

Oaths and Ordeals in Classical Cambodian Law, 1011–1891

Translations from Old, Middle, and Modern
Khmer

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Justice in Translation 7/2022 | October 2022

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Oaths and Ordeals in Classical Cambodian Law, 1011–1891: Translations from Old, Middle, and Modern Khmer

The Cambodian legal tradition is replete with oath texts and the ritual ordeals tied to their recitation. Similar texts and traditions were prevalent throughout mainland Southeast Asia up through the end of the nineteenth century, including in Burma, Laos, and Siam. Many terms for “oath” in the region are based on the Indic terms *satya* (Sanskrit) or *sacca* (Pali), both of which mean “truth.” Premodern oath texts in Southeast Asia are based on the understanding that truthful, powerful words, when recited in a ritual context, have real consequences in the world. They can bind students to masters, subjects to monarchs, and the accused to the consequences of the law. As such, they are an inextricable part of the classical legal tradition in mainland Southeast Asia.

The recitation of oaths may be accompanied by an ordeal. In the case of oaths to rulers, those swearing fealty may be expected offer a ceremonial amount of their own blood to prove their sincerity. In the case of legal proceedings for judging plaintiffs and defendants, a series of far more complex ordeals may be ordered. Many such ordeals are known by local variations on the Indic terms *viśodhana* (Sanskrit) or *visodhana* (Pali), from the verbal root *śudh*, “to purify.” In the Southeast Asian legal context, an ordeal is a tool to reveal who is pure and who is impure, or rather who is innocent and who is guilty. The ordeals chosen are intentionally strenuous and often laced with mortal danger, making both accusing others or being accused oneself of serious crimes a risky affair. According to the logic of the system, those who refuse to participate in such ordeals are automatically judged guilty.

The following includes translations of three such Cambodian

texts on oaths or ordeals, dated to 1011, 1693, and 1891 CE and grounded in three linguistic phases of the Khmer language: Old, Middle, and Modern. These texts reveal the importance of such oaths and ordeals over time and provide a basis for comparison with similar legal traditions in pre-twentieth-century Burma, Laos, and Siam. Though their cultural influence has diminished over the past century, the legal principles behind these texts remain part of Khmer public memory and notions of justice.

Inscribed in 1011 CE, “The Oath of the Guards” is one of the finest examples of eleventh-century Old Khmer prose. Carved in stone on the Eastern Gate of Phimeanakas (K. 292) and South Khleang Temple (K. 467) at Angkor Thom in today’s Siem Reap province, the text offers an intimate portrait of the ritual forces that held together the vast administration of the Khmer empire at its height. Most other surviving texts in Old Khmer are composed in the spare, documentary style crafted for the legal transfers of property recorded in the inscriptions. “The Oath of the Guards” stands out in the Old Khmer inscriptional corpus for its careful balance between emotional expression and legalistic precision.

This oath, taken by guards in the royal service, appears on numerous inscriptions completed during the reign of Sūryavarman I (r. 1002–1049). The present translation is of a composite edition of the Old Khmer text first published by George Coédès in 1913 and revised in 1937. Due to the ravages of time, most inscriptions in Old Khmer that survive to the present are damaged on one or more of their faces, and the various epigraphical instances of “The Oath of the Guards” are no exception. A composite edition is necessary to present a complete text. Each inscription provides the oath as taken by a different group of officials, followed by a list of the names of the officials who took the oath. For my translation here, I give the “first division of the guards” (*bhāga tamrvac eka*) as the example group, though I have omitted the name list that

follows, since this varies across the different versions.

The ritual text of the oath reveals that the “binding vow” (*vaddhapratijñā*) taken by the guards was sealed in blood procured from their own upper limbs (*tai* being Khmer for both “arm” and “hand”). The “Sacred Flame, the Sacred Jewel, brahmans, and gurus” (*vraṇ vleñ braḥ ratna nu vrāhmaṇācāryya*) are signs of the legitimacy of Sūryavarman I’s reign. The specified duration of the punishments for those who violate the oath (“as long as the Sun and Moon still shine,” *tarāp vraḥ candrāditya mān ley*) appears frequently in the curse portions of donative inscriptions from the Pre-Angkorian (seventh to eighth centuries) and Angkorian (ninth to fifteenth centuries) periods. Though many South and Southeast Asian cosmologies shy away from notions of eternity, the phrase “as long as the Sun and Moon still shine” is essentially synonymous with “forever,” for only after uncountable ages will they fade and this world system be born anew.

