other man brought the areca and the betel early.

The man who set his trap at the bottom of the tree was poor and so pitiful. He could not buy those things. He was so frightened and he was afraid of losing the case. Therefore he ran from village to village in search of someone who could help him. Suddenly he met Judge Rabbit who said: "Stop! Stop! Why are you running around like that? What is wrong with you?"

That man sadly replied, "Please sir! Please sir! Help me. There is some unfair issue. I put my trap at the bottom at the tree and the other man put his trap at the top of the tree; however, the trap at the top of the tree caught a deer. I don't agree that this could happen so I went to Judge Parrot. Judge Parrot ordered that whoever returns with the areca and betel first will win the case. Consequently I am so scared. Please rescue me if you can."

"Okay. Don't be worried. Wait until this evening and I will go with you," said the rabbit. Hearing these words, the poor man was delighted.

When evening arrived, Judge Rabbit and the poor man went to Judge Parrot's house. Judge Parrot asked, "Why are you so late? You lost the case already."

"We are late because we were waiting to watch a fish fly up to eat a tamarind leaf," Judge Rabbit replied.

Judge Parrot wondered and said, "Since the time of my ancestors, I've never heard of anyone who has seen a fish fly up to eat a tamarind leaf."

And Judge Rabbit also said, “From my ancestors and my parents, I also have never heard of a four-legged animal trapped at the top of the tree instead of at the bottom. Has any villager ever heard of that?”

Hearing this, Judge Parrot was so quiet. He had nothing to reply.

Judge Rabbit judged in favor of the poor man. Judge Parrot who was sitting nearby was so embarrassed and humiliated because of his desire to eat deer meat.

The moral is: **“Lmobh It Kmās Vinās Cpap’ ” (Desire and Greed Lead to Breaking the Law).**

Story 4: *Ka Oloh Bīr Nāk' Ca* † *Pān Prabandh Ge* (The Two Men Wanted Another Man's Wife)⁸⁸

There was a couple who has just recently married. The wife of the young man was so pretty. One day, they went to visit their relatives. Two men who simultaneously saw how beautiful the young wife was fell in love with her. They planned how to take the young man's wife for themselves. The crafty man said to the second man, "It will be easy to take her. Just borrow a chariot and pretend that you do not know me. If I ask you about the chariot, you do not answer 'the chariot,' you just answer: 'This is a pole; this is an axle; this is a wheel, etc.' "

The second man went to borrow a chariot from someone. The crafty man saw the young couple walking on the road; he called out that he wanted to chat for a moment. The couple agreed and went over. When the second man driving the ox cart arrived, the crafty man pretended he didn't know him and asked: "Eh! What is this?" The poor young man with the beautiful wife answered: "It is a chariot."

"Are you sure that it is a chariot?" The crafty man emphasized.

The poor man convincingly responded, "Yes, sure it is a chariot."

The crafty man said, "If it is a real chariot, do you dare to bet with me?"

The poor man asked, "Do you have anything to bet?"

The crafty man replied, "If I lose the bet, I will be your servant. If I win the bet, I will take your wife."

Because the poor man surely believed that it was a chariot, he also agreed to the bet. Then the crafty man pointed to the chariot and asked the driver of the chariot what it was. He pointed to the wheel, the axle, the yoke, and the body. The driver said, "It is a wheel, the yoke, the axle and the body." The crafty man said, "After answering these questions, there is nothing but parts and nothing to be called the 'chariot'; therefore you lose the bet. Give me your wife."

The poor man disagreed and went to file a complaint with the magistrate at the court. The two men who wanted the poor man's wife had bribed the magistrate so he judged against the poor man.

The poor man was so angry because he had lost his beloved wife. He was walking with his eyes full of tears when he met a rabbit. And the rabbit asked, "What's wrong with you? Why are you so sad?"

⁸⁸ PRBK 2001: 1, 59-61.

The poor man explained what had happened to him. The rabbit said, “Don’t worry. I will help you. You just get a bunch of bananas for me first.”

The poor man was delighted and went to get some bananas for him. Next the rabbit and the poor man went to the court. The rabbit asked about the case that the magistrate had judged. He told the magistrate that, “Your discernment is not fair; hence I will judge it again.”

The rabbit asked the crafty man: “When you bet, what did you put up for betting?”

The crafty man replied: “The wife.”

The rabbit continued, “Which parts do you call ‘wife’? If you are able to find any, the wife will belong to you. If not, the wife will belong to her husband.”

Then the crafty man touched her hands and her feet and Judge Rabbit called out “The hands and the feet. All these components, such as the head, the feet, the hair and so forth incorporate what is represented by the name ‘wife’, like ‘chariot’ depends on the pole, the axle, the wheel, the framework, etc. Therefore you need to give his wife back.”

The clever Judge Rabbit blamed the magistrate saying, “Brother! You judged a case by taking a bribe. It is not right; it does not follow the law.”

The poor man was delighted after receiving his wife back. He gratefully said, “Your judgment is fully right. I wish greater wealth for you.”

Story 5: *Mahā Īsī Proh Khlā* (The Great Hermit Saves the Tiger's Life)⁸⁹

Once a tiger was sleeping in front of a snake's hole, The snake came out, bit and killed the tiger. Meanwhile a great hermit out on a journey happened to wander past that place. Because his heart was so kind, he revived the tiger back to life.

The tiger, whom the great hermit had cured, said, "I was well and fast asleep. Why do you awaken me? Because of that I need to eat you."

The great hermit replied: "You had been sleeping in front of a snake's hole, and the snake bit you and you died. I have restored your life. Why do you want to eat me?"

The tiger and the great hermit had a dispute with each other. Hence they asked the jackal for help. The tiger and the great hermit explained what the dispute was. The jackal thought: "If I judge that the tiger loses the case, I won't be able to depend on his power in this forest anymore." That the jackal judged the case like this was due to his bias caused by love or desire (*chandāgati*).

The great hermit did not accept this resolution. Then they found a cow judge and told him what happened. The cow judge reckoned that, "If I do not help the tiger, he will hate me and eat me." So the cow helped the tiger to win. His judgment was biased by fear (*bhayāgati*).

Then the great hermit asked a monkey for help. The monkey thought: "In the past, a man had fallen into the well and my father helped him; however that crafty man ate my father." The monkey's judgment was clouded by hatred or enmity (*dosāgati*).

The fourth judge was a buzzard. He thought to himself, "Currently I often get my food from the remains of a tiger's meal. If I decide against the tiger, he will be angry with me. How will I be able to get my food from him?" The buzzard's judgment was biased by his greed or desire (*lophāgati*).

The great hermit disagreed again and he went to a tree spirit who thought, "People walking in the forest and taking shelter always break and cut off the leaves." So the tree spirit judged in favor of the tiger. His judgment was biased by delusion or stupidity (*Mohāgati*).

But the great hermit did not accept this judgment. He asked Judge Rabbit for help and explained what happened again to the rabbit. The great hermit said, "This tiger who was sleeping in front of the snake's hole was killed by the snake's bite. I returned him to

⁸⁹ From PRBK 2001: 3, 1-3.

life by using my magic charm. However he is ungrateful. Now he wants to eat me anyway. Please, sir, consider this case and help me.”

