

PUDDH TOMNEAY

(THE BUDDHA'S PROPHECIES?)

ពុទ្ធខណ្ឌ

Translated and Interpreted

by
Kenneth T. So
សៅ ខុង ថៃ

PUDDH TOMNEAY

The Tragedies of Cambodia as Prophesied by the Buddha?

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សេនា ខុនី ថៃ

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selections from this book, write to:

Kenneth T. So
E-mail: aryasatya@rocketmail.com

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Kenneth T. So a.k.a. ស៊ា ខុន ថៃ
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PREAMBLE

Puddh Tomneay literally means Puddh's Prophecy in Cambodian. The *Prophecy* was written in Khmer and Pali. People have always believed that *Puddh Tomneay* (ពុទ្ធនិទ្ទេស) was truly the message of the *Lord Buddha* (*Puddh means Buddha in Khmer*) who prophesied about various events that affected the Buddhist religion from its conception to the year 5000 (the predicted end of the Buddhist era).

This *Puddh Tomneay* was translated from the Khmer/Pali version, titled “BUDH DAMNAY, Yantra Gatha Karabar Khluon, by Brahma Vira (ពុទ្ធនិទ្ទេស យន្ត្រ ភាថា ការពារខ្លួន រៀបរៀងដោយ ព្រហ្មវិរៈ).” This important document can be obtained at the “Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Civilisation Khmère (CEDORECK),” located at 218, rue Saint-Jacques, 75005 PARIS, FRANCE.

Since childhood I have heard a lot about the tale of *Puddh Tomneay* from my parents and older people, which they in turn heard it from their ancestors. I was not even sure that a document on this *Prophecy* would exist. Before I embarked on this project I did not realized how hard the translation would be. Only after I started to read it that I knew it would be very difficult. I knew that I had to be very patient and analytical in my approach on how to do my work. I had to constantly rewrite my translation until I was satisfied with the intended meanings conveyed in the *Puddh Tomneay*. Having completed the translation, I proceeded to the next important task, which was to interpret the riddles and meanings of the prophecies. I constantly tried to analyze them in my head on my way to work every day. Sometimes I talked to myself and tried to make some senses out of the riddles and events described in the *Puddh Tomneay*.

For generations people believed the reason *Nokor Kok Thlok* (Cambodia) was prominently referenced in *Puddh Tomneay* because of the fact that Cambodia contributed

to the spread of Buddhism, especially in the Southeast Asia part of the world. However, lately scholars have questioned the true origin of the *Prophecy*.

There are two schools of thoughts on this subject. The first opinion attributes *Puddh Tomneay* to the *Lord Buddha's* prophecies and no one is to question their authenticities. The second opinion speculates that *Puddh Tomneay* was probably written by a scholar, priest, or *Horasastr (Fortuneteller)* named *Puddh*. People that belong to this second group of opinions posed the question, “Why would the *Lord Buddha* who lived in India be interested in prophesying only about Cambodia?”

It is a legitimate question to ask “Is *Puddh Tomneay* really the words of the *Lord Buddha*?” It is also in human nature to ask “How accurate is *Puddh Tomneay*?” As to the first question, nobody really knows the answer to it. However, I will attempt to answer this question in the Interpretations section from my personal point of views. In the same token, no one can prove that *Puddh Tomneay* was not the true word of the *Lord Buddha* either. This question may never be resolved to everybody’s satisfaction. It will always remain controversial. It is much easier to answer the second question. The prophecies that were foretold in *Puddh Tomneay* could be verified by the historical events that had occurred in Cambodia. I will do my best to correlate the *Puddh Tomneay's* prophecies with historical data in the Interpretations section. However, due to my limited resources and my lack of training and understanding in Khmer history and literature, I will leave this question to scholars and historians to tackle this problem with more proofs of evidence in their future studies.

Pali was the preferred language of Buddhism while Sanskrit was more attributed to Hinduism or Brahmanism. Since *Puddh Tomneay* was written in Khmer and Pali languages, the translation of this body of work into English is very difficult. In some cases, the translation may not be quite accurate due to the fact that some portions of the *Prophecy* were written in verses producing sentences that could rhyme only in Khmer and Pali written languages. Therefore, some of the translations may not capture and convey the intended messages of the prophecies due to the fact that there are no equivalent phrases or words that actually portray the poetries used in *Puddh Tomneay*. However, I was very diligent in my duty as an amateur translator not to stray too far away from the intended words, phrases, or meanings of the prophecies. Because of the

preponderance of the Pali vocabularies used in *Puddh Tomneay*, combined with riddles, obscured messages, and unfamiliar Khmer words (especially for non-Khmer or young Khmer readers), I feel an obligation to provide a lot of footnotes to explain some of the historical facts or meanings behind certain words or phrases. In addition, If *Puddh Tomneay* were originated from India, I have the feeling that this Khmer/Pali version of *Puddh Tomneay* was already a translation from probably an original version that was totally written in Pali. It is always difficult, if not impossible, for anyone who attempts to decipher the meaning of a prophecy, especially for events that have not yet happened. However, it is much easier to interpret an event that has already happened and correlate it to a certain section of the prophecy.

When I was working on this project I intended to only translate the document. I was not going to interpret it, because I felt I was not qualified to do so due to my lack of training and understanding in the fields of Khmer history, arts, and literatures. However, after I finished the translation, I decided to add some footnotes to help the readers understand some of the meanings behind certain words or phrases. Having done that, I thought that my job was finished. But I realized that the translation would not be complete if I did not write a preamble explaining and interpreting some of the contents in the *Puddh Tomneay*. Originally, I intended to write only a one-page of Preamble. After completing one page, again I thought that my job was done. On my way to work every morning, I kept thinking about some of the riddles in the *Puddh Tomneay* and tried to make some senses out of them. I kept feeling that something was not complete. I was not satisfied with my Preamble. I then started to add one more page and then a few more pages to it. I thought that the Preamble section would be adequate but then again I still felt that something was amiss. When I reviewed my final draft I realized that I had not correlated the events described in the *Puddh Tomneay* with the historical events of Khmer civilization. Then I decided to add an Interpretation section.

The Interpretations section was the last piece of the *Puddh Tomneay* puzzle. When I started to correlate those events and dates, out of a sudden I felt like some pieces of a puzzle that were scattered everywhere up until then were now coming together to form a clearer image of what the puzzle was about. The more I read my Interpretations, the more I kept adding new ideas into them. Finally I decided to end my work because I did

not really have the time, the resources, and the expertise to fully do justice for this important piece of document. Some experts in the fields of Khmer literatures and histories may reproach the way I do my translations and interpretations, and may consider my work not scholarly enough to merit its review.

I do not claim to be an expert on Khmer history or Khmer literature or even Buddhist religion. I am only an amateur who happens to be curious about *Puddh Tomneay*'s revelation. I am doing this translation as a labor of love and also out of passion to learn more about the history of Khmer civilization, art, and literature. My intention is to provide some understandings, no matter how small they are, on this very important subject that has been occupying the Cambodian minds for many generations. I would like to apologize in advance about any mistakes or misunderstandings in my interpretations of this very unique body of work that is known as *Puddh Tomneay*.