Moving forward several centuries, we come to “A Solemn Oath” and “Law for Ordeals,” two related legal texts that illuminate several distinctive aspects of traditional Cambodian legal proceedings during the Middle Period (c. 1431–1863) and beyond. The first, “A Solemn Oath” (*praṇidhān*, pronounced today as “pranethean” and derived from the mixed Pali-Sanskrit compound *saccā-praṇidhāna*), purportedly dates to 1614 of the Śaka era, equivalent to 1693 AD.

While the precise date may seem suspect, Grégory Mikaelian argues for the historicity of this and other legal texts of the period as representing a dramatic reform of Cambodian law in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This reform entailed a shift away from the classical Angkorian model to a new Siamese-inspired law code. Whereas the Angkorian system primarily drew inspiration from a Brahmanical milieu, Siamese legal codes were inspired by Buddhist legal models as well, particularly the *Dhammasattha* tradition developed

among the Mon and the Burmese. Cambodian law codes from the seventeenth century onward reflect this diverse heritage of various religious and legal traditions from across the region.

“A Solemn Oath” is one of several similar oath texts that survive from the end of the seventeenth century. They were recited in legal proceedings to invoke the gods—including Buddhist, Brahmanist, and local deities—to take sides in an unresolved legal dispute to determine the identity of the guilty party. The main portion of the text, composed as a poem in the Crow’s Gait (*kākagati*) meter, offers an impressive litany of powerful local spirits who have been at the core of indigenous Cambodian religion for the past fifteen hundred years. Each goddess (literally, “white lady,” or *me sa*) is associated with a specific place in Cambodia. The poem uses *me sa* for all of the local deities mentioned, including famous male tutelary deities (*anak tā*, pronounced “neak ta”) such as Klang Moeung. Together they construct a complete geography of the kingdom, summoned as witnesses to a solemn oath.

This practice of chanting solemn oaths is mentioned frequently in the “Law for Ordeals” (*kram bisodhan*, pronounced “kram pisaot,” from the Pali *visodhana*, “purifying [ordeal]”), a section of the voluminous compendium of Cambodian laws promulgated by King Norodom in 1891. The text that served as the basis for the 1891 version translated here is likely much older, though exactly how much so is hard to determine. This “Law for Ordeals” details a series of processes for resolving legal disputes by having both the plaintiff and the defendant undertake one or more ordeals. Along with the recitation of an oath, such legal procedures may incorporate far more painful trials, including walking over a pit of coals or being submerged in water. The ten articles of the law code are composed in the formal prose style typical of the genre.

Together, these three texts demonstrate the enduring place of oaths and ordeals in the Cambodian legal imagination, from the beginning of the eleventh century to the end of the nineteenth. The modern Khmer term for “justice,” *yut-tidhārm*, parallel to *yutitham* in Thai and *nyutitham* in Lao, does not appear in these three classical texts. Indeed, “justice” as an abstract concept is generally not discussed at all in traditional Cambodian writings. What is considered just—or in alignment with the *dharma*, the natural law or order of things—depends on a variety of social, religious, and situational factors. In each of the three texts, a special emphasis is given to the horrific consequences suffered by those who break vows, tell lies under oath, or fail tests of purity. This conception of justice necessarily entails violence against wrongdoers. Oath and ordeals represent one Southeast Asian approach to framing, invoking, and justifying such violence. At the same time, oaths and ordeals were a key technology in maintaining social order. As ritual texts and practices, oaths and ordeals bound society together through emphasizing loyalty to leaders and institutions, sacralizing the act of speaking the truth, and grounding legal practices within Buddhist and Brahmanical religious ideas.