The tiger explained: “While I was comfortably sleeping, the great hermit awakens me. Consequently I am tempted to eat him. He did not accept this. He asked the jackal, the cow, the monkey, the buzzard and the tree spirit for help; and all these judges decided for me. Please help me.”

Hearing the great hermit’s and the tiger’s explanations, Judge Rabbit considered them, relying on his intelligence. He gave the following order: “Let the great hermit and Brother Tiger go back to where this incident happened, and I will judge it again.” They also agreed and went back there.

When the great hermit and the tiger approached that place, the tiger went to sleep on the snake’s hole again. After a while the snake came out, bit the tiger who then died. Then Judge Rabbit advised the great hermit, “Please look at that tiger. Due to his ingratitude he has died of his own accord. From now on, don’t be so generous to a tiger.” This judgment of Judge Rabbit was based upon his independent, fair and honest way of thinking.

Story 6: *Kra Boe Ni* ✦ *Anak Parradeh* (The Crocodile and the Carter)⁹⁰

A crocodile lived in a big lake which became empty when the dry season arrived. The pitiful crocodile was so weak he could barely stand so he crawled up onto the land in search of deeper water.

Meanwhile an older man driving his cart arrived and met the crocodile as he was crawling.

Seeing this, the crocodile asked for help. The elder asked him, “Where will you go?”

The crocodile replied, “I have no settled place to live because the lake where I used to live is now dry. I can’t live there anymore. Therefore I’m looking for a lake, a pond, or a river that is full of water. If you have compassion, please sir! Please take me in your cart to deeper water.”

The kind-hearted man agreed to take him in his cart. Then he proceeded to unyoke the cows and lift the crocodile onto the cart. The crocodile was afraid of falling from the cart so he asked the old man to tie him with the rope onto the cart. The elder man also accepted this suggestion and did what the crocodile told him. Then he drove his cart with the crocodile. When they approached a big, deep lake, the kind man stopped the cart and unknotted the rope in order to let him crawl into the water.

The ungrateful and hungry crocodile said, “You had tied me onto your cart. I suffered so much from being hurt. So you must give me a cow for food. If you don’t give it to me, I will eat you instead right now!”

Hearing this threat, the elder man felt so frightened and begged, “Oh crocodile! I’ve done a gracious deed for you. Now you want to eat me anyway. I do not have any guilt. You should not kill me. So, I do not accept your argument. Let me find a magistrate to judge this situation first before you eat me. Are you okay with this?”

The crocodile also agreed with this suggestion and said, “Okay, you can go to find the magistrate to judge this case as soon as possible; I will wait for you here.”

The elder man brought a bunch of bananas with him as he walked to find a magistrate. On the way he met a rabbit on the hill. Seeing that man carrying a bunch of bananas, the rabbit asked, “Oh! Sir, Why are you weeping? What’s wrong with you? Please come here.”

The pitiful man explained what had happened to him with the crocodile.

⁹⁰ This version takes from PRBK 2001: 7,10-13.

Realizing these events, the rabbit said, “Of course! That crocodile is ungrateful. I will be the judge for you. Don’t be worried. I will help you, but you should give me these bananas to eat first. Then we will go together.”

The old man gave the rabbit the bananas to eat. Then they went to the place where the event had happened. When they approached, the rabbit said, “That kind man had helped you to find deeper water. Why are you so ungrateful? Why do you want to eat him anyway?”

The crocodile replied, “Yes sir, Subhā. That elder man has taken me to this place, but he hurt me so much. He tied me so strongly with the rope to his cart that I could not move my body and could not breathe. He caused me to suffer so much and that’s why I am angry with him. He must give me a cow to eat. If he disagrees, I will eat him instead.”

The rabbit pretended, saying, “Oh, old man! You tied him so strongly that he is angry with you. Why did you tie him so tightly? He almost could not breathe.”

The elder man responded, “Oh no, no. I did not tie him so tightly. I tied him normally so that he would not fall off the cart.”

The rabbit said, “Oh, we cannot judge now because Brother Crocodile has said he was tied tightly and the elder man has said that he tied him normally; and there is no witness for this situation. Therefore, Brother Crocodile you should return to the cart and let the man tie you up again. Then I will judge this situation fairly.” As soon as he tied the crocodile tightly, the rabbit planned to order the man to kill him with his axe.

The numskull crocodile crawled onto the cart and let the man tie him again. The rabbit asked, “Did the elder man tie you like that?”

The crocodile replied, “No, no, sir. If he had tied me normally like this, I would not be angry with him.”

The rabbit ordered the elder man saying: “Yes, tie him tighter than this in order to please the crocodile.” The elder man did what the rabbit told him.

The rabbit asked again, “How do you feel right now? Did he tie you tightly now like before?”

The crocodile replied, “No sir. Not yet like before.”

The rabbit ordered the man again saying: “You need to take a wedge so as to squeeze him again on both sides, the front part and the back part.

Then the elder man did what the rabbit told him. He tied him tighter until the crocodile could not breathe. When the crocodile was tightly squeezed, he yelled, “Of

course. He tied me tightly like this. Please sir, look at this and be my witness. Who is right and who is wrong?"

After seeing this circumstance, the rabbit ordered the elder man, saying: "Why don't you take out your axe nearby and hit his head now? Don't let him stay alive because he is an ingrate. He never realized your good action."

Judge Rabbit ordered, "Take the crocodile's tail. You can barbecue it, boil it, or make it into a salad; you can use the crocodile's intestines for a salad. It is really good tasting."

The elder man did just as Judge Rabbit said. Then he showed his gratitude to Judge Rabbit by giving him a bunch of bananas. After that the elder man drove his cart back home.

Story 7: How the Rabbit Figure Came to Be on the Seal of Justice⁹¹

The cleverness of the rabbit became famous everywhere.

Once there lived a king who has a son around twenty years old. He wanted his son to have a princess, the most beautiful girl in the world, but he could not find anyone suitable. He arrived at a country where rabbit was living and saw the king's daughter of that realm. She was the most beautiful girl in that county.

The king with the son sent a message through the ambassador to the king who had that daughter. The message said, "Your majesty, I heard that you have a beautiful daughter. I am very pleased to send my ambassador to ask for her hand in marriage to my son. If there is anything you want in return, I will satisfy your desire. I am very pleased to give you my slaves, my people, my kingdom; I will even be your vassal. Whatever you demand, I will obey your command even though it may be the most difficult task. However, if you refuse my request made with good intent, I will take my army and declare war on you. I will take your country and your people will be my servants."

The king who had the pretty daughter felt so angry with this message. He did not intend for his beloved daughter to marry the prince whose father used to be an enemy nor have a war with him because it would cause many people to die. Therefore, he delayed seven days in order to think. Then he let the ambassador return.

The king called for a meeting of all the ministers in order to request their advice about how to solve this problem. None of them could find a solution. The king was so disappointed. He sent advertisements everywhere so as to find a clever person who could help. Suddenly, one of two men said, "Your majesty! I have known a rabbit who is most intelligent. He always has the last word among the magistrates. Everyone calls him Judge Rabbit (Subhā Dansāy). He serves as an advocate."

