

SINSAY (POEM)
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Written for Mrs. Erhart
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Outline

- I. Ancient history of the poem Sinsay
 - A. The country where the poem took place.
 - B. The century when it took place.
 - C. About the author.
 - D. Is it one of the most famous poems in Laos?
- II. Discuss the two kinds of the poem that were written and discuss how they read each one of them.
- III. Discuss the form of the poem.
 - A. How many words in a line.
 - B. How is it different from the other form?
 - C. Is this form commonly used?
- IV. Write the theme of the poem.
 - A. How many characters?
 - B. The main characters.
 - C. Sinsay's adventure.
 - D. Sinsay's half brothers tell a lie to the King
 - E. the arrival of Sinsay's aunt.
- V. Discuss the last part of the poem. The most important ideas that are expressed in the story.

The poem of Sinsay is very well known in Lao literature. It had been written ~~ten~~ hundred and hundred years ago. But nobody knows the exact date, but they said that it was written approximately the year of 1006. So it was a quite ^{an} old poem, but it is well known through out the Kingdom of Laos. People read and talk about it very often. It was known since the administration of Chao Soulignavong Sa. During his reign the kingdom was very peaceful. And Lao literature was high developed. There were many, many things written during that time. But the most famous one was Sinsay.

The poem of Sinsay took place in the kingdom of Pengchan. "But it was written in the town call Dong Boualampou, which is Oudone in Thailand today. This city used to belong to Lao Kingdom. Chao Pangkham the king of Dong Boualampou wrote this poem. But the poem was known before Chao Pangkham. But nobody knew who wrote it before and in what century it was written. Chao Pangkham wrote this poem after he came back from hunting from Champasack. Some part in the poem he wrote and described his love and real life in. His life was very romantic, Once he went down to Champasak for the elephants hunt. One day he met Nang Phao a daughter of the chao Muong Champasak And they both fell in love. At last they became real close until he won all her love, She became pregnant, but Pangkham had to come back to his kingdom. When the baby was born, she had a lot of trouble and she cursed that every woman should have to have a marriage celebration before she becomes his wife. According to this curses people believe in wedding today. So when he wrote the poem he put some of the happenings of his into the poem.

Sinsay poem is the most famous, readable and enjoyable poem, that has been written in Lao literature. When somebody mention the name Sinsay people seem to know it immediately. People seem to be familiar with this poem especially the adults. And sometimes the monk use it as a prayer or they use it when they give a sermon. It has been retold from generation to generation. Chao Pangkham had very much

knowledge. He was very intelligent in controlling his kingdom. He was a powerful king, so that his style of writing is very rich in power and has the same situation between the theme and his own experiences.

The poem of Sinsay was written in two kinds. One was written in the form of an ordinary poem using the Lao characters. The second kind was written like an ordinary short story or in a form of singing or praying. This kind they used Pali or used the "THAM"¹ character. The type that they used the "THAM"² characters is called "Lamsinsay"³ or they called "Sinsayasadok".⁴ And it was written in a series of books. There are 20 books and each has 20 to 25 pages. The form that used the Lao characters and wrote as an ordinary poem by Chao Pangkham. "He said that he also copied it from Sinsayasadok".⁵

Now I'm going to talk about its form. Sinsay is a poem that has seven words in a line. This seven words line is the main one, but there are two words in front and two words after. The two words before the line call "Boupabot"⁶. The two words after the main line is called "Kham Kayaii Banpaii"⁷. P.S. Nginn said that they used the two words before and after the main line, just to make the poem sounds pretty.⁸ The form is not really different from the other poem, almost every poem in Lao has 7 words in one line, and some others has no more than 11. But there is some distinguishes in Sinsay poem. P.S. Nginn said the way they arranged the words is neat. They used the right word in the right place. So it makes it very easy to read and to understand more than that it sounds so beautiful.⁹ And he also said that this form is commonly used in Lao Poetry.¹⁰

Sinsay story is very well known from generation to generation. People talk about it over and over without getting bored of it. Sometimes the history of Sinsay is given as a sermon in a Buddhist temple. Sinsay is also rich in the idea of religion. There are more than 20 characters in Sinsay. But the main character in Sinsay story is Sinsay. He is the hero of the story. As the story followed.

Phagna Koutsarat was a king of PengChan. He lived happily with his wife in the palace. His wife is Chantha. The Queen Chantha was beautiful, and she was respected through out the kingdom. The king

has a lovely sister named Soumountha. She is pretty, just plain adorable, attractive so that all the kings in another kingdom wanted to marry her. But because the king Koutsarat loved her so much, he couldn't let her marry to anyone. He kept her in his palace. One day she wanted to go to wash her hair so badly. Then she asked for a permission from her brother the king Koutsarat. When she received a permission she went to the river. Then ^{came} the Gnak Koumphan the most powerful, strong monster. He fell in love with her, and wanted her to be his wife. According to the history no human body can kill him. His heart wasn't with him. He gave it to somebody else to be guarded. So that day, having met princess Soumountha at the river, he stole her, and took her to his palace.