The three Khmer texts presented here are part of a broader spectrum of oaths and ordeals preserved in mainland Southeast Asian legal texts. Unpacking their distinctive legal logic and style demands careful comparison with related treatises, inscriptions, and manuscripts from across the region. In addition to making the Khmer legal tradition more legible beyond Cambodia, my goal in translating these three examples is to facilitate future research on the long-term development and modern reception of pre-twentieth-century Southeast Asian legal systems and conceptions of justice.

Oath of the Guards¹

933 of the Śaka era [1011 CE], the ninth waxing day of Bhadrāpada, a Wednesday. What follows is a binding vow:

All of us gathered here from the first division of the guards, as we make this oath, slice open our hands and offer our lives and our most pure, grateful fealty to His Majesty Śrī Sūryavarmma-deva, who has enjoyed the complete pleasures of his righteous reign since 924 of the Śaka era [1002 AD] in the presence of the Sacred Flame, the Sacred Jewel, brahmans, and gurus. We shall not bow before any other Lord of the Lower Realm, shall not stand against him, shall not join his foes, and shall not harm him in any way.

We shall double our efforts towards those acts that emerge from our grateful fealty to His Majesty Śrī Sūryavarmmadeva. Should a war break out, we shall join the fight wholeheartedly as opposed to cherishing our own lives. Our devotion means we shall never flee the field of battle. But should war never come and we waste away from disease, may we still receive our rightful due, having been faithful to our master. Should our royal service extend across the span of our lives, we shall serve him devotedly until our deaths. Should His Majesty command us, in the course of our royal service, to travel afar due to news about a distant event, we shall seek out the true facts—each of us shall act in accordance with this binding vow.

¹ Translated from the Old Khmer text as printed in George Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, 8 vols., Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1937–1966, vol. III, p. 208.

Should there be those among us whose conduct breaks this binding vow, we ask the Lord of the Realm who enjoys the next rightful reign to exact multiple royal punishments on us. Should we be treasonous and fail to fulfill this vow, may we be born in the thirty-two hells for as long as the Sun and Moon still shine.

But should we faultlessly act in accordance with this binding vow, may the Lord of the Lower Realm provide for the maintenance of temples in our homelands and nourish our families, on account of our faithful service to His Majesty Śrī Sūryavarmmadeva, who has enjoyed the complete pleasures of his righteous reign since 924 of the Śaka era.

As for the fruits due to those who remain faithful to their masters, may we receive them, both in this world and in the next.

A Solemn Oath²

May there be prosperity, good fortune, vast splendor, and extraordinary success in this year of 1614 of the Śaka era, Year of the Rooster, third waning day of the twelfth month, a Monday, an auspicious hour! It was at this moment that His Majesty the King, his heart filled to the brim with mer-

² Translated from the Middle Khmer text of *Prañidhān* (*Satrā prāṃmadhdhān sābhauv 1*) as printed in Grégory Mikaelian, “Recherches sur l’histoire du fonctionnement politique des royautes post-angkoriennes (c. 1600-c. 1720), appuyées sur l’analyse d’un corpus de décrets royaux khmers du XVIIIe siècle.” Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris-IV - Sorbonne, 2006, vol. II, pp. 152–158. A simplified version of this translation originally appeared in Trent Walker, “Goddesses of the Land,” *Mānoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing* 33:2–34:1 (Winter 2021–Summer 2022), pp. 26–29.

cy and grace, spoke to the assembly of judges in the royal courthouse, informing them of all they needed to know with regards to making oaths, including the texts for chanting solemn oaths, should the occasion arise.