Hearing these words, the king ordered five elephants to be fitted with envoys who will seek the rabbit and ask him to come to the palace.

The king explained what the situation was, and asked rabbit for help, saying: "If you can find the way to respond to my heart, I will take care off you; and I will give you an honorable title. You will be honored. If you die, I will conserve your image in perpetuity so that your reputation will last forever."

⁹¹ Monod (1985: 45-48).

The rabbit replied, “Your majesty, I want to help you in such difficult circumstances, but for this case, you should permit me to speak on your behalf without refusing or disagreeing with even a single word.”

“I will permit you to speak freely because I have complete confidence in you,” said the king.

“Therefore, your majesty, please agreed with the ambassador’s letter.”

The rabbit sat on the throne and said to the ambassador: “Excellent! Please return to tell your lord that our king and other ministers agree with your request.”

Rabbit then said, “Your king has asked you to convey to him my response: ‘Our king and his ministers have decided to agree with the engagement of his daughter to your son. However your master must fulfill and satisfy all my demands. We order the king and his son to fly up into the sky to provide us with a cart whose wheels are made out of the sun and the moon in order to convey the princess.’ This is our proposition to your master because he had declared that he would do anything for us no matter how difficult. If your master cannot do it, our king does not have to betroth his daughter to your son.’ That is all I want to say.”

The ambassador brought the rabbit’s message back to his master. Hearing these words, the king was so surprised and said, “My goodness!, Who can fly? Who can make the cart’s wheels from the sun and the moon? My goodness!, We cannot do this. My kingdom is lost. I will become his servant.” After that he wrote a declaration saying: “I recognize the rule of the princess’s father with my seal and seal of all my high dignitaries.”

The princess was not married to the prince because he could not fulfill the conditions of the king for his daughter’s betrothal.

The King paid his respect to the profound knowledge of the rabbit. He took care of and honored the rabbit and he appointed him as the head of all the judges in the whole kingdom.

Any affair too delicate for people is often tackled by the rabbit.

The rabbit became old and died. The king ordered that all the judges (subhā) use a seal with the rabbit image just as he had promised in order to perpetuate rabbit’s image. You know that it is still kept this way today.

Story 8: The Crafty Man Borrows Money from Another Man⁹²

A crafty man borrowed some money from a man. They made a loan agreement, dated on the first day of the fifth lunar month.⁹³ The debtor promised to pay back the money, including principle and interest, whenever there were two full moons.

At the end of two moons or in two moons' time, the lender asked for his money back from the debtor. The debtor refused to repay it saying that the time had not yet arrived. Therefore, the lender petitioned the court for repayment. The magistrate called for the defendant to come to testify.

The crafty man said, "I admit that I borrowed some money from another man. But we had an agreement. I promised to pay him back whenever there were two full moons. However the lender asked me to repay the money before that deadline had arrived. Please sir, magistrate, I would like you to look up at the sky. If you see two moons there, I will repay him right now."

The magistrate found that the sky had only one moon so he declared the term of payment to be whenever there were two full moons.

The lender disagreed with this judgment so he went to find Judge Rabbit. Judge Rabbit said, "Your case is very simple, don't be worried! Find some boards and bamboo, then build a pretty raft. Tonight, you must buy some white wine and prepare for a party on the raft and we will be happy together."

The lender followed Judge Rabbit's instructions. They also invited the magistrate and the debtor to their party. When nighttime arrived, the rabbit invited all the guests into a small enclave built on the raft. He invited all the guests to please themselves with the delicious food and the white wine as he planned to enjoy some ripe bananas.

When the dinner was finished, the rabbit started to discuss the loan agreement with the magistrate. He asked, "How did you judge this case and how was it resolved?"

The magistrate responded, "That case is not finished yet. It cannot be declared again. However, the case was judged based upon their agreement. The debt will be repaid whenever there are two full moons."

The rabbit asked, "Could you permit me to ask a question of the defendant?"

The magistrate replied, "Of course, please."

⁹² This is an episode from "Le Sophea lièvre," Monod 1985: 43-45. The content of this story is similar to the episode of "Two Moons and Defeat" from *Tales of Sri Thanonchai: Thailand's Artful Trickster*, (Bangkok Naga Books), 111-113.

⁹³ Each Cambodian lunar month has only a full moon day, the fifteenth days of the first fifteen days in a lunar month.

The rabbit asked, “As I understand it, you promised to give the lender his money back, not on two moons in two months but whenever we will see two moons at once. Is that how you understand your loan agreement?”

“Exactly! If you can point to two full moons at the same time, I will pay him back immediately,” said the debtor.

The rabbit said, “Mr. Magistrate, sir, in this situation I would like you to have him pay the money back immediately to my client.

The magistrate gazed upward and said, “I see only one moon in the sky.”

The rabbit said, “Look carefully, Mr. Magistrate, sir! There!! In the sky, that is a moon and that is another moon in the water. Do you see two moons, Mr. Magistrate, sir? They are full and round.”

Hearing this and seeing these moons, the magistrate ordered the debtor to pay his debt to the lender immediately.

Story 9: *Niyāy Bī Dansāy Phsah Phsār Bhe Bīr Prā* (The Rabbit Reconciles the Two Otters)⁹⁴

One day, two otters went to catch fish together. They caught a fish, but they could not divide it equally because each of them only wanted the head. One otter said, “I want the fish head.” The other otter also said, “I want the head too.” Therefore, they did not know how to come to an agreement with each other.

The rabbit, who had observed this event asked, “Oh Brother Otters! What is wrong with both of you?” Both otters answered: “We caught a fish but we don’t know how to divide it.”

The rabbit continued, “Why can’t you divide it?” The otter replied, “Because we both only want the fish head.”

The rabbit told the otters: “So let me help you to divide it. Brothers just give me the fish.” The rabbit cut the fish into three pieces: the head, the middle and the tail, then he gave the head to the first otter and the tail to the second otter.

He said: “Brother Otter here is the head for you.” To the other otter he said: “This tail is for you. Since I helped you to divide this fish, I’ll take the middle because I am tired.” Then the rabbit took most of the fish and walked away.

⁹⁴ Cf., Midan (1986: 58).

Story 10: *Subhā Dansāy Jā Bāky Kāby* (The Story of Subhā Dansāy in Verse)⁹⁵

There were five animals—an otter, a hen, a tiger, an eagle, and a rabbit—who were friends. They had planned to build a house. The tiger said, “We should first go to reap thatch before constructing the house.”

When they had approached the field of grass, they settled and camped there, then started to reap the thatch. The otter said, “Among us, who will be the cook?” Brother Tiger was made the cook while the others went out to cut the thatch.

The hen, the otter, and the eagle rapidly cut the plants, except the rabbit. The rabbit pretended to be sick because he wanted to spy on the tiger who was finding the food. He slowly walked after the tiger who was catching a deer. Seeing this, he quickly ran back, pretending to shiver with cold in order to convince the other animals that he was sick.

The three animals cursed the rabbit for being too lazy to work. The rabbit quickly explained, “Don’t be in such a hurry to scold me, I really am sick; I have a serious fever, I am shivering with cold like a bird and I have a headache. I am not pretending.” However, they ignored the rabbit and continued to cut the thatch.