Final Thought

Notice I choose to spell "*Puddh*" instead of the more common one "*Puth*" or the more correct one "*Buddh*." I struggled for a long time whether to use *Puddh* or *Buddh*. Finally, I decided on the spelling of *Puddh* because I wanted to differentiate *Puddh* from *Buddh* that connotes Buddha. As explained earlier, *Puddh* could be the name of a person or it could actually be Buddha. Therefore, as a compromise I chose to spell it *Puddh* instead of *Buddh*. I feel that *Puth* is not the proper spelling because it may sound right in French but not in English. *Puddh* sounds correct in both languages.

This project has been the most satisfying work I have ever done and the most rewarding experience I have ever had. Everyday I was looking forward to coming home from work in order to add some of my new thoughts and interpretations to the Preamble and Interpretations sections.

This work is dedicated to all the Cambodian people who have suffered so much throughout history.

Kenneth T. So a.k.a. សេនា ខុំ វ៉ែ (Mission Viejo, June 22, 1996)

THE TRANSLATION OF PUDDH TOMNEAY

Translated from BUDH DAMNAY, a khmer/Pali document
that prophesied mainly about the events in Cambodia

TRANSLATION

Buddha fixed the Buddhism period to last 5,000 years, dating from Tuesday, the 15th day of the waxing moon¹ in the month of *Pisak*² and the year of *Massaing*³.

Buddha gathered his disciples that included *Ananda*⁴ and instructed them to spread and carry on his teaching after his death (after he entered Nirvana). *Ananda* then asked *Buddha* what kinds of difficulties human would encounter during the 5,000 years span of the Buddhism period. *Buddha* answered that not too long after his death, there would be fights and harsh provocation words among people but things would later return to normal again. He then added, “My disciple *Ananda*, there are a lot of people who do not like my teaching (which later becomes a religion) and attempt to destroy it, but they will not be successful in their efforts because there are more people who believe and practice it.”

¹ Used for each day of the 15-day period from the new moon to the full moon.

² The sixth month of the lunar year, corresponding to April-May.

³ The sixth year of the 12-year lunar calendar, corresponding to the year of the snake.

The following prophecies were recorded in *Puddh Tomneay* and handed down from generations to generations:

In the year 200⁵, my disciple *Ananda*, there will be powerful people trying to destroy my teaching but a king named *Kalasaok* (កាលសោក) will use all his influences not only to save my teaching but he will help make it prosper also. A big quarrel will take place in the year 218. Again, there will be another big resistance in the year 500. When my religion⁶ is more than 1000 years old, it will reach a country known by the name of *Nokor Kok Thlok*⁷. In that country there is a wise king named *Preah Ketomelear*⁸ (ព្រះកែតុមាលា) who brings prosperity to his people.

In the year 1656, there is an evil king of *Nokor Kok Thlok* who forbids his people from practicing my religion because he tries to destroy all the texts that preach about my teaching. At that time there is a person who achieves *Arahantship*⁹, whose name is *Preah Puddh Khosacha* (ព្រះពុទ្ធក្រិស្ណាចារ្យ), who defends my religion and fights against the evil king by organizing and establishing a collection of *Tripitaka*¹⁰ (ព្រះត្រៃបិដក) texts that are partitioned into 84,000 sectors from the various bodies of writings on Buddhist teachings. He proceeds to propagate my teaching to the rest of the world. As a result, *Nokor Kok Thlok* remains a peaceful country and benefits from it by being the resting place for the *Preah Keo Marakat* (*Sacred Emerald or Emerald Buddha*).

While a king named *Preah Bat Batumreach Chakravong* (ព្រះបាទបុទុមរាជចក្រវង្ស) helps strengthen my religion until it reaches the year 2000, a group of *Siam Krung Naong Snao* (សៀមក្រុងណោងស្មៅ) raises an army to attack his kingdom and steals all the

⁴ Ananda was the most learned of the Buddha's disciples.

⁵ The years were all chronicled to the Buddhist era which began about 543 B.C. (Christian Year = Buddhist Year - 543).

⁶ Religion and teaching are used interchangeably throughout the text.

⁷ Nokor Kok Thlok was a historical name for ancient Cambodia.

⁸ Ketomelear is also the name assigned to Jayavarman II.

⁹ High learning of the Buddha's teaching.

¹⁰ Tripitaka texts consist of Vinayapitakam, Suttapitakam, and Abhidhammapitakam. These are the three baskets of Pali canons or collections of Buddhist sacred writings which are: 1) Discipline, consisting of

books of rules and principles, as well as kidnaps all the scholars and intellectuals to take them to Siam. After that, the people become depressed, starvation is rampant, and social unrest is spread all over the country.

In the year 2025, there is a king who rules *Nokor Borei*¹¹ and he is called by his people as the *Leper King* (ស្រ្តីចក្ខុម្មង់). Not only is he a bad king but he is also insatiable in sex, which results in him contracting the leprosy disease. A *Preah Moha Muni Essey* (*The most senior of Holy Man*) wants to cure the king of his disease. He sends a young monk to prepare a big pot of boiling water for the king. After the monk pours a medicinal potion into the boiling water, he then asks the king to get into the pot. That suggestion makes the king so furious that he instructs his guards to throw the young monk into the pot instead. The young monk dies instantly. When *Preah Moha Muni Essey* hears of the incident, he rushes to the place and uses all his mighty powers to resurrect the young monk. *Preah Moha Muni Essey* is so mad at the king that he casts a spell on *Nokor Kok Thlok* damning the country to incessant wars, famines, and social unrests from that day on.

About ten years after that, witches and all the bad elements that exist in nature come out of the forest to join and mingle with the populace. The country becomes so unrestful that people start to quarrel. Bad becomes good, black becomes white, cheating becomes the norm, students are not listening to teachers, children are not obeying their parents, and the wives are not respectful of their husbands.

In 2200, there are enemies from the outside (foreigners) who interfere in the internal affair of the country by stirring up troubles. There are killings everywhere and rumors of a reincarnated *Holy Baby* prompt the foreigners to conduct searches to kill him. The foreigners kill women that are pregnant as well as young children. The foreigners are able to operate at will in the country because the king is a weak king and he can be easily manipulated. Later on, *Chao Pohnnier Krèk* (ចៅព្រហ្មក្រែក) seizes and regains power and the kingdom of *Nokor Kok Thlok* becomes peaceful once more.

a series of instructions for monks; 2) Things Strung Together, or sermons and addresses to all; and 3) Superiors Truths or Metaphysics.

¹¹ The ancient Cambodia was called *Nokor Kok Thlok*. Later on, it was changed to *Nokor Borei*. However, *Nokor Kok Thlok* and *Nokor Borei* are being used interchangeably.

Again in 2300, there is a morally wicked and evil king named *Reamreach Chanchet* (រាមរាជ ចន្ទលេង្គី) who makes an alliance with foreigners. He is later murdered by his own bodyguard and as a result social unrests occur everywhere, creating famine and leaving monks and the people starving to death all over the country. People leave the city and enter the forest proclaiming themselves kings.

