

## The Brother Returns

IN THE PROVINCE OF KORAT THERE IS A FAMOUS TOWN NAMED PIMAI. The temple in Pimai is one of the most beautiful in Thailand. It was built by the Cambodians before they built Angkor Wat. The craftsmen who built Prasat Hinpimai, also built Angkor Wat. But this is not the story of how the temple was built, it is the story of how Pimai got its name.

### A

One of the Kings of Cambodia was Suryavarman II. His kingdom was very big, and it included much of northeastern Thailand. King Suryavarman had a son named Tao Prajet. He was a handsome young man,, and he wanted to find a wife.

One day Tao Prajet said to his father, "I am old enough to be married. I want to travel throughout the kingdom to find my wife." His father agreed with him, and Tao, Prajet left the palace in the capital of Angkor Thorn. He traveled for many months.

Tao Prajet was very tired of traveling, but he had not yet found his wife. Finally he came to the part of his father's kingdom which is now in Thailand. At a small village, called Sumrit, he saw an old woman.. Tao Prajet saw that the woman was going to have a baby. He thought, "She is old. She will need help. Perhaps I can become her servant."

Tao Prajet asked, "What is your name?"

"I am called Grandmother Bua," the old woman replied.

Tao Prajet did not want to tell anyone who he was, and so he said, "I am a poor traveler. I do not have any money, but I am strong. If you need someone to cut wood or to take care of the rice plants for you, I can do it."

"Well, I could use a servant," Bua answered. So Tao Prajet agreed to be her servant. He did not tell; anyone who he was. Everyone thought he was a very poor man.

### B

When Bua's baby was born, it was a girl. She was named Orapin. Tao Prajet helped Bua look after the baby. He stayed for many years as Bua's servant. He was like a brother to Orapin. And because no one knew his name, they called him Pi, or brother. When Orapin became a young lady, she was very beautiful. All of the young men wanted to marry her. Tao Prajet also fell in love with Orapin. He wanted to marry her, but he had to have his father's approval first. So Tao Prajet left Bua's house one day. He did not tell anyone where he was going or why he was going.

King Suryavarman was very glad to see his son again after many years. He thought that his son was dead. Tao Prajet told his father how he had traveled to many places in the kingdom without finding a wife. He told his father how he had been a servant to Grandmother Bua for many years. He told his father of Bua's daughter,; Orapin. And then he said, "Orapin is very beautiful. I want to marry her."

The king did not know what to do. He had never seen Orapin. She was not the daughter of a prince or a princess. But Tao Prajet said he loved only Orapin. Finally, the king agreed, and he said, "If you want to marry Orapin, we must take some presents to her. We will all go to visit her in the town of Sumrit. So the king, the queen, Tao Prajet\* and many relatives, set out for Bua's house.

When Tao Prajet left Bua's house, Orapin and Bua were very sad. They both loved him very much. Bua said, "Pi would have been a good husband for you, Orapin. But he is gone. We will have to find another man to be your husband."

One day a man named Prommatud came to Bua's house. He was a rich and powerful man. He said to Bua, "You are very poor, and I am very rich. I love Orapin, and I would like to marry her." Orapin did not love Prommatud, but she agreed to marry him because he was rich and powerful. She was not happy, because she loved only Tao Prajet. Sometimes she was so sad she would cry all night.

## C

Tao Prajet and his family traveled for several days. At last they came to Ban Kong Road. They stopped and asked some people, "How far is it to Bua's house?"

"It is not very far," they answered, and then they said, "why are you carrying all of those packages?"

"I want to marry Orapin," Tao Prajet answered.

"Don't you know that Orapin is already married to Prommatud, He is a rich man."