Later the rabbit asked himself, “I wonder what we will have for dinner this evening?” He answered himself: “We will have some special food.” Hearing this, the otter, the hen, and the eagle asked him to guess what it was.

The rabbit immediately replied, “If I guess it right, you all don’t get to eat. We’ll have deer’s meat for food,” guessed the rabbit. When the tiger arrived with a deer, the rabbit said, “You see! I am good at guessing; I am a fortune teller.” Then they all ate together.⁹⁶

The next morning, it was the otter’s turn to find food and so off he went. The rabbit again pretended to be sick. He said, “I have a stomach ache. I cannot go to cut thatch with all of you.” Actually, he wanted to secretly watch the otter catching fish. When the otter arrived at a pond, he dived in and caught a fish (trī chto).⁹⁷ Seeing this, the rabbit quickly returned to the field of thatch. He slowly walked up and said to the tiger, the hen, and the eagle, “Who knows? What will we have for food?”

⁹⁵ This version translates from PRBK 2001: 2, 65-74. For another version can be seen in palm leaf manuscript (FEMC 627): “Sāstrā Dansāy Sī Cek” (The Manuscript of the Rabbit Who Eats Bananas).

⁹⁶ This episode can be seen in Midan “The Rabbit Takes the Chicken’s Food” (1986: 60). There are some differences: after the rabbit plays a guessing game with the chicken, the chicken gets lost and ends up with nothing to eat since the rabbit has taken its food.

⁹⁷ A kind of fresh water fish.

Those animals were too lazy to talk with him and so they let him guess. The rabbit answered, “We will have fish (trī chto)”

Over the next few days, it was the eagle’s turn, and then the hen’s turn to be the cook. The rabbit acted the same way every day, guessing what they would eat in order to tease the animals. The eagle caught a fish (trī brā); and the hen laid an egg.⁹⁸

When the rabbit’s turn arrived, he was so worried because he did not have any food for the others. He thought, “So I need to try to do what the other animals did.”

First he wanted to catch a deer like the tiger did; unfortunately, he was beat and attacked by the deer. He complained to himself, “Oh, my body! I almost died; my body aches all over.” Then he imitated the way that the otter had caught food. Not only did he fail to catch a fish but also sank into the water. After that the rabbit followed the eagle catching the fish. However when the fish was freed, he nearly died because he dove into the water. Finally he decided to do as the same as the hen. The rabbit defecated into a pot and cooked it as a food called Prahuk (a traditional Khmer food).

As soon as he finished cooking, he played at being sick with a fever and chills, and he went to sleep. The hen, the tiger, the otter, and the eagle believed that the rabbit’s excrement was a food called Prahuk so they all ate it except the rabbit.

When they finished eating, the rabbit stood up energetically and proudly smiled and said, “You all ate my dung!”

They were so angry with him that they chased him. The rabbit ran away into the forest. The next day, he came back and participated with them because the four animals had stopped being angry.

When the otter, the hen, the eagle, the tiger, and the rabbit finished cutting the thatch, they thought about how to carry it back to their house. The rabbit explained that the tiger had the biggest and strongest appearance. The other animals agreed with him. Therefore they gathered everything—dishes, utensils, sickle, steel lighters and knives and the thatch—and they put it all on the tiger’s back. The rabbit also sat on his back to be the driver. While the tiger was walking along the road, the rabbit took out a steel lighter hitting it many times until he had set the tiger’s back on fire.⁹⁹ The thatch burned the

⁹⁸ Cf. Midan, “The Rabbit Was Cheated by the Tiger.” When it is the hen’s turn to be the cook, the rabbit wanted to eat the egg alone. However the tiger took it first to eat alone. The rabbit was so angry he wanted revenge (1986:62).

⁹⁹ A similar version can be found in Midan “The Rabbit Takes Revenge on the Tiger,” (1986: 64).

tiger's back and the frightened rabbit quickly jumped into a *sa ✚ghār* tree¹⁰⁰ where he picked some fruit to eat.

The tiger was painfully burned. He went roaring loudly around the forest. He was furious, and thought about how he could take revenge on the rabbit. He tried to find the rabbit until he saw him sitting in the *sa ✚ghār* tree.

The tiger angrily cursed him and said, “*Ā bai, āco tak dan!!* I will cut off your head and eat it.”

The rabbit responded, “Please come to catch me. You will die because the *devadā* told me to pick this *sa ✚ghār* fruit to eat.”

Hearing these words, the tiger lost his anger and begged the rabbit to allow him to eat this fruit. The rabbit answered, “If you come up this tree, you will eat me. How can I believe you?”

The foolish tiger said, “Please believe me. I promise and make a vow to you.”

And the rabbit fooled the tiger by saying: “If you climb up here and want to be happier, you can strip all the fruit to the tip of the branch.”

After ordering him to do this, the rabbit ran away and jumped up to a vine which was not far from there and swung on it happily.

The tiger followed what the rabbit had told him without considering how the *sa ✚ghār* branch was full of thorns. His paws were cut, flowing with red blood. He was in serious pain for a second time so he again wanted to chase and kill the rabbit.

Seeing the rabbit, who was sitting on the vine, the tiger screamed, “You cheated me! I have walked through the whole forest to find and eat you!”

The rabbit replied vulgarly, “What do you want to do with me? The *devadā* loves me so much that he allows me to swing on a vine; he knows my capacity for comic antics and he lets me play. The *devadā* will listen to me.”

Hearing this, all the tiger's anger was gone spontaneously. He asked the rabbit to permit him to play on the vine swing too. The rabbit pretended not to believe the tiger's request and told him, “You want to cheat me, you will eat my head! I don't believe you!”

“Don't be worried, I vow not to do that,” replied the tiger. The rabbit believed that and advised the tiger: “The *devadā* will love you a lot if you swing very quickly.” After that the rabbit quickly jumped down and ran away until he found a bamboo tree to climb.

¹⁰⁰ A kind of thorny plant having edible fruit.

The stupid tiger again followed the rabbit's advice. He strongly swung on the vine until it broke. He fell down on the earth and got hurt. His eyes became white. He could hardly stand having lost his strength. Later, after the tiger had recovered, he went off to find the rabbit again in order to get revenge.

As soon as the tiger approached the rabbit sitting in the bamboo tree,¹⁰¹ he angrily said, "Oh you are here! I will kill you!!" The rabbit responded "The *devadā* loves me, so he permits me to play music."

Hearing this, the tiger became comforted and said to the rabbit, "*Veuy*, please let me play music with you." And the rabbit replied, "I am not stupid. You will eat me." And the tiger said, "Don't worry, I won't punish you. I vow to *anak tā* to cut off my head if I harm you."

The rabbit agreed and told him, "Okay! You can join me to play music. As soon as the wind starts blowing strongly, you can put your tail into the bamboo branches to make music. The sound will be even sweeter and make the *devadā* love you even more.

Then the rabbit got down and ran away. As he was wandering around he saw a bumblebee hive. He picked some leaves and used them to close the hole to the hive before sitting on it and hitting it to make some music. The queen of the bumblebees was quite surprised but she was unable to come out.