There is a king of big stature, born on the 5th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Dragon (*Chhnam Rong*), named *Preah Bat Harikraksakvong Angpimpiksasreach* (ព្រះបាទហរិរក្សវង្ស អង្គពិម្ពិសាសរាជ), who is just and kind to his people. He reestablishes control and order and reorganizes the country to a peaceful and religious way of life again.

After the king's death, his elder son ascends to the throne and reigns for three years at *Oudong Rechey*¹² and then moves his council, advisors, and government to settle at the location where the four rivers meet. In the process, the king accepts and replaces his people with foreigners, thus creating constant turmoils throughout the country. During that time an army of ruthless people recruited from *Naong Snao*¹³ (ណោងស្នោ), *Koh Slaket* (កោះស្លាកែត), and *Somraong* (សំរោង), that has been hiding patiently in the forest, decides to come out and attack the foreigners. The king who is too blind with power and who enjoys the protection of the foreigners has allowed his people to be persecuted. Later on, the younger brother of the king named *Sereiputhivong* (ស៊ីរីពុទ្ធវង្ស) ascends to the throne and reigns at the *Chaktumuk Royal Palace*. However, the country is still undergoing a violent turmoil with fights breaking out everywhere. On Friday, of the sixth month of the lunar year, which corresponds to April-May (*Khè Pisak*) and on the 1st year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Rat (*Chhnam Chout*), my religion reaches 2,400 years old.

The turmoil is reaching to the point where people do not obey the laws, individuals take the laws into their own hands, children ignore their parents, farmers forget to earn their livings, monks forget to meditate, and lower rank workers want to become high

¹² The historical name is Udong Meanchey. King Norodom I (1860-1904 B.C.) moved the capital from Oudong to Phnom Penh.

¹³ Naong Snao referred to Siam.

government officials. The whole phenomena become so evil and absurd that everything is turned upside down, frogs are not scared of snakes, crows want to fight with elephants, bananas want to attack buffaloes, fish want to bang on mountains, servants want to attack their masters, cats leave the houses, and fish leave their lakes. This period will change my religion for two years and at that time the *Thmil*¹⁴ (၄၆၄) people will destroy Buddhism and replace it with their own beliefs, destroying all statues, stupas, and bodhi trees; creating their own organization to brainwash people so that older and younger brothers do not listen to each other, children do not know their mothers, students do not recognize their teachers, and grandmothers do not recognize their grandchildren.

In 2435, on the 12th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Pig (*Chhnam Kao*), a king from the west conquers over the *Thmil* people and establishes his reign over the country. On the 5th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Dragon (*Chhnam Rong*), there are four wise men who come out of their meditations and proclaim themselves to be the *Righteous Persons*. They fight against each other in front of *Tonlé Chaktumuk* (*the congruent of the four rivers*) to a standstill.

In 2482, on the 6th month of the lunar year, which corresponds to April-May (*Khè Pisak*), the *Thmil* people come back and fight to regain power. At that time the country becomes very prosperous, people can get anything they want, and they can command/use fire (or light), water, and wind at will. However, this causes the Buddhist religion to change and turn upside down in such a way that people are always angry, not knowing right from wrong, and not knowing the difference between good and evil.

My disciple *Ananda*, I will provide the following riddles for all of you to pin your hope on for the future. There will be a very noisy thunder coming from the east. The overseer of the country will cross his arms and cry, shrimps lay their eggs on top of mountains, and white crows patiently wait under reeds. Bodhi trees are about to take roots, poisonous cobras make their nests, buffaloes are in hiding so they can hone their horns, and Garudas (Mythological bird) fly and search to destroy their nests. Birds

¹⁴ Thmil is a person who is mean, ruthless, and evil. It may also indicate that the person does not believe

lay eggs in waters, crows carry *Phlè Lvear*¹⁵ (*cherry-like fruit*) and scatter them all over the country. At the sight of the fruits people pick them up for savings. Only in the future will the truth be revealed to them. Angry gray monkeys practice fighting techniques, only when they see trotting horses will they go hiding; long neck white herons are showing off, claiming they know exactly how many fish there are in the water. Herons are hunting non-stop in the vast plain, disregarding the fearless roar of a lion, as they catch fish in the water

without pity. Female tigers hunt in the cemeteries, hiding and waiting for Buddhism to come back. Only when thunders roar in all directions, will the tigers come out of the forest. This is near the *Mid-Way of the Buddhist Era*¹⁶ (*ពាក់កណ្តាលព្រះសិវសនា*).

My disciples, wait and observe at people of all genders in the country. If all they do are to eat, drink, commit sins, and gamble all over the places, then thieves will spring up everywhere and people will be only interested in their own fortunes. They will not participate in any charities and neither will they practice in moral conducts. The path will lead to destructions and killings of their own kinds, it will generate diseases and illnesses, and it will create famine that affect laymen as well as ministers and people of high rankings. This event will take place in the year of the Dragon (*Chhnam Rong*). Look at the stupa that preserves some of the remains of my body. It is located near *Wat Unnalom*¹⁷ and it is in such a state of dilapidated condition. However, people will rebuild it. They will rebuild the *Vihear Preah Keo Marakat*¹⁸ (*the Emerald Temple*) also. Look at all the new buildings that spring up all over the places, including the *Psar Bak*

in any religions.

¹⁵ The fruit is round with a smooth exterior appearance. It looks very appealing to the eyes. Its size is about that of a Bing Cherry. Its color change from green-yellow to red when it is ripe. When the fruit is opened up, gnat-like insects fly out of it. Traditionally in Cambodia, when one calls a person pretty like a *Phlè Lvear*, it means that the person is beautiful only on the outside but very rotten in the inside.

¹⁶ The Buddhist year 2500 is considered to be the mid-way of the Buddhist era.

¹⁷ Wat Unnalom is located in Phnom Penh near the Royal Palace. Wat Unnalom has always been the center of religious activities in modern day Cambodia. It is the principal residence of one of the highest ranking monk in Cambodia.

¹⁸ The temple is located within the Royal Palace compound. The temple was built by King Norodom I.

*Touk*¹⁹ (ផ្សារពាក់ទ្រូក) that has been newly completed. It is at this moment, when the *Righteous King* (ព្រះបាទធម្មិក) leaves for his ascetic practice that the sky becomes dark and cloudy, pouring rains for seven days and nights. From that moment on the weather is in turmoil. Rains will fall in the off seasons, changing dry seasons to rainy seasons for seven straight years. People are in bad moods and monks act and conduct themselves in immoral ways, but they all pretend to be righteous. Lay devotees also stop listening to Buddhism preaching.

My disciple *Ananda*, when the crisis occurs on the 9th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Monkey (*Chhnam Vok*), there is a king power from the *Thamek*²⁰ *White Race* (ធម្មិកសាសន៍សី) at the fortress in *Phnom Penh*, but he loses power and decides to retreat. Then the *White Race* bestows the reign to a king named *Thomakthonin* (ធម្មធម្មិន្ទ) who comes from the west. After that, the *Thamek White Race* sets up eight *Thamek* groups and let them defend and fight against the evil enemies. On the 10th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Rooster (*Chhnam Rokar*), the evil enemies surrender and finally retreat from the kingdom completely. The population starts to come out of the forest one by one.