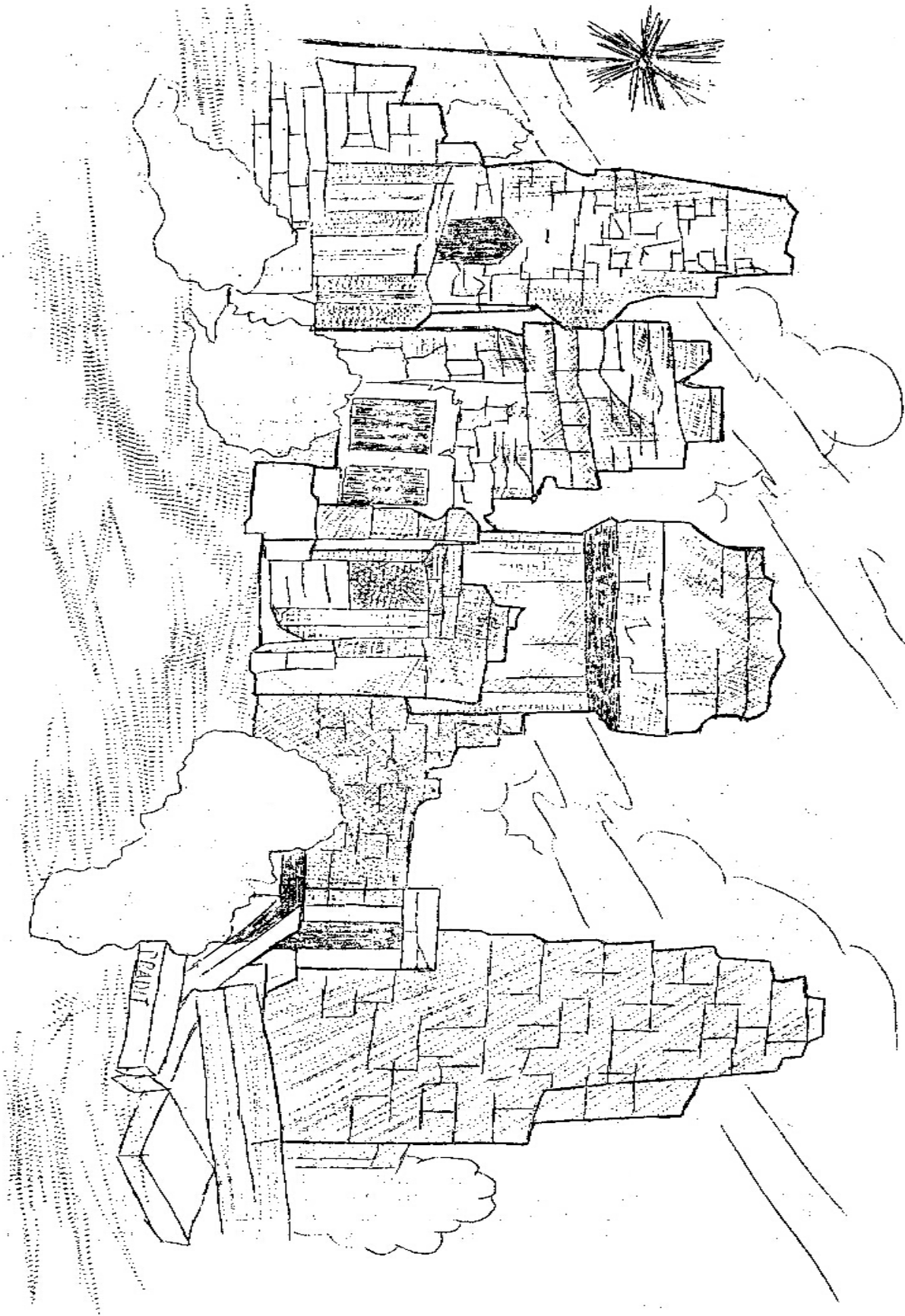
Tao Prajet was very sad, and his parents were very angry. There was a small river near the road, and they threw all their gifts into the river. Then Tao Prajet said to his parents, "Please return to your palace. I want to go to the village of Sumrit alone."

## D

When he came to the village, he asked where Prommatud's house was. The people told him. They wondered who this handsome man was. That night he went to the house. It was very dark, and he entered the house quietly. No one knew that he was there. He came to the bedroom where Prommatud and Orapin were sleeping. Very carefully, he opened the door, and went to their bed. Then he took out his knife and stabbed Prommatud.

Before Prommatud died, he shouted, "I am dying, help me!"

This shout awakened Orapin. She looked up and saw Tao Prajet. He said excitedly, "My brother has come back to me (or in Thai, Pima lew.) How happy I am to see you here! I have never loved this man, I had to marry him because he was rich and powerful."



Tao Prajet believed Orapin. He said, "You do not know my real name. I am Tao Prajet, King Suryavarman's son. For many years I was your servant. When you became a young woman I fell in love with you. So I returned to my father's palace to ask him if I could marry you. But it is a great distance from here to my father's palace, and so my journey took several months. When returned, you were already married. I was very sad, and very angry. I wanted to kill you. "When I asked some people where you lived, they said you were very unhappy with your husband. Then I believed that you loved me, and I love you."

Tao Prajet and Orapin went to Grandmother Bua's house. She was very surprised to learn who Tao Prajet was. When she heard that Tao Panchit wanted to marry Orapin, she asked Orapin, "Do you want to marry Tao Prajet? You can only marry him if you love him."

"He is the only man I have ever loved, Mother. I want to marry him very much," Orapin replied. And so Tao Prajet married Orapin. They went to the city of Angkor Thom, the capital of King Suryavarman, and they lived happily ever after.

This story is remembered in two names. The river where Tao Prajet and his parents threw their gifts is called Lampraimad, which means, the place where Tao Prajet was disappointed. And the town of Sumrit was named Pimalew. Today it has been shortened to Pimai, but it still means what Orapin said that night, "My brother has come back to me."

*[The story and drawing of Pimai are taken from **Stories of the Northeast** a reader developed by the English department of the Teachers Training College of Mahasarakham for first and second year students in that institution. While that institution has not existed. The purpose of the reader was to help students understand English could be used to tell their own stories, too. That institution has not existed for 40+ years, but its most recent successor institution today is known as Mahasarakham University. Peace Corps Volunteers at the Teachers Training College of Mahasarakham handles much of the work in producing that reader. The artist of the drawing was a fourth year student at the College.]*