The tiger played on the bamboo swing alone and he did what the rabbit told him to do for the third time. His tail was cut. He was screaming and roaring from pain. Then he sought the rabbit for revenge again.

When he found the rabbit, he said the same thing, but the rabbit mentioned the *devadā* like before, thus calming the tiger down. The rabbit said, "The *devadā* loves me. That's why he allows me to often play music for him." Hearing this, the tiger asked "Please let me play with you!"

The rabbit said, "I am not going to be cheated by you. I don't believe you. You will catch me."

"Oh friend, I won't do that. I promise," replied the tiger. The rabbit agreed and jumped down with the bumblebee hive. Before leaving he told the tiger, "Brother, don't hesitate to play this music. Your paws are so strong. You can hit it heavily so the sound will become sweeter."

¹⁰¹ Cf. Midan "The Rabbit Escaped from the Tiger" (1986: 50). In this version, the tiger sits on the bamboo tree and hits the bumblebee hive.

Actually the rabbit was so frightened. While running, he fell into a well. The tiger hit the bumblebee hive so hard that the bumblebee hive suddenly burst and the bumblebees stung him all over. His whole body was full of stings and so painful. Then he chased the rabbit.

When the tiger saw the rabbit in the well, he was so happy and said, “You will die this time.”

The clever rabbit responded, “I am very okay because I am in this safe place. You, however, are not safe because the sky is going to fall and your body will be broken into pieces.” Hearing this, the tiger was scared and jumped down into the well too.

The rabbit thought of a way to get out of the well. He pretended to tickle the tiger’s hip. The tiger got angry and cursed him. Again and again the tiger could not stand this mischievous rabbit. He threw the rabbit out of the well; the rabbit was delighted because he had provoked the tiger into helping him to safety.

Then he called for the villagers to catch the wild tiger in the well. He said, “Oh villagers, bring your swords, knives, and pikes, but don’t bring the dogs.” After saying this he escaped. The villagers came and killed the pitiful tiger.¹⁰²

The moral of this story: “**Kaṭṭhā Lāṭṭhā Kāy Duk Jā Gran’ Poe Kā Min Smoe Kaṭṭhā Lāṭṭhā Prājñā**” (The force of physical appearance may seem better and stronger, yet it is not equal to the force of intelligence)

¹⁰² This episode can also be found in Midan, “The Rabbit Escaped Again from the Tiger” (1986: 52-54). This version differs from the above version as follows: the tiger was not killed by the villagers and he was just seriously injured because he was saved by the clever rabbit. The rabbit cheated the villagers. He picked many red flowers (flame flowers) putting them on the villagers’ roofs and he yelled, “Oh villagers, your houses are on fire.” All the villagers saw that their roofs were red like fire. They freed the tiger and went back to put out the fire. The tiger was seriously injured and run into the forest.

Story 11: *Subhā Dansāy Jā Bāky Rāy* (The Story of Subhā Dansāy in Prose)¹⁰³

There was a rabbit who came out from a well and was relaxing near a village. While relaxing, the rabbit saw an old lady who was selling bananas.

“Now, I am very exhausted. What can I do to get those bananas? I will pretend that I am dead,” thought the rabbit. Thinking that, he ran to pretend that he was asleep on the path. When the lady passed the path, she saw the rabbit was lying on the ground.

“How lucky I am! I have never tasted that before. Today, I will cook it for the first time,” said the old lady.

After that she took the rabbit into her basket and continued on her way to sell bananas. Along the way, the rabbit ate all the bananas in the basket. When a passerby asked the lady to buy bananas, she noticed that all the bananas were eaten, and the rabbit had run away.

“Oh! That rabbit was still alive. I thought it was dead. Damn it!” yelled the lady.

After escaping from the lady, the rabbit reached a pond in the forest and really wanted to drink water from it. There was a shellfish in the pond, and he came to stop the rabbit from drinking.

“Hey, why do you drink my water?” asked the shellfish.

“If I drink, what does it matter to you?” replied the rabbit.

“Of course, this pond is mine,” the shellfish continued.

“So, let’s have a race. If I win, I will drink water from this pond; and if I lose, I will never drink water from any pond anymore,” said the rabbit proudly.

The shellfish then discussed with his friends how to defeat the rabbit. They thought of a trick that required a shellfish to be placed every two or three meters around the pond. When the rabbit called out to a shellfish as he was passing, that shellfish had to reply “*kūk*.”

When the race began, the rabbit called out to the first shellfish who replied “*kūk*,” The rabbit thought that the shellfish ran so fast, so the rabbit tried to run faster and faster. Every time the rabbit called out to a shellfish, the shellfish which had been placed in front always replied “*kūk*.” When the rabbit reached the goal point, he found the shellfish already there. The rabbit, without thinking clearly, thought that he had lost so he ran away. From that day on, the rabbit never drinks water from any ponds, he just drinks dew.

¹⁰³ This version is taken from PRBK 2001: 2, 65-74.

After losing to the shellfish, the rabbit ran into the forest where he saw a river. The rabbit wanted to cross the river, but he did not know how. Suddenly, the rabbit saw a crocodile.

“How can I get that crocodile to help me cross this river?” thought the rabbit. Then he asked the crocodile, “Hey, what is wrong with your rough skin?”

“I have got scurvy,” replied the crocodile.

“If you help me to cross this river, I will cure it for you,” answered the rabbit. Hearing these words, the crocodile was very happy. Then he let the rabbit sit on his head. Feeling disgusted because of the crocodile’s skin, the rabbit put some leaves on the crocodile’s head and sat on them.

“Why do you need those leaves?” asked the doubtful crocodile.

“You have helped me, so I shouldn’t sit directly on your head. I am afraid of sin,” replied the rabbit politely.

The crocodile, ever truthful, believed it and helped the rabbit cross the river. When they reached the other side of the river, the rabbit jumped off the crocodile’s head and ran away.

“How stupid you are! Your skin is inherited from your ancestors. No one can cure it!” shouted the rabbit as it ran away fast.

The crocodile felt very angry, but it could not do anything. Then the crocodile thought about a way to eat the rabbit. The crocodile pretended to be dead like some floating wood in the river and waited for the arrival of the rabbit.

Running away from the crocodile, the rabbit saw a dead buffalo near a pond. A big hole in the buttock of the buffalo had been made by some vultures. Seeing the hole, the rabbit wanted to go in. After entering the hole, the rabbit couldn’t come out because the heat from the sun had made the hole smaller and smaller until it disappeared. When the sun set, there were some people who came to take water home. The rabbit, recognizing the villager, asked for help.

“Could you pour some water over the buttock of this buffalo, please? I am inside and I cannot come out. Just do it to get higher merit,” said the rabbit pitifully.

When the villager heard that, he felt very sorry. So he poured some water over the buttock of the buffalo. Getting wet with the water, the hole became bigger and bigger.

When the hole was big enough, the rabbit ran out and shouted back: “How stupid you are! You won’t get any merit from doing this. I just cheated you to get out!” and then ran away.

When that villager heard what the rabbit said, he felt very angry and promised not to help that rabbit again.

After running for a long time, the rabbit got back to the river where he had met the crocodile. The rabbit recognized that there was something floating in the river. The rabbit wondered whether it was a piece of wood or the crocodile.