On the 11th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Dog (*Chhnam Chor*), there will be some more turmoils that are known as the big unrest. At *Mid-Way of the Buddhist Era*, a king from *Naong Snao* marches his army until it reaches *Tonlé Chaktumuk*. There will be seven years of war until bloods become common sights. The battle starts at *Beong Srang*²¹ (បឹងស្រង) which spills over to *Kampong Tuol* (កំពង់ទួល), then reaches *Phnom Penh* near *Tuol Preah Srey* (ទួលព្រះស្រី), and then the evil enemies fight non-stop all the way to *Lvear Em* (ល្វែងម), and finally the

¹⁹ Bak Touk was the name of a lake that had been filled with land so that a market (*Psar*) could be built on it. The market that was built on this location was called *Psar Bak Touk*, and it was located south of the present Phnom Penh train station.

²⁰ Thamek is a person who is very educated and very knowledgeable in scriptures, laws, and moral principles.

battle ends up at *Tonlé Chaktumuk* again. My disciple *Ananda*, this is the period when Buddhism in that region is completely destroyed except the existence of only four monks, one holy man, and one *Achar*²² who rest under the shade of a bodhi tree.

These cataclysmic events have infuriated *Indra*²³ as he opens his divine eyes and sees the catastrophe that is ravaging inside *Kampu Borei (Cambodia)*. *Indra* decides to dispatch *Visakamtevabot*²⁴ (វិស្វកម្មវេទវបុត្រ) who metamorphoses himself into a *Chinese Kompi*²⁵ *Carrier* (ចិនលីកម្លីវ) searching for *Preah Bat Thamek Reach*²⁶ (ព្រះបាទធម្មិករាជ) living down here on earth.

During that time, *Thmil Thamek*²⁷ (ទមិទ្ធុធម្មិក) are fighting a war in all eight directions. *Visakamtevabot* has met *Thamek Kok Thlok*²⁸ (ធម្មិកកោកត្រុក) and asks him if he has seen the *Divine King*. *Thamek Kok Thlok* tells the *Chinese Kompi Carrier* that he is the person he is looking for, but the *Chinese* says that he is not the right person. The *Chinese* turns around and asks the *Achar* the same question. The *Achar* answers that the *Divine King* has been living in *Phnom Penh* for 23 years. The metamorphosed *Chinese, Visakamtevabot*, answers back that he cannot find the *Divine King* without some help. The *Achar* then tells the *Chinese* to go ask *Preah Moha Muni Essey*. He then tells the *Chinese* that the *Divine King* lives at *Phnom Tbèng* in the northeast. When the *Chinese Kompi Carrier* arrives in *Phnom Tbèng* he sees a *Bhikkhu*²⁹ all by himself with his robe having the color of a smoke draping around him. He is meditating on a rock in quest of knowledge. The *Chinese* then asks the monk if he were the *Divine King*. The *Bhikkhu* says that he is not the person, and the reason he is so dedicated in his meditation because he is waiting for the arrival of *Preah Bat Thamek Reach*. The *Chinese* then politely asks

²¹ Name of a large pond in front of the temple of Banteay Kdei in Siem Reap province. Khmer kings in ancient times went swimming in it.

²² A layman who coordinates and sets up religious ceremonies.

²³ A principle Vedic deity associated with rain and thunder.

²⁴ Name of the divine architect, said to be a son of Brahma who presides over all manual labors.

²⁵ Sacred scripture, treatise, law, code of law, body of laws, and/or legal principles.

²⁶ The Righteous King, or Divine King, or Divine One.

²⁷ *Thmil Thamek* means “The destroyer of knowledge” or a person who destroys things that are of importance to learning.

²⁸ Wise Man of Nokor Kok Thlok.

²⁹ Rank of a Buddhist monk above a *Sammet*, the lowest rank monk.

the *Bhikkhu* to move away from the rock he is sitting on and go sit on a rock located on the north side instead. The *Bhikkhu* complies without protest.

Suddenly, there is a divine appearance of a crown, a decorated neck bracelet, a golden shoes, and a silk clothing dropping from the sky accompanied by two angels. The *Bhikkhu* then asks where is *Indra*? As soon as the two angels answer that they are going to stay here on earth that *Indra* drops in and presents an umbrella decorated with different colors. The *Bhikkhu* asks for an elephant with blue tusks as a royal transportation to prepare for the *Divine King*. At the same time the *Chinese Kompi Carrier* begs *Indra* to go sit on the rock located in the south side because the royal elephant will be born to serve the *Divine One*. The *Bhikkhu* asks for kings *Chaktarat* (or *Dhataraddha* - ឆត្រវដ្តិ), *Viruppakhak* (or *Virubakha* - វិរុប្បក្ខៈ), *Viruklakhakkak* (or *Yama* - វិរុទ្ធិហិកៈ), and *Kukverak* (or *Bubera* - កុវេរៈ) known as the *Chaktuklokabal*³⁰ (the four king-guardian angels - ចតុរាសីកុលាប្ប). The four king-guardian angels appear and tell the *Bhikkhu* that they are going to stay here on earth. Again the *Bhikkhu* asks why the *Supreme Bones of the Buddha* (*Preah Boromsereirekatheat* - ព្រះបរមសិរីវិក័រោត្តម) have not metamorphosed on his palm yet? Upon hearing this, the *Chinese Kompi Carrier* makes a wish for the ashes of bone to appear, and suddenly the *Supreme Bones of the Buddha* float down from all directions from the sky. At the same time, a collection of *Tripitaka* with all its 84,000 sectors from the various bodies of writings on Buddhist teachings floats down and congregates to the same location, presenting itself to *Preah Bat Thamek Reach*. The four king-guardian angels submit themselves as servants to the *Divine King* and proceed to escort him out of *Phnom Tbèng*, traversing *Phnom Penh*'s fortress and reaching *Chroye Chankvar*.

In the meantime, the *Thmil's* (*mean, nasty, and ruthless people*) left side bodyguard stretches his bow and arrows to prove his master's might. It resonates in all seven directions, shaking the earth and heaven. The *Thmil* shouts to *Thamek Kok Thlok* asking him if he hears the thunderous noise creating by his divine bow and arrows? Then, the

³⁰ The mythological guardian angels of the four cardinal directions: Kubera in the north, Indra or Dhataraddha in the east, Yama in the south, and Varuna or Virubakha in the west (Pali: Catulokapala).

Thmil's ride side bodyguard shoots the arrow up creating an earth shattering noise. The *Thmil* then tell *Thamek Kok Thlok* that he is the *Divine One* and demands that the fight must be stopped. *Thamek Kok Thlok* asks his people not to listen but keep on fighting. At that moment, the servants of *Preah Bat Thamek Reach* shouts to *Thamek Kok Thlok's* people to stop fighting. However, the *Thmil's* people keep on shooting but bullets do not come out of the gun barrels. Only water and flowers comes out of the barrels, thus offering as gifts to the *Divine One*. Upon seeing this, *Thamek Kok Thlok* and his people submit themselves to the *Divine One*, offering him their allegiances and loyalties.

Preah Bat Thamek Reach ascends to the throne and rules *Nokor Borei* with justice, fairness, and honesty. All citizens in the kingdom have the same rights. Evil people are all killed and only good people remain alive. People will live to be 200 years old. Rain falls will become normal, the country is prosperous once again, and Buddhism will reach the year 5000.

