



The study of "GARUMARGĀ : A study of literary conventions of figures of speech and symbols in Khmer literatures" was funded by the Ubonratchathanee University (academic year 2007), with an aim to study the custom of poetic devices and symbols in Khmer Literature which are selected from 15 famous literatures : Rāmkerī , Rāmkerī Kāi Vairābhasītumyakbrarāmbān , Khayanānkhā , Bogakulakumār , Kākī , Hanyāntra , Bhuṭṭhisen Nānkanī , Sabvasiṭṭhi , Dumḍāv , Causradapcek , Maraṇmātā , Subintakumār , Brasuthan , Bracankamkaev , and Sansilpajai.

The research shows that Khmer literature favors similes as seen in most Botchomchom. The use of similes can emphasize the extraordinary appearance of the characters especially the hero and the heroine. The use of Botchomchom in the Khmer literature is both the Sanskrit influenced style and the Khmer style, which has much in common to the Ayuddhayan one. Besides, similes are found in various circumstances. For example, sorrow or anger is compared to fire that rages in the heart. Metaphors are mostly found in names of the characters. For instance, some characters are named "Mas", "Kaew", "Tab", "Phung Nam", "Kwan" in order to express love and admiration. Metaphors are also found in some other situations. For example, poets say a pleasing word is honey. Overstatements are used mostly to emphasize the mass of the mentioned items.

Personifications are used to express the characters' feelings: the poets use nature as a messenger to represent the feeling of the characters. Metonymy are also found. For instance, poets use "liver", "lung", "gallbladder", "stomach" and "abdomen" to represent body or life. Allusions are about the Bhodhisatta, who will be the future Bhuddha, as well as other gods both in the Buddhist and Brahman Religions.

The use of symbols in Khmer literature falls into 2 categories: the symbols that represent love, such as betel nut and clothes, and the symbols with sexual connotation, which are rarely found, thereby not being considered a literary custom. Moreover the study also reveals many resemblances between Khmer and Thai literature in terms of poetic devices and symbols, showing profound cultural relations between the two ethnics.

The study of literary customs of poetic and symbolic use in the Khmer literature enables us to understand the Cambodians more profoundly as well as to have a clear insight into Khmer literary forms, which will be very useful for the study of both ancient and contemporary Khmer literature.