“If it is a crocodile, it will float along the river. If it is not, it will float back down the river,” said the rabbit.

The crocodile thought, “Now, I am acting like some floating wood. The rabbit said that if I am wood, I would float against the current. So, I have to float backwards.”

Because of his lack of cleverness, the crocodile floated backward. When the rabbit saw this, he knew that it was a real crocodile.

“Okay, poor crocodile. You can’t cheat me!” said the rabbit. Having been cheated by the rabbit, the crocodile thought that this time he should act like a dead crocodile on the earth near the river. Then he crawled up onto land and opened his mouth wide like a dead crocodile.

After running a long time, the rabbit arrived again at the river. He saw the crocodile with his mouth wide open. The rabbit thought that the crocodile was dead. So he went inside the crocodile’s mouth and played there, touching his white teeth. Suddenly, the crocodile swallowed the rabbit who ended up in his belly.

The rabbit said, “Oh, how lucky I am. I have been wanting to eat all these coiling intestines for a long time, and then he flicked his claws into them.”

Hearing this, the crocodile felt very frightened. He begged the rabbit not to eat his intestines and promised to release him. After that the crocodile opened his mouth in order to make a way for the rabbit to get out. Then, the rabbit ran out and ran fast into the forest.

Having run a long distance, the rabbit felt exhausted. So he stopped for a while and sat on a tree stump. When the sun reached its full power, the resin melted into liquid, and his buttock got stuck on that stump. The rabbit tried to do something in order to

release himself, but it did nothing. At that time, there was a young elephant who wanted to drink water from the pond nearby.

“Why do you drink my water? The *devadā* brings me here to look after the water in this pond!” said the rabbit.

When the young elephant heard this, he was frightened and ran to his mother. When the mother heard everything, she felt very angry. She came to see the rabbit and asked him, “Ah rabbit, why don’t you let my son drink the water in this pond?”

“I do not permit you to drink it because the *devadā* ordered me to guard this pond,” replied the rabbit. The angry elephant mother tossed him away. The rabbit was very happy because he had been released from the tree resin.

When the rabbit ran away, he saw a cucumber plantation which was owned by an old man. The rabbit was starving right now. Therefore, he ran onto the plantation and ate some cucumbers. When the old man came, he noticed that some cucumbers had been eaten. He was very angry. Then he made a trap and put it on his plantation in order to catch the rabbit. A few days later, during the nighttime, the rabbit came back to the old man’s plantation. Unfortunately, he was caught in the trap set by the old man. The rabbit was very frightened and tried to find a way to release himself. Suddenly, the rabbit saw a toad jumping nearby.

“Hey, what’s wrong with your skin?” the rabbit pretended to ask.

“I have scurvy,” replied the toad.

The rabbit said, “If you help me to get out of this trap, I will cure that for you. Don’t be worried.”

Hearing this, the toad was delighted and agreed to help him. The toad did it successfully. Releasing him from the trap, the rabbit did not show his gratitude to the toad, but instead he scornfully said and shouted: “How stupid you are! Your skin is inherited from your ancestors. No one can cure it!” Then he ran away fast.

The toad was furious. He tried to chase the rabbit, but he couldn’t. The next morning, the old man came to see whether the rabbit was caught or not. He noticed that the rabbit had been released from the trap. He felt very disappointed and set the trap again. A few days later, the rabbit came back again. With his carelessness, he was caught by the trap again. Accidentally, the rabbit saw the same toad again. Seeing the rabbit was caught again, the toad felt very happy.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! This time I won’t help you. When the old man comes, he will kill you,” said the toad happily. Actually the rabbit was very angry, but being a clever animal, he kept himself calm.

“Before, I cheated you because I could not find any better way and I did not know how to cure the scurvy. But this time, I’m telling you the truth. I have seen a beautiful girl. Her face is full and her cheeks look like the blossom of a red rose. She lives in Angkor. I will engage her to you if you help me. Believe in me,” the rabbit persuaded.

The toad who fell in love easily felt very happy when he heard what the rabbit had said.

“Don’t cheat me again, okay!” the toad said with his smile.

“Okay! Don’t worry. I won’t cheat you again and again. Before, I did not know how to fix the scurvy, that’s why I cheated you; but this time I will not do that. In Angkor now there are a lot of virgins. If I don’t engage a girl to you, the parents will engage her to you. Especially since those girls are so cheap. Ten girls cost only one *slin* (20 cents). As a result, people sing that, ‘Ten virgins cost only one *slin*, because they have seen the toad swimming to ask for someone’s daughter in marriage’,” the rabbit explained.

Then the toad released the rabbit again. Actually, the rabbit had just played a trick on the toad like before.

“Take a look at your skin. How ugly you are. No one will marry you,” shouted the rabbit.

Having been cheated by the rabbit again and again, the toad felt very angry about himself. He wanted to commit suicide, but when he thought about wanting a wife, he decided to travel to Angkor to find one. Along the way, the toad saw a dung beetle. The dung beetle asked him, “Brother Toad! Where are you going?”

“I am going to marry a girl in Angkor,” answered the toad.

The dung beetle continued, “Now it is getting dark! When will you arrive?”

The toad who desired a wife proudly told the dung beetle, “I will return tomorrow morning in order to eat breakfast here.”

The dung beetle made a sound like *nū* ★ *nū* ★!! Hearing this sound, the toad asked, “What are you doing right now?” The dung beetle answered, “I am turning cart-wheel hubs on a lathe.” The toad continued to ask, “Is a cart-wheel hub short?” “It is not short. I think I will cut it into two parts.” answered the dung beetle. Then the toad swam across the river to Angkor. Whenever he met anyone, he told him, “I am going to Angkor for a wife,” until he was swallowed by *Trī dībo* (a big fish).

Having been released from the old man's trap, the rabbit hid himself in the bushes. There was a tiger near by. The tiger crawled slowly and silently toward the rabbit. The rabbit, a sensitive animal, noticed that the tiger was behind him, so he thought of something to save himself. The rabbit cleared his throat and said, "I have eaten five elephants and am still not satisfied. Now an eggplant has made my throat sore. I need a tiger's liver to soothe it."

Hearing what the rabbit said, the tiger felt very frightened and ran away to see his friend, the monkey.

"Hey, what an animal that is! He said that he ate five elephants and that he was still not satisfied. Now an eggplant has made his throat sore. He needs a tiger's liver to soothe it. When I heard this, I got so scared," said the tiger.

"How big is he? Can you describe him?" asked the monkey.

"He is about the same size as my hand; he has long ears, a short tail, and white fur."

"Oh! It is the rabbit. This is a kind of tricky animal. Don't be afraid of him," said the monkey.

The tiger disagreed. "No, no, Brother Monkey! I saw some tusks of the elephants that he had eaten on the ground around him."

"No, don't be afraid. I will go to identify him with you," the monkey said.

"But, I am still afraid. He wants to eat my liver. If it chases me, you can climb up the tree, but what about me? The rabbit will eat me," said the tiger.

"How stupid you are! If you don't believe me you can tie this vine around your waist and I'll tie the other end on mine. Then we will all go together," suggested the monkey.