My disciple *Ananda*, I am asking all of you to decipher the riddles of my prophecy concerning *Nokor Kampuchea*, like the verse “*the domesticated cows (or bulls) and white herons embrace themselves happily like one united friend, but they differ in their thinkings. As to the heron and the wild tiger they cannot live together, and when they meet each other they almost bring death to other animals as well, because they are both mean in their own ways. They both know how to act to attract the other animals to side with them. As to the people who indulge themselves in sex, they will sell their bodies to those who can offer them the most; this is called the sex war, creating changes within Nokor Borei, leading to the country disappearance; turtles are comparing themselves to elephants, frogs are comparing themselves to lions, fireflies are comparing themselves to the moon, herons are comparing themselves to Garudas, and copper is comparing itself to gold, reversing everything.*” My disciple *Ananda*, thunders from the north that cause fire in waters and in forests can be put out only by tigers after sunset. This is called the war of the *New Era*. *Khè Bos*³¹ indicates information, *Khè Meark*³² indicates thunder,

³¹ The 2nd month of the lunar calendar, corresponding to January.

³² The 3rd month of the lunar calendar, corresponding to January-February.

*Khè Phalkun*³³ indicates chaos, *Khè Chèt*³⁴ indicates the Lord is Divine, and these are the rhymes and riddles left for the *Mid-Way of the Buddhist Era 2500*.

Therefore, all of you who are supporting religious activities, you must maintain and practice good moral conducts and laws according to the scriptures of Buddhist teachings. You must wait for the *Divine One*, whose name is *Preah Areymetrei* (ព្រះអាទិបុរេមត្រី), by keeping your faith through practicing, reciting, meditating, and following the virtue and goodness of *Buddha*, the virtue and goodness of *Dharma*, and the good disciplinship of a monk. Harm will not come to you and peace will be found.

THE END OF PUDDH TOMNEAY

³³ The 4th month of the lunar calendar, corresponding to February-March.

³⁴ The 5th month of the lunar calendar, corresponding to March-April.

THE INTERPRETATIONS OF PUDDH TOMNEAY

Controversies will abound and I welcome all critiques

INTERPRETATIONS

Conversion from Buddhist Year to Christian Year

Before the interpretations of *Puddh Tomneay* can be started, it is necessary to show how the Buddhist years are converted to Christian years. Christian years are approximately obtained by subtracting 543 from the Buddhist years. The year 1996 A.D. is equivalent to the Buddhist year 2539.

Riddles Covering the Khmer Rouge Era

My interpretations of *Puddh Tomneay* will always be subjects to controversies. I provide these interpretations only reluctantly because I am the last person who is qualified to do this since I do not have any expertise in this field of study. I am not a trained scholar or a person well verse in the Khmer language, literature, or history. As stated earlier in my Preamble, it is much easier in trying to interpret the prophecies for events that have already happened.

The passage that starts with the following riddles seems to indicate the Khmer Rouge era:

“My disciple *Ananda*, I will provide the following riddles for all of you to pin your hope on for the future. There will be a very noisy thunder coming from the east. The overseer of the country will cross his arms and cry, shrimps lay their eggs on top of mountains, and white crows patiently wait under reeds. Bodhi trees are about to take roots, poisonous cobras make their nests, buffaloes are in hiding so they can hone their horns, and Garudas (Mythological bird) fly and search to destroy their nests. Birds lay eggs in waters, crows carry *Phlè Lvear* (cherry-like fruit) and scatter them all over the country. At the sight of the fruits people pick them up for savings. Only in the future will the truth be revealed to them. Angry gray monkeys practice fighting techniques, only when they see trotting horses will they go hiding; long neck white herons are showing off, claiming they know exactly how many fish there are in the water. Herons are hunting non-stop in the vast plain, disregarding the fearless roar of a lion, as they catch fish in the water without pity. Female tigers hunt in the cemeteries, hiding and waiting for Buddhism to come back. Only when thunders roar in all directions, will tigers come out of the forest. This is near the *Mid-Way of the Buddhist Era* (អារុសោអាណន្ទឆើយ អញ្ចតថាគតនឹងកំណត់ប្រស្នាឲ្យអ្នករាល់គ្នា នឹងរំពឹងទៅអនាគត

ឯភ្នែកចុះ។ ផ្លូវលាស់ ឯបួរសួរកណ្តុក អ្នកតាចាស់ស្រុកឱបដៃយំ
 កំពឹសពងពេញលើកំពូលភ្នំ ភ្នែកសសម្មី នៅក្នុងម្រៃតង។
 ព្រះពោធិព្រឹក្សហៀបចាក់បូស ពស់វែកមានពិសដឹកន្លែង ក្របីលាក់ខ្លួន
 ពួនសម្រួចស្តែង រាជហង្សហើរស្តែងកាច់សំបុក។ ពពេចក្រាបពងក្នុងគង្គា ភ្នែកពាំផ្លែ
 ល្ងាវាយគ្រប់ស្រុក អ្នកផងឃើញហើយប្រឹងរើសទុក តំណទៅមុខទើបដឹងខ្លួន។
 ស្វាក្រិះក្រញិះប្រឹងហាក់គុន លុះឃើញសេះលុនទើបរត់ពួន កុកសកវែងឯងអ្នកខ្លួន
 ថាដឹងចំនួនត្រីក្នុងទឹក។ កុកសាបរកស៊ីដោយវាលត្រាញ់ សស្រាក់សស្រាញ់ឥតមាន
 ភ្លឹក សីហនាថតគាតននាតនឹក ចាប់ត្រីក្នុងទឹកឥតមេត្តា។ ខ្លាញិរកស៊ីក្នុងស្មសាន

លាក់ខ្លួនរៀបចំប្រារណាចាំសាសនា លុះដល់ផ្លូវលាន់គ្រប់ទិសា ទើបខ្លាចាត្រាពីក្នុងព្រៃ។
នេះហើយនឹងជិតដល់ពាក់កណ្តាលព្រះសាសនា)”

I interpret the “*very noisy thunder coming from the east*” as the Khmer Rouge launching a major offensive on the Lon Nol’s regime from the Vietnam direction. Shrimps laying eggs on the top of mountains are out of the ordinary, reversing all facts of life like the Khmer Rouge doing everything completely out of the norm. White crows represent good people as opposed to black crows that represent the Pol Pot’s people. Therefore, the phrase “*white crows patiently wait under reeds*” would indicate that the people were waiting for the Lon Nol’s government to collapse. The sentence that said “*poisonous cobras make their nests*” would mean that the Pol Pot’s people started to win the war and held on to their occupied territories. “*Garudas fly and search to destroy their nests*” would mean that airplanes were flying and searching to bomb and destroy the Khmer Rouge. The next riddle about the crows carrying “*Phlè Lvear*” needs a little bit more explanation.