Should a party to a dispute make an oath to prove their innocence, whether by drawing lots, swearing via a proxy, or forcing a confession, the judge should examine both parties carefully. Having created a secure record of their testimony, the judge should never fail to make them swear upon this very testimony, as follows:

*Hear, O Deities! O Śiva, O Visnu! O Brahma, Creator!
To bind this oath, we call you down to join us here.
Make haste, my lords, come soon! Join as our witnesses.
We bow in joy to the dust that clings beneath your feet.*

*We bow to Maitreya, glorious Buddha of the future,
to the Dharma and the Sangha, and to the Five Lords.
We bow to Indra and to Yama, to all the Brahma host,
to the Sun, the Moon, the stars, and Lord Viśvakaman.*

*We bow to Vaiśravaṇa, replete with power and glory,
to the Earth herself, and to gods both great and small.
O Rain, O Wind, O Sacred Flame, all gods above,
be our witness, both day and night, at dusk and dawn.*

*O gods of trees, of caves, of Himalayan peaks,
of streams, clefts, craters, thickets, and vast fields!
Hear us, O Lord of Death; hear us, O God of Time!
Come here at once; bear witness to their claims in full.*

*Ṛṣis of pure virtue, gandharvas of finest scent,
vidyādharas of magic might, and kinnaras
who frolic with the kinnaris, travel with speed
from all quarters—help be our court's sincere witness.*

*Hear us, O gods! Come here, O guardian deities,
native spirits both great and small, known and unknown.
Goddess of Klang Moeung, Center of the Realm, highest of all!
Come here now with your retinue; serve as our chief.*

Goddess of Banteay Pech, bright your beauty, lofty your rank!
Come and listen to this solemn oath; be our witness.
Goddesses of Phnom Bat, Preah Theat, and Phnom Preah
Reachatroap!
Goddess of the Tāvatiṃsa Stupa at victorious Udong!

Goddesses of Sla Khav, Koh Chen, Krang Ponlei, Srah Kaev,
Phsar Daek!
Fearsome Goddess of Ponhea Leu, mighty Goddess of
Peak Proat!
Goddesses of Kampong Khong, Lvaek, Anlung Koh Ream,
Thnal Cham,
Ach K'aek, Kampong Ko Chraek, and lovely Prambei Chhaom!

Goddesses of Chveang Peang Sangkae, Chik Preah Srae,
Prei Chrap,
Chhuk Chral, Sandan Thma Sa, and Bapreng—come one and all!
Spirits of Phoey Pao Tralak! Come here with your whole group.
Most excellent spirit of Phnom Baset! Bring your entourage here.

Goddess of Kampong Roteh, bearer of much merit and power!
Goddesses of Praek, Kong Meas, and Kampong Kdar,
joy of the gods!
Among the Goddesses of all districts, Goddess of Santuk,
you stand tall!
Goddess of Kampong Svay and Goddess of Peam Traen—
we invite you here.

O guardians who abide everywhere, in Sdi Bet Meas, hidden in
sand and rice,
in groves of teal trees, in the ponds and plains of Saen Snay, and
in distant temples!
Goddess of Phnom Banan, Goddesses of Pursat and
Battambang,
Goddess of Babor, Goddess of Khlung, Goddesses of Krang and
Kragar!

Goddesses of Peal Nhaek and Peam Lok in Traok, mighty
Goddess of Banhas!
Goddess of Trates, curt Goddess of Phnom Mlu—come here to
listen.
Goddess of Indapattha, Queen of Angkor Wat! Goddess of the
Bakan!
Brave Queen of Wat Athvear! Goddess of Bathleip, Goddess of
Bakheng!

Goddess of Treang, proud Goddess of Bapeal, prominent
Goddess of Barach,
Fearsome Goddess of Choeung Tan Thom! Come here; show off
your might.
Goddesses of Kampot and Kampong Som, whose names prove
your power!
Goddess of Koh Ream, Goddesses of deltas and currents, come
here quickly!

Goddesses of Banteay Meas, Prei Krabas, Nokorathibadei,
Kampong Putrea, Prei Puoch, Bati, and Samrong Tong!
Goddess of Phnom Choap, Goddess of Rolea P'ier, join as one!
Mighty goddesses and guardians great and small, come join us!

We invite you and your retinues, Goddesses of Rumduol and
Svay Toap.
Come from the north, O bold Goddess Daeng, come all forest
spirits!
Please come, O Goddess of Ba Phnom and other great
guardians.
Come, O Goddesses of Tuol Chneang, Prei Khduoch, and
Prei Khla!