After tying the vine, they walked together to see the rabbit. The tiger and the monkey approached, while the rabbit was sitting on a mound.

"Hem hem, monkey! Have you brought this tiger to pay back your debt?" called out the rabbit.

Hearing this, the tiger thought that the monkey brought him just to pay back his debt. So, the tiger ran away in fright. The tiger forgot that the monkey was attached to him. The monkey was dragged over a log and killed. When the tiger stopped, he thought the monkey was smiling at him. Feeling angry, the tiger cut the vine and ran away.

After traveling a long way, the rabbit felt hungry. In the late evening, the rabbit went into a field and ate some rice paddy. When the owner came in the morning, he noticed that there was an animal who had come to eat his plants. So he set out a trap along the path that the rabbit used to come to his field. In the evening, the rabbit came again. Unfortunately, he was caught by the trap. The rabbit was frightened. He tried to find someone to help, but it seemed that nobody was there.

Then he pretended to be dead. Next morning, the owner came. He saw the rabbit and felt very happy. Thinking that the rabbit was really dead, he released it from the trap. The rabbit, having been placed on the ground, got up and ran away. The old man was very angry. He had thought that the rabbit was dead but it wasn't. He set up the trap again because he thought that the rabbit would come back again someday.

Actually, two days later the rabbit desired to eat rice paddy again so he returned to the field. Again, he was caught in the trap. When the old man came, he saw the rabbit. This time he would not let the rabbit escape again. He brought the rabbit back home and put him in a trap. He also had caught a fish and placed it next to the rabbit. Then the old man thought about a monk in a pagoda that was near his house. He had heard that this monk was good at telling fortunes. So he went to see him to get his fortune told.

Before leaving the house, the old man told his wife, "You should look after the rabbit and the fish so they don't get away." Then he went to the pagoda. He bowed respectfully to the monk and politely said, "I have heard that you have the best reputation for telling horoscopes."

"I can tell them, but I don't say that it is completely right," said the monk.

"Please please, just guess what I had to eat this morning?" asked the man.

"I am afraid that I can't guess for you," replied the monk.

The man begged. "Please, please, I want to know," the old man continued.

"I am afraid that you will be upset," answered the monk.

"If this monk guesses correctly, I will give him some rabbit meat and some fish to eat. However, if he guesses wrongly, I will give him nothing. I will eat the rabbit and the fish with my wife only," the man thought himself. Then he said, "I won't be upset actually. Please tell me!"

"Today, you get nothing delicious to eat!" said the monk.

After that, the man went back home. He thought, "That monk was good at guessing but he guessed completely wrong. I have the rabbit and the fish. Why that monk

guessed that I got nothing delicious to eat!” Then when he arrived home, he asked his wife to cook the rice.

However, the rabbit and the fish had found a way to escape. The rabbit told the fish, “Brother Fish, you should pretend to be dead, float with your stomach up. When they catch you, they will put you nearby the water; you can jump into the water and slowly swim away. When they run to catch you, you do the same as before until they take the trap from me to put over you. Then you can go to the deep place in the river.”

As soon as the elder woman had boiled the rice, the old man took the fish to scrape its skin and clean it near the edge of the pond. The fish pretended to be dead according to the rabbit’s advice. Seeing that the man hopped to catch him, the fish acted like this again and again until the man called out to his wife to bring him the trap. That woman forgot that the rabbit was caught in the trap. When the wife took the trap, the rabbit ran away quickly into the forest. Seeing that the rabbit had run away, the fish swam to a deep place in the river. The couple felt very angry and went back to their house. They were so cold they could barely stand. They sat in front of the fire and thought that what the monk had said was really right. They believed the monk’s prophecies after that.

Appendix 3. Pictures of Rabbit

Figure1. The rabbit float (sideview)



Figure 2. The rabbit float (front view)



These are photographs of the rabbit float representing the Ministry of Justice during the fiftieth anniversary of Independence Day, 9 Nov, 2003.

Figure 3. The rabbit is on the wall of Bayon Temple at Siem Reap Province



Figure 4. The rabbit below is enlarged from figure 3.



Appendix 4. Structural Analysis of Stories

Story 1: *Niyāy Bī Dansāy Jā Cau Kra* (The Rabbit Is a Judge)

One day, a man said to himself: “I heard that Judge Rabbit (Subhā Dansāy) is very intelligent, so I want to test him.” Thinking that, he wrote a request to some magistrates for them to solve it.

The request: “A few months ago, my buffalo was stolen. It was neither a male nor female buffalo. It was stolen neither last year, nor this year, and the thief was neither my relative, nor a stranger. What is its gender? Who has stolen my buffalo and when?”

Initial Situation: The initial situation in this episode begins with a man who wants to challenge the intelligence of the rabbit. The man thought of way to test him by writing about an enigmatic situation. He pretended to send it to many magistrates for them to solve. This initial situation also includes the time phrase “*Thnai Muoy*” which literally means “one day” and one character—a man—“*Mān Puruss Mnāk*’ ”. The request is the core of the complication of this tale. If the request is solved by the important character, the rabbit, then the story will end.

The next sequence in the narration has a lot of magistrates who try to answer the man’s request: “Then the man sent this request to the magistrates so they could help him. None of them could understand this request. They threw it away saying: ‘It is a stupid letter. The person who wrote this letter is really crazy.’”

After those magistrates could not understand this request, the raconteur let the clever rabbit solve it because he wants to show the rabbit’s wise capacity. The important character in this episode is the wise rabbit, therefore he plays the role as the final judge, the one who can solve the riddle. Actually the request is not a complaint but a test to find the wisest judge, especially to test rabbit.

The cleverness of the rabbit is revealed through his ability to answer the enigmatic question. The rabbit could realize what was beneath the words: He looked at the problem and explained: “This is not a stupid letter and the one who wrote it is also not crazy. A buffalo who is neither a male nor female is a castrated buffalo. That it was stolen neither last year nor this year means that the buffalo was stolen during the night of last year just before passing into the New Year. The thief who is neither a relative nor a stranger is the brother-in-law.”

Hearing his answer, all the magistrates and the man who wrote the request appreciated and respected rabbit’s intelligence. This episode ends with the recognition of

the rabbit's intelligence because the rabbit could solve and answer the man's request through his cleverness. All the magistrates and the man appreciated and respected rabbit's wisdom from then onward.

The functions of the episode "The Rabbit Is a Judge"

1. A man wanted to test the rabbit so he wrote a request.
2. The magistrates could not understand the man's request.
3. The rabbit could answer the enigma.
4. All magistrates and the man recognized the reputation and the intelligence of the rabbit.

Story 2: *Manuss Bīr Nāk' Nau Phdah Jit Gnā* (Two Neighbors)¹⁰⁴

1). First sequence of the story

a. Initial Situation: Lack

The story begins by presenting the time, space and the number of characters.

Once upon a time, there were two men who were neighbors. One day those two men decided to set traps in the forest.

b. Departure: Then their issue is to attempt to put a trap in the forest to get meat for their living.

After deciding that, they departed later in the afternoon.

c. Return: Finally, the two neighbors agree that one will put his trap at the bottom of tree and another will his trap at the top of the tree. They return home.