The riddle in the *Puddh Tomney* that says “*ក្រុកពាំផ្លែល្វោរាយគ្រប់ស្រុក (Crows carry Phlè Lvear (cherry-like fruit) and scatter them all over the country),*” has been interpreted among some Cambodian communities as the era where the Khmer Rouge committed their atrocities. In order to understand this riddle, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the word *Phlè Lvear* first. The fruit is round with a smooth exterior appearance. It looks very appealing to the eyes. Its size is about that of a Bing Cherry. Its color changes from green-yellow to red when it is ripe. When the fruit is opened up, gnat-like insects fly out of it. Traditionally in Cambodia, when one calls a person pretty like a *Phlè Lvear*, it means that the person is beautiful only on the outside but very rotten in the inside. Therefore, “*Crows*” is interpreted as the Pol Pot’s people because they dressed up in black like a crow; “*carry Phlè Lvear*” is interpreted as the Khmer Rouge (who are Red Khmer like a ripe *Phlè Lvear*) who sound and act very friendly and compassionate externally, but in reality they are evil to the core; “*and scatter them all over the country*” is interpreted as the Khmer Rouge carrying their evil missions and brainwashing the people all over the country.

“At the sight of the fruits people pick them up for savings” would indicate that at first when the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh people were welcoming them. *“Only in the future will the truth be revealed”* means that the Khmer people would find out about the true intentions and characters of the Khmer Rouge only later on. *“Angry monkeys practice fighting techniques, only when they see trotting horses will they go hiding”* would seem to indicate that the Khmer Rouge were preparing to fight against the Vietnamese but they would flee the moment they saw the enemy’s tanks and fighting forces. *“Female tigers hunt in the cemeteries”* would probably mean the wives were looking for their dead husbands who were executed by the Khmer Rouge. *“Hiding and waiting for Buddhism to come back”* would indicate that people were longing to practice Buddhism again.

As demonstrated in the above riddles, it is impossible to interpret the true meaning of the messages if the events have not yet happened.

The Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo

The legend of *Preah Ko Preah Keo* fits very well with the *Puddh Tomneay’s* prophecy about the people from *Siam (Thailand)* who raised an army to attack *Nokor Kok Thlok (Cambodia)* and stole all the books of rules and principles, as well as kidnapped all the scholars and intellectuals to take them to Siam. The following is quoted directly from Hann So’s *The Khmer Kings* dated August 3, 1988 for the legend of *Preah Ko Preah Keo*:

The citadel of Lovek was so large that no horse could gallop around it. Inside were two statues, Preah Ko (Sacred Cow) and Preah Keo (Sacred Precious Stone). Inside the bellies of these statues in turn, ‘there were sacred books in gold, where one could learn formulas, and books where one could learn about anything in the world; these were inside the bellies. Now the king of Thailand wanted to have the statues, so he raised an army and came to fight the Khmer king.’ Thai cannons fired silver coins, rather than shells, into the bamboo hedges that served as Lovek’s fortifications.

When the Thais retreated, the Khmers cut down the hedges to get at the coins and thus had no defenses when the Thais returned the following year to assault the city. When they had won, they carried off the statues to Thailand. After opening up their bellies, the legend told us that ‘they were able to take the books which were hidden there and study their contents. For this reason, they had become superior in knowledge to the Khmers, and for this reason the Khmers are ignorant, and lack people to do what is necessary, unlike other countries.

According to *Puddh Tomneay*, Cambodia was the resting place of *Preah Keo Marakat (Emerald Buddha)* and the event mentioned above took place in the year 2000 of the Buddhist era (1457 A.D.). From the historical stand point, the *Preah Ko Preah Keo* story took place during the reign of *Preah Satha I, a.k.a. Preah Barom Intho Reachea II* (ព្រះសត្តា ទី ១ ឬ ហៅថា ព្រះបរមវិជ្ជរាជ ទី ២), between 1567 and 1575 A.D. The years between these two events are close enough that they deserve to be studied more carefully by competent scholars. It is widely believed that the current *Emerald Buddha* that is located in Bangkok, Thailand was the *Preah Keo Marakat* stolen from Cambodia. Since then, the center of knowledge has shifted from Cambodia to Thailand.

The Prophecy that Could be Applied to the CPP and FUNCINPEC

The riddles at the end of *Puddh Tomneay* are more general in nature. It is more of a warning and a guide to help us understand what is in store for us. There is no specific time frame attributed to these riddles. However, they can be applied directly to the current events in Cambodia.

It stated that “*the domesticated cows (or bulls) and white herons embrace themselves happily like one united friend, but they differ in their thinkings... As people who indulge themselves in sex, they will sell their bodies to those who can offer them the most; this is called the sex war, creating changes within Nokor Borei, leading to the country disappearance...fireflies are comparing themselves to the moon...and copper is comparing itself to gold, reversing everything.*” I interpret this riddle to represent the current situation in Cambodia where two differing parties are joined to form the current

government. These two parties act as friends but in reality they mistrust each other. One party behaves like a bull charging forwards and taking no prisoners, while the other one acts like a white heron looking very majestic. During this period, prostitution in Cambodia is at its highest level. “Fireflies that compare themselves to the moon” and “copper that compares itself to gold” may be interpreted as people who came from lower status are now conducting themselves like lords and ladies, reversing everything that existed before.

Two Authorships of the Prophecy

Based on my hundreds of hours of research and painstaking reading and understanding of this unique document, known as *Puddh Tomneay*, it is my belief (I have no proof of it but a Khmer/Pali linguist or phraseologist may be able to shed some light to this) that the *Prophecy* was probably a combined work of two different “authorships.” It seems that the first part of the *Prophecy* was more related to historical events and to the Buddhist religion. However, the second part of the *Prophecy* has a completely different style of writing. The style of writing is very jumpy and not as smooth as the first part. The description of the events are more mythical in nature. It talks about angels, *Indra*, and miracle appearances and metamorphoses of persons and objects.

From my personal interpretation and understanding of *Puddh Tomneay*, it seems to me that the events described in the text were somehow prophesied up to around or slightly beyond the year 2500 of the Buddhist era only. Since the Buddhist era does not end until the year 5000, some scholars or *Horasastr (Fortuneteller)* may have taken the liberty to complete the prophecies on their own. The paragraphs on the second part of *Puddh Tomneay* are much shorter than those of the first part. In addition, the descriptions of events in the second part are much less specific than those in the first part. The prophesied events in the second part started from around the year 2500 (of the Buddhist era) and ended in 5000 without going through the different eras like those described in the first part.