Goddess of Prei Veng and Goddess of Srei Santhor, endowed
with might!
Goddess of Tbound Khmum, from north of Khal and down to
Slaeng!
From the Goddess of Peam Reang all the way the Goddesses of
Prang
and Moat Khnung, travel here on roads both smooth and clear.

Goddess of Kok Seh! We invite you here, along with you of
Choeung Prei,
Ba Chey, Steung Traeng, Preah Beung, Sambok, and Sambour.
Goddesses of rivers and reservoirs, of vast lakes, ponds, and
streams,
like those of Sopoar Kalei—come and hear this testimony.

Once the two parties have argued frankly against one another,
their testimonies must each be examined for boasts and truths.
Hence we now invite you to preside over this unfinished case—
serve as our witnesses. May the Earth herself be our alibi.

Should either party lie, intentionally breaking the oath,
may the deities of all places destroy them—bring them to ruin!
Part them from their kids, wives, parents, and relatives.
Scatter their wealth. Smite them, O Lords, crush them.
In their next life, let them burn away their sins in the hells,
for such faults lead to birth in Avīci, the lowest realm.

O deities! As for those who are honest and kind,
may all you gods and goddesses postpone their deaths.
Supply them with abundant wealth, with goods and gems.
Lengthen their lives and swiftly grant them highest bliss.

O deities! We, the assembly of judges in this court,
beseech you now—kindly serve as our chief witnesses.
Hear us, O gods! May these prayers be swiftly answered.
O guardians! May this, our solemn oath, be soon resolved.

Law for Ordeals³

What follows is a detailed exposition of oaths and ordeals, including submersion in water and walking through fire, which the kings of old ordained in the ten articles below.

Article 1: A royal ordinance holds that if a plaintiff and a defendant are to be put through an ordeal together, there are seven possible types, to wit:

- 1) have them plunge their hands in molten lead
- 2) have a solemn oath recited
- 3) have them walk through fire together
- 4) have them both be submerged in water
- 5) have them race by swimming against the current
- 6) have them race by swimming to the other shore
- 7) have them each light a candle of equal size

³ Translated from the Khmer of *Kram bisodhan* (excerpted from *neh cpāp' sāksī bīsoddh*), printed in Olivier de Bernon, Kun Sopheap, and Leng Kok-An, *Kamrañ cpāp' khmæer bī purāñ bhāg 1 / Codes anciens du Cambodge, Corpus de 1891*, Volume 1, Phnom Penh: Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2016, pp. 363–369.

Before preparing the ordeal itself, the judge must detain the two litigants and have the following materials purchased for each in equal measure: a live chicken, wax, raw cotton thread, *sambuor* fruit, *kroch soech* fruit, a new rice pot, a new stew pot, and white cloth, including both lower sarongs and upper coverings, along with *bay si*.

Have the two litigants wear the white cloth. Keep them on an ascetic regime for three days; forbid them from talking. Have the bailiff look after the litigants, providing them with rice and checking both parties for any potential mishaps and lapses in behavior. Should either litigant flee the ascetic regime or should either one curse or hit the other, the one who ran, cursed, or hit loses the case. Should three days of such fasting pass without a fault, have the plaintiff and the defendant be submerged in water together as an ordeal.

The ordeal should be prepared in the following way. First build a pavilion for the deities native to the soil. Then construct a ritual hall conforming to the characteristics of the ordeal. Finally, erect two posts in the water, six cubits apart. The offerings for the deities must be separately placed on the altar by the plaintiff and the defendant. Each must prepare a *bak chham*-style *bay si*, a pleated white cloth five spans long, a new rice pot, five candles lit for the deities, ten incense sticks lit for the deities, a rooster, and a male duck. These animals should then be released at a monastery.

Article 2: For an ordeal of submersion in water or walking through fire, the judge assigns a guarantor to ask for money from the plaintiff and the defendant to set aside as collateral, with each party contributing ten *sleung* of silver coins, a total of twenty *sleung* or five *baht*. The cost for having the solemn oath recited is six *sleung* each, a total of three *baht*. The cost for catching an arrow is two *sleung* each, a total of one *baht*. The cost of the post in the water is six *sleung* each, a total of three *baht*. The cost of the gong is two *sleung* each, a total of one *baht*. The cost of detainment is six *sleung* each, a total

of three *baht*.