When they approached the forest, the first man said: "I will put a trap at the bottom of the tree because animals always come to eat the fruit that has fallen there." And the second man said: "I also want to put my trap at this place; however, now you have put it there so I will put my trap at the top of the tree. Then we will wait until tomorrow morning. We will see." Saying this, one put his trap at the bottom of the tree and the other put his trap at the top of the tree. Then they went back home.

2). The Second Sequence of the Story

The raconteur develops the character of the man who set his trap at the top of the tree. He violates his agreement by using deceit in order to get the meat into his trap. His choice in this incident is to violate his neighbor.

¹⁰⁴ This version is from PRBK (2001: 1, 7-9). It can be found in Midan, with some different mythemes. In Midan's text, the man puts his trap in the water and another puts his trap at the top of the tree in order to catch fish. The first judge is a magistrate and the second judge is the rabbit (1986: 74).

a. Violation and Trickery

The man who set his trap at the top of the tree seems like a clever and crafty man. He thought over his plan carefully before implementing it the following day. The story proceeds by discussing his plan.

When the man who set his trap at the top of the tree arrived home, he and his wife talked: "Since the time of my ancestors, I have never heard of anyone catching a four-footed animal by setting a trap at the top of a tree. Now I have put my trap at that place; how can I catch an animal from it! So I had better go early in the morning. If I see a four-footed animal trapped at the bottom of the tree, I will transfer it to my trap. When morning arrives, I will go with the man who set his trap at the bottom of the tree. If he doesn't agree with what's happened, I will give some meat from the animal in my trap to Judge Parrot; and Judge Parrot will help me to win the case." After coming up with this plan, the husband and wife fell asleep until early morning.

As soon as the first cock crowed, the second man got up and left home to go to the forest. When he arrived, he saw that a deer was trapped at the bottom of the tree; and he transferred this animal to his trap at the top of the tree. Then he returned home.

At dawn, the one who had set his trap at the bottom of the tree called out to the second man to go see what was in the traps.

The second man pretended not to know anything and said, "Don't be in such a hurry. I don't think I caught an animal because my trap is at the top of the tree. Your trap must have caught an animal. If so, please share it with me."

When they approached the place where they had put their traps, they saw that an animal had been caught in the trap at the top of the tree. The man who had set his trap there mocked the other man saying, "Oh look! If you had just listened to me before you put your trap at the bottom of the tree, you would have gotten the animal." Then he undid the trap and got the deer. They all went back home.

b. Mediation

The deceitful man is the one who set his trap at the top of the tree and the deceived man is the one who put his trap at the bottom of the tree. The four-footed animal is in the trap at the top of the tree, whereas there is no animal trapped at the bottom of the tree. There is no solution so the two neighbors need to find a mediator.

1. The first mediator: Judge Parrot

Judge Parrot was bribed by the deceitful man. As a result his judgment is neither fair nor truthful. His solution is unjust for the deceived man.

The man who had the deer hurried to give Judge Parrot some meat from the animal and told him that, “Another man and I went to set traps. I put my trap at the top of the tree, and the other man put his trap at the bottom of the tree. I am dishonest. I know that he will come to you. So please do what you can. Help me to win the case. I will show my gratitude to you in the future.”

As soon as Judge Parrot received the deer meat, he replied, “Go buy areca and betel and give them to me early tomorrow morning. If that man files a complaint with me about this case, I will order him to get the areca and betel. If he comes late with them, I will judge that he lost the case. So you hurry back home.”

When the man who put his trap at the bottom of the tree arrived home, he was so disappointed that he disagreed with this situation. He went to Judge Parrot who ordered him to do exactly what he had told the other man. The next morning the other man brought the areca and the betel early.

2. The Second Mediator: Judge Rabbit

a). The man who set his trap at the bottom of the tree was poor and so pitiful. He could not buy those things. He was so frightened and he was afraid of losing the case. Therefore he ran from village to village in search of someone who could help him.

b). Judge Rabbit appears surreptitiously while the poor man seeks a helper.

Suddenly he met Judge Rabbit who said: “Stop! Stop! Why are you running around like that? What is wrong with you?”

That man sadly replied, “Please sir! Please sir! Help me. There is some unfair issue. I put my trap at the bottom at the tree and the other man put his trap at the top of the tree; however, the trap at the top of the tree caught a deer. I don’t agree that this could happen so I went to Judge Parrot. Judge Parrot ordered that whoever returns with the areca and betel first will win the case. Consequently I am so scared. Please rescue me if you can.”

“Okay. Don’t be worried. Wait until this evening and I will go with you,” said the rabbit. Hearing these words, the poor man was delighted.

c). The Cleverness of Judge Rabbit

Before the rabbit judges the case and helps the poor man, he asks him to clearly explain what has happened. Based on this information, the rabbit can solve the issues by responding to the evidence, such as the fact that a four-footed animal appears to have been caught in a trap at the top of the tree. This kind of incident contradicts natural logic. As a result, the rabbit employed clever words which contradicted Judge Parrot’s

statement. If Judge Parrot did not agree with what the rabbit said, Judge Parrot must reconsider and rethink his terms of judgment.

When evening arrived, Judge Rabbit and the poor man went to Judge Parrot's house. Judge Parrot asked, "Why are you so late? You lost the case already."

"We are late because we were waiting to watch a fish fly up to eat a tamarind leaf," Judge Rabbit replied. Hearing these words, Judge Parrot spontaneously expressed himself in a way that contradicted his previous judgment. Judge Parrot wondered and said, "Since the time of my ancestors, I've never heard of anyone who has seen a fish fly up to eat a tamarind leaf."

And Judge Rabbit also said, "From my ancestors and my parents, I also have never heard of a four-legged animal trapped at the top of the tree instead of at the bottom. Has any villager ever heard of that?"

Judge Parrot realizes what he has done and agrees with the natural logic that if a the fish cannot fly up to eat a tamarind leaf, then a four-legged animal cannot be trapped at the top of the tree.

Hearing this, Judge Parrot was so quiet. He had nothing to reply.

Judge Rabbit judged in favor of the poor man. Judge Parrot who was sitting nearby was so embarrassed and humiliated because of his desire to eat deer meat.

The denouement of this story ends up with a clever rabbit who helps the right man win the case and humiliates the bribed Judge Parrot. Moreover, the raconteur concludes the story with a proverb: "**Lmobh It Kmās Vinās Cpap'** " (**Desire and Greed Lead to Breaking the Law**). This moral mainly refers to Judge Parrot who desires to eat deer meat, therefore he violates the man's trust and the law. The bribed judge was humiliated finally by the wise judge, Judge Rabbit.

The moral is: "**Lmobh It Kmās Vinās Cpap'** " (**Desire and Greed Lead to Breaking the Law**).

In summarize the structure of story:

- 1). Two men want to put out their traps.
- 2). They depart into the forest, set their traps, and return home.
- 3). The man who set his trap at the top of the tree, deceives the other man.
- 4) The man who set his trap at the bottom of the tree is not satisfied. They seek a solution.
- 6). Judge Parrot is the first judge. He judges the case based on bribery.

7). Judge Rabbit is the second judge. He judges the case through his reason and cleverness.

8). Judge Rabbit finishes the case by implementing justice.

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