The Four Points of References Used for Clues

Placing the Pol Pot's era solely on black and white crows is always subject to debates. In order to help substantiating this interpretation, I will take a different approach on how to interpret these prophecies and at the same I will attempt to answer the question whether this *Puddh Tomneay* is truly the words of the *Lord Buddha* or simply that of a *Horasastr* (Fortuneteller). My approach will be based on rational thinkings that combine deductive arguments developed by Pythagoras and dialectic method used by Socrates. I will base my interpretation on four points of references given in the text that allows me to bound the time span of the events described in the *Puddh Tomneay*. The four points of references will be taken from the following passages:

1. When my religion is more than 1000 years old, it will reach a country known by the name of *Nokor Kok Thlok*. In that country there is a wise king named *Preah Ketomealear* who brings prosperity to his people (អាណន្តអើយ លុះដល់អាហុកាលព្រះសាសនាបានជាង ១០០០ នោះ ទឹកដីបូរីវង្សកំណត់ឈ្មោះគោកធុកនោះ នឹងមានស្តេចមួយអង្គទ្រង់ធម៌ ហៅថា ព្រះកេតុមាលា បានរៀបចំស្រុកតូចផងិតមជសបទ បានសុខក្សេមក្សាន្តតទៅ ដោយនូវក្រឹត្យក្រមខត្តមប្រសើរហោង).
2. In the year 2025, there is a king who rules *Nokor Borei* and he is called by his people as the *Leper King* (លុះសាសនាគម្រប់បាន ២០២៥ ទើបមានស្តេចគ្រងរាជ្យវង្សបូរី អ្នកស្រុកហៅថាស្តេចគម្ពង់).
3. After the king's death, his elder son ascends to the throne and reigns for three years at *Oudong Rechey* and then moves his council, advisors, and government to settle at the location where the four rivers meet. In the process, the king accepts and replaces his people with foreigners, thus creating constant turmoils throughout the country (លុះស្តេច នេះសុគតទៅ ព្រះរាជបុត្រច្បងគ្រងរាជឡើង នៅទីខត ក្នុងព្រះបរមបរិវារ ក៏នាំអស់ អ្នកមុខអ្នកការ សង្ឃមន្ត្រី សេនាសេនិយ

មកគង់នៅទន្លេបួនមុខ

ស្តេចយក

សាសន៍គេធ្វើសាសន៍ឯងច្របល់ម្យ៉ាងទាំងនគរ)... The turmoil is reaching to the point where people do not obey the laws, individuals take the laws into their own hands, children ignore their parents, farmers forget to earn their livings, monks forget to meditate, and lower rank workers want to become high government officials (...កើតភពភ័ន្តអន្តរកប្បមនុស្សលែង គោរពច្បាប់ អាងបុទ្ធិអំណាចរាងខ្លួន ក្នុងភ្លេចខ្ចីម៉ែ អ្នកស្រែភ្លេចរបរ ព្រះសង្ឃ ភ្លេចធម៌ កម្មករចង់ឡើងជាមន្ត្រី)... In 2435, on the 12th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Pig (Chhnam Kao), a king from the west conquers over the Thmil people and establishes his reign over the country (លុះដល់សករាជ្យព្រះសាសនាបាន ២៤៣៥

មានស្តេចមួយអង្គមកពីទិសខាងលិចចូលមកសោយរាជ្យ បង្ក្រាបអស់ ទមិទ្ធិវិនាសស្នូនស្នង ក្នុងអម្ពង្គ័រក្រុងស្រីក្រវែលនោះ)... In 2482, on the 6th month of the lunar year, which corresponds to April-May (Khè Pisak), the Thmil people come back and fight to regain power. At that time the country becomes very prosperous, people can get anything they want, they can buy all kinds of clothings, and they can command/use fire (or light), water, and wind at will. However, this causes the Buddhist religion to change and turn upside down in such a way that people are always angry, not knowing right from wrong, and not knowing the difference between good and evil (លុះដល់ឆ្នាំ ២៤៨២ ក្នុងខែពិសាខឆ្នាំក្រវែលនោះទមិទ្ធិរាមកតករាជ្យវិញ ពេលនោះនឹងកើតអស្ចារ្យសម្បូរ សប្បាយ មនុស្សទាំងឡាយចង់បានអ្វីៗ វានឹងមានស្រាប់ តាំងពីសំពត់អាវសាវ ស្បែក ហើយមានពលានុភាព អាចប្រើភ្លើង ទឹក ខ្យល់ បានតាមចិត្ត ប៉ុន្តែ

វាជាច្រវីកវរបុរាណបរវត្សសាសនា ក្រុងស្រុកក្រុងច្បាប់ធម៌វិស័យ មនុស្សកើតតែ
ទោសោ មោហោ លោកោ លែងចង់ស្តាប់បុណ្យស្តាប់បាប).

4. My disciple *Ananda*, when the crisis occurs on the 9th year of the 12-year lunar calendar, which corresponds to the year of the Monkey (*Chhnam Vok*), there is a king named *Toussarith*, who comes from the north trying to seize power from the *Thamek White Race* at the fortress in *Phnom Penh*, but he loses power and decides to retreat. Then the *Thamek White Race* bestows the reign to a king named *Thomakthonin* who comes from the west (ម្ចាស់អាណន្ត ពុទ្ធបុព្វជ្ជាករើយ អ្នករើយក្នុងកំឡុង
ស្រុកកើតវិបត្តិនោះ នៅនាឆ្នាំរក ចត្វាសក មានស្តេចមួយអង្គនាម
ព្រះបាទទសវិទ្ធី មកពីខ្ពត្តវទិសា
មកដណ្តើមរាជ្យពីធម្មិកសាសន៍សនៅបន្ទាយភ្នំពេញ ទើបស្តេច
ទសវិទ្ធីអស់អំណាច ថយចេញទៅ រួចធម្មិកសាសន៍សលើករាជ្យថ្វាយស្តេច
ធម្មធនិន្ទ មកពីទិសខាងលិច).

Preah Ketomealear a.k.a Jayavarman II

I decided to choose the passage that mentioned *Preah Ketomealear* as the first point of reference because it was the first verifiable name of a Khmer king mentioned in the *Puddh Tomneay*. It placed the event beyond the year 1000 of the Buddhist era (*អាណន្តរើយ* លុះដល់អាបុកាលព្រះសាសនាបាទជាង ១០០០ នោះ), somewhere between 1000 (or 457 A.D.) and 1656 (or 1113 A.D.). The year 1656 was the next specific year that was mentioned right after the year 1000 . Based on Khmer history, *Preah Ketomealear* is also known as *Jayavarman II* who reigned from 802 to 850 A.D.

The True Identity of the Leper King Revealed?

The second point of reference mentioned the name of the *Leper King* who ruled Cambodia in 2025 of the Buddhist year (or 1482 A.D.). As indicated in the history, the identity of the *Leper King* is very obscured and very little is known about him. The reason for this obscurity may be intentional due to the shameful disease that he contracted. The king and his descendants may have decided to remove any references linking the disease to any kings from the past, present, and future, or stating that a *Leper King* ever existed. However, it was believed that the *Leper King* was *Jayavarman VII* who reigned in Cambodia from 1181 to 1201 A.D. It was believed so because the end of his reign was very obscured. He just vanished without anybody knew what happened to him. But based on the *Puddh Tomneay*, the *Leper King* ruled Cambodia around the year 1482 A.D. Therefore, could it be possible that *Jayavarman VII* was not the *Leper King* that history had taught us to believe? According to history, the king who reigned during this period (from 1468 to 1498 A.D.) was none other than *Thommo Reachea* (ព្រះបាទត្រៃលោក), the son of *Ponha Yat* (ព្រះបាទប៊ុយយ៉ាត - the first king to move his capital to Phnom Penh around the mid 1400s A.D. However, upon the king's death, his son *Narayana Ramathippatei* (នរាយណ៍រាមាធិបតី) - brother of *Thommo Reachea* - was crowned king and decided to move the capital back to Angkor). *Thommo Reachea* was the first Khmer king to be crowned by the Thais in 1474 A.D. After bringing up the *Leper King's* name, the rest of the Khmer ruler's names mentioned in the *Puddh Tomneay* are not recognizable.