The offerings required by each party are as follows: a white cloth five cubits long, uncooked rice in a bamboo bowl, a *baht* of silver candle ends, five tapered *chom* offerings, four offerings of ruit, a pair of conical *sla thoa* offerings, and a pair of *bak chham*-style *bay si*. Have each party have a rooster with a piercing crow to stand guard. Each side must also offer a chicken to the local deities, a flat comb, some auspicious cotton thread for wearing around the head, and a skein of cotton yarn for enclosing the ritual space. Make sure there is enough food to feed the brahman priests participating in the three-day ascetic regime, along with various fragrances.

As for the ritual hall and the pavilion for the deities, have the plaintiff and the defendant construct them. As for the required offerings, the plaintiff and the defendant must be coerced to offer them at the same time, namely at the second hour of the afternoon. The preparations complete, at the fifth hour of the afternoon the ascetic regime begins in the ritual space. The posts must also be erected by the appropriate water functionaries.

The gong is then struck and the presiding sheriff has the police functionaries force the plaintiff and the defendant down by the shoulders into the water. The presiding sheriff, along with the guarantors of each party, holds his breath for three breaths. If he has taken three breaths and the plaintiff and the defendant have still not emerged, quickly dispatch the bailiff into the water to bring back the plaintiff and the defendant. Should the plaintiff or the defendant come to the surface before three held breaths have elapsed, ask the one who came up early about the reason why they surfaced before the other.

Article 3: For an ordeal of walking through fire, dig a fire pit six cubits long, one cubit wide, and one cubit deep, with hot embers piled one span thick. Have the judge procure the following payments from both the plaintiff and the defendant: The cost of having the solemn vow chanting is six *sleung*

each. The cost of detainment is six *sleung* each. The cost of the fire ordeal is three *sleung* each. The mounting plate is ten *sleung* each. The total is therefore two *damloeng* and one *sleung* each.

Have the plaintiff and the defendant wash their feet. Have the bailiff, the judge, and the cantor of the solemn oath inspect the soles and toes of both parties to make sure they are clean as well as to check for any scars or injuries, whether new or old. Have the cantor serve as the scribe, making a sketch of the soles and toes to serve as evidence. Once the fire ordeal is over, keep both parties for three, five, or seven days, and only then allow them to wash their feet. If any impurities are detected, inspect them with a needle to determine whether they are blisters caused by the fire or from another cause.

If either the plaintiff or the defendant has burn blisters on their soles, they lose the case. If they have burn blisters on the top of their foot instead, or on their toes, then they have surely lost, without the possibility of victory. If both have burn blisters, the sages say that both are guilty. Likewise, if neither have burn blisters, the sages say that both are innocent. If further clarity is necessary, have them undergo the water ordeal.

Article 4: If a legal disagreement leads to an ordeal of walking through fire, the judge must inspect the situation with great care, lest one of the parties be skilled in magic spells that can be chanted over and blown onto the fire to remove its poison, preventing the development of burn blisters. Or, alternatively, it is possible that one of the parties may be skilled in magical techniques that can cause burn blisters to develop. If someone is suspected of using these unlawful tricks, they should be set aside for special scrutiny.

Article 5: If an accusation arises regarding lending money, borrowing silver, gold, or skirts of colored silks, or anything else, and the plaintiff's accusation is rejected by the defen-

dant but both sides are unsupported by witnesses, an ordeal should be arranged, whether by submersion in water, walking through fire, racing against the current, racing to the other shore, lighting candles of equal size, or making *pae ruat* or *pae chaeng* offerings of folded banana leaves to the gods.