Pragna Koutsarat had no idea, who stole his lovely sister. He began to worry. He missed her very much. He was so dear to her. He decided to go after her. So he gave up every ^{thing}, even his dear wife, to become a monk. He started to go out. One day he reached a town named Champa. He went out to beg for food, as a monk should do. Phagna Champa was a millionaire, and had seven attractive daughters. That morning those seven girls came to offer the food to Phagna Koutsarat. Phagna Koutsarat saw those seven sisters, and he fell in love with all of them. Then he decided not to go on. He went back to the kingdom of Pengchan, and left the temple. Then he sent his messengers to see Phagna Champa and asked for their seven daughters. Phagna Champa accepted the request and gave the seven sisters to be his wives. So now he has eight wives. Later on those eight wives became pregnant, and the king wanted to know what those eight children would be like when they grow up. He had the fortuneteller told the future of those eight children. The fortuneteller said that the children of the first and the last wife will be the greatest man. They will have their power come along from their birth. They will beat any body else.

Now the other six wives became jealous, wanted to exile the two other wives and their children. They all asked the fortuneteller to say that they will be very bad children and they will destroy the kingdom. So he did. The king felt so bad hearing those made up words, and was afraid that it would come true. When the babies were born. The

first wife's baby was an animal and the last wife's sons were a shell and one was Sinsay, but Sinsay brought with him some weapons. The king was afraid those words of the fortuneteller would come true. So he told the two wives and their children to leave the town. They respected all his commands.

After a while those six sons grew up, and the king still missed his sister. So he told their sons to go after her. Those six sons asked to go to study some skills first. The king let them go. As they went half way they met their three brothers. Having known that they're brothers, those six told Sinsay a lie that the king wanted him to go after his aunt. He believed that it was really his father's desire. He agreed to go after her. Then, those six boys went back and told the king that they have studied some skills. They came back to Sinsay then they all went. As soon as they arrived at the big river, those six brothers could go across the river. So Sinsay told the other two took care of the six brothers over this side. When Sinsay reached the Gnak Koumphan palace, he had to fight he won and took his aunt out. But Soumountha had one daughter whom she married to the Nak under the water. Before going back to Pengchan, Soumountha asked Sinsay to go after her. So he went down the river and fight with Nak. Nak feel very so pain because he didn't want to leave his wife. Nak loved her very much. But Sinsay won so he took her. When Sinsay arrived and he got his aunt and her daughter, they were ready to go back to the kingdom. But those six brother felt jealous, because they wanted to tell the king that they have gotten back their aunt. They asked Sinsay to go swimming. Because they were so jealous, they pushed him down. They thought that he was dead. Now they ready to go. But Soumountha thought of her nephew so much. She didn't believe that he was dead. So she wanted to make sure if her nephew Sinsay were really dead. She took out three very valuable things and hung them on the branch of the tree along the river. And she said if these three thing return to her that meant her nephew wasn't dead. But later on the merchant came along the river, they

those three things and brought them to the king. Now Soumountha knew exactly that he wasn't dead. She knew for sure the Sinsay was still alive.

So she told the king that Sinsay alone went to get her. So he realized that those six sons weren't honest. So he exiled them and including those six wives.

Then the king and his knights went after Sinsay saw him with his mother the last wife, and Chantna the first wife with her son. The king asked him to go back and rule the kingdom. Now speaking about the Nak he thought of his wife very much, he missed her. So he came up from the water and asked for his wife. That time the king and Princess Soumountha gave the Nak back his wife. So they lived happily ever after.

And in Sinsay poem readers enjoy the part, when Sinsay took Nak's wife from him and he missed her. And when he came up from the water for his wife. P.S. Gninn said this part is important to the story, and they call Banaksadoung.¹¹ And this part refers to Chao Pangka... the author's life, when he got separated from the daughter of Chao Champasak's daughter.

Footnotes

1. Pangkham, ປາງກຳມ ວິໄນ ວິໄນ Vientiane, 1960. p.
2. Pangkham, ປາງກຳມ ວິໄນ ວິໄນ Vientiane, 1960. p.
3. Pangkham, ປາງກຳມ ວິໄນ ວິໄນ Vientiane, 1960. p.
4. Pangkham, ປາງກຳມ ວິໄນ ວິໄນ Vientiane, 1960.p.
5. Pangkham, ປາງກຳມ ວິໄນ ວິໄນ Vientiane, 1960 p.
6. P.S. Nginn Interveiw on 5th January 1967. At 10 o'clock in the morning.
7. P.S. Nginn Interveiw on 5th January 1967. At 10 o'clock in the morning
8. P.S. Nginn Interveiw on 5th January 1967. At 10 o'clock in the morning
9. P.S Nginn Interveiw on 5th January 1967. At 10 o'clock in the morning
10. P.S Nginn Interveiw on 5th January 1967. At 10 o'clock in the morning
11. P.S. Nginn Interveiw on 5th January 1967. At 10 O'clock in the morning

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