Should the plaintiff be defeated by the ordeal, or should the defendant be defeated, the sages say that the gods do not side with those with evil hearts, who have no grasp on truth. Determine the original cost of the disputed goods. Double that amount to determine the penalty paid by the loser. Divide that amount into twenty shares to assess the legal fee, including the meeting tax and that for the emotional distress of the victor, as regulated in the royal codes.

Article 6: If a mutual disagreement arises at court or in a ministry, and the case proceeds to an ordeal, the investigators should have the plaintiff and the defendant undergo an ordeal. Take an amount of money appropriate to the gain or loss at stake in the case, and place it in a neutral place. Then allow the ordeal to begin. If the ordeal involves lighting candles of equal size, have the sheriff and the guarantors of each party sit together and listen, considering the merits of the case. The plaintiff and the defendant themselves must be barred from speaking. Should either party use foul language or curse the other, they are in the wrong on account of their speech, and it is certain that they started the conflict and must lose the case.

Roll out the candles to equal weight. Make the cotton wicks of equal length and string them through the candles. Once this process is complete, should flies or other insects land on the candle belonging to either party, causing that candle to extinguish itself, the party to whom it belongs is defeated, and must pay the other party back double the amount of the original dispute.

Article 7: Should an ordeal of water submersion be conducted, have the scribe—that is, the cantor—take up the words

of the solemn oath and chant them to the deities. Have the plaintiff and the defendant wash their heads clean and enter into the water. The judge should take the rope around each of their waists and tie it to their respective posts. He should then take some small logs and crisscross them three times around each party's shoulders, then shove them down by the shoulders while releasing the ropes, such that both plunge their heads under the water at the same time, right at the base of the post. Whoever surfaces first should be led by a noose back to the assembly as a form of deterrence.

Article 8: If a solemn oath and ordeal takes place, whether by plunging their hands in molten lead, racing against the current, racing to the other shore, drawing lots, or lighting candles, the plaintiff and the defendant must each prepare the following on their own: uncooked rice in a bamboo bowl, one *baht* of silver, four tapered *chom* offerings, and a white cloth five cubits long. The offerings to the deities include five candles, five sticks of incense, five bunches of flowers, and five measures of puffed rice. The cost of chanting the solemn oath is six *sleung*.

If one party is happy with the ruling, but the other dares to swear against it, the contented party's witnesses are to be given a blessing by the one who dares to swear against it. The cost for this blessing is five *damloeng* of silver per witness.

Article 9: Regarding the process of drawing lots, eight lots are written out and placed into a new bronze bowl. Four of them read "true"; the other four read "not true." Each are stamped with a seal. Have the scribe chant the solemn oath. Then pray to the gods and have the plaintiff and the defendant draw four lots each. If one side has four that say true, this is called complete victory; if three true lots, this is called partial victory. If each get two true lots, the two parties are equal.

In addition, there is a royal ordinance that says, should

people of other religions, including those from Europe, Champa, or Java, be put through an ordeal, replace the solemn oath with another oath appropriate to their religion.

Article 10: Regarding the division of the fines as discussed in the Law for Witnesses and the Law for Ordeals, divide all of the unforced fines into ten shares: four for the treasury tax, two for the meeting tax, and four for emotional distress. If the dispute concerned a base amount, the fines are doubled and are to be divided into twenty shares: four for the treasury tax, three for the meeting tax, and thirteen for the emotional distress of the victor. If a fine is assessed at three or four times the base amount, or at an even higher rate, the original value of the dispute is still divided into twenty shares.

If the judgment on a case is presided over by the king himself, the fine is divided into only ten shares: five for the treasury tax and five for the emotional distress of the victor. If such a royally judged case involves a base amount, then it is divided into twenty shares: five for the treasury tax, thirteen for the emotional distress of the victor, and two for the meeting tax.

The functionaries of the director of legal fines in the treasury are to make the appropriate divisions of the fines in accordance with royal command.

May this code of laws last long and stand the test of time.

About the Authors and Translator

The original title of the texts are Untitled [K. 292/K. 467]; *Prāṃmadh-dhān [Praṇidhān]*; and *Cpāp' sāksī bīsoddh [Kram bisodhan]*. All three texts are anonymous and were composed between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries.

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