From King Norodom I to King Sisowath Monivong

The third point of reference seems to point to *King Norodom I* when it described that the elder son of King *Harikraksakvong Angpimpiksasreach* moved his government from *Oudong Rechey* to where the four rivers meet. This confluent of the four rivers is also known as *Tonlé Chaktumuk*. Soon after *Norodom* was crowned king in June 1864, he moved his capital to *Phnom Penh*, where the four rivers meet. Throughout this period, between the reign of *King Norodom I* (1860-1904 A.D.) and the reign of *King Sisowath*

Monivong (1927-1941 A.D.), the country was in big turmoil, there were conflicts everywhere, and Cambodia was on the brink of collapse. The events described in the *Puddh tomneay* correlate very well with the historical events for the above periods. The following is an extract from Hann So's Book, *The Khmer King*, published in August 1988, for those periods:

1860-1904: Norodom (son of Ang Duong)

Thailand was very pleased with the choice of the new king as he was raised in Bangkok with Thai culture. But in 1861, Norodom's brother Sivatha rebelled against him by claiming the support of peasants and mandarins who were hostile to Thai influence. The revolt broke out into a big war. The major part of the country was behind Sivatha who seduced the population with his beauty, youth, and eloquence. Fearing for his life, the king fled to Thailand where he arrived on January 24, 1862. His brother Sisowath took charge of the country and had to fight his younger brother with French and Champ help. In March 1862, the king came back to Oudong but was suspicious of Sisowath by accusing him of trying to take control of the throne. In June 1862, Vietnam signed a treaty with France by giving up Gia Dinh (former name of Saigon which was Prey Nokor), Bien Hoa (Kanghva Dak Peang), and Mytho. In July 1863, the king signed a treaty of friendship with France: France would defend the Khmer territory; in return, Cambodia would allow special privileges to the French. In June 1864, he was crowned in the presence of officials from France and Thailand. He moved the capital back to Phnom Penh and exile his brother Sisowath to Thailand.

Between 1865 and 1867, two Buddhist monks Achar Assoa and Poukombo alias Achar Leak, led a popular revolt against the French and the king, with the help of the Vietnamese. In August 1866, Achar Assoa was wounded, captured and deported to Poulo Condore or Koh Tralach (French Alcatraz), Reunion, and finally to Antilles. On June 7, 1866, Poukombo captured the Tayninh fort with 2000 men. On December 17,

1866, he attacked Oudong and penetrated into the fort. In July 1867, he fled to Laos under French heavy attack. In November 1867, he came back but was captured and beheaded. In 1876, Sivatha came back to fight the French, who tried through Sisowath and the Thai government to persuade him to settle down in Saigon where the French promised to provide him with all facilities and sufficient pension. But he was evasive in his replies and started to recruit followers. He and his men were driven back to the north of the country where he lived a miserable life until his death in 1891. France, which occupied Cochinchina, was ready to give it back to Cambodia, but in December 1863, the king signed secretly a treaty of allegiance to Thailand, which became public in March 1867. Upset by this act of duplicity and versatility of the king, France decided to keep Cochinchina which would be lost forever. France required Thailand to abandon its suzerainty on Cambodia. In July 1867, Thailand renounced definitely any pretension on Cambodia and acknowledged the rights of France. The modernization of Cambodia took place. On June 24, 1884, the king was forced to sign a treaty making Cambodia a French protectorate. All power was given to the French Resident Superior, who became a very powerful figure in the Khmer administration: he was the king's protector and tutor; he had to agree with the king on appointment, promotion, and dismissal of ministers and other officials; he had control on finance, currency, customs, army, and police. Between November 1884 and January 1887, insurrection against the French broke out several times. Unable to pacify the country, France gave back the authority to the king. In 1887, the Indochinese Union which consisted of Cambodia, Laos, Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonkin (the latter three became Vietnam), was founded. In 1888, the scholar Resident Superior Aymonier, who spent several years researching the history of Cambodia and saving the ancient monuments, was named prime minister. In 1893, Thailand gave back Stung Trèng. In 1904, under French pressure, Thailand gave back Mlou

Prei, Tonlè Repou and Koh Kong. The King died in 1904 leaving 200 widows, not counting concubines.

1904-1927: Sisowath (brother of Norodom)

Prince Yukanthor, Norodom's son, was not chosen to succeed his father for in 1900 he went to France to protest the imposition of French protectorate. He died in exile in Thailand. Sisowath was crowned on April 26, 1906. In 1907, Thailand signed a new treaty with France by giving back Battambang, Sisophon, Mongkol Borei, Siemreap, and Tnot. Thailand still kept Aranyaprathet, Surin, Korat, Chantaboun, and Krat. French scholars and architects began a Herculean work of restoring the ancient temples of Angkor. They also traveled all over the country to study and decipher old inscriptions about Cambodia ancient history. The kingdom was ruled by the French until 1945. In 1914, the king even sent some Khmers to fight with the French against the German.

1927-1941: Sisowath Monivong (son of Sisowath)

The French imposed the rule of succession to the throne by allowing only members of the male descendants of Ang Duong. It was a peaceful reign. On March 11, 1941, Thailand took control of Battambang, Siemreap, and Sisophon as France became weaker under the German and Japanese attacks.

Cambodia under the French was a forgotten country, a stepchild. The capitals of Indochina were Hanoi and Saigon. Revenue from Cambodia was taken away to support the services in Vietnam; all trade was transshipped at Saigon and financed and controlled from there; customs and currency offices were non-existent in Cambodia. Worst of all, the French in Cambodia brought Vietnamese assistants with them rather than trained the Khmers. In the field of education, the French did not do much. There were no good schools in Cambodia and students had to go to

Saigon or Hanoi to continue their educations. There were no universities, and the Khmers were discouraged to continue their studies in France.

The Last Reigning God King

The third point of reference provides me with a clue for the modern era of Cambodia. It clearly mentioned that the *Thamek White Race* (*Thamek means a person who is very educated and knowledgeable in scriptures, laws, and moral principles*) bestowed the reign to a king. This passage leaves me with little doubt that the person in question is *Norodom Sihanouk* (នរោត្តម សីហនុ) who was crowned king by the French. Cambodia was still under the French protectorate during that time.

The crowning of *King Norodom Sihanouk* took place on April 25, 1941. Therefore, this passage placed the event at the year 1941 A.D. However, this passage takes place after the riddles mentioning the black and white crows that are believed to occur during the Khmer Rouge era. In order to reconcile the differences, I have to interpret that this crowning of a king was related to the second crowning of *Norodom Sihanouk*, which occurred after the arrival of the *Thamek White Race*, namely the sponsors of the *1991 Paris Peace Agreement* or the *United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)* from 1992 to 1993 (*UNTAC, rather than France, seems to fit the definition of Thamek better because this word, in addition to the definition provided earlier, also connotes fairness, goodness, and justice*).

UNTAC may not bestow the reign to *Norodom Sihanouk* directly like the *Puddh Tomneay* said, but it was because of this international organization that Cambodia had an election and a new constitution. The new constitution restored the Prince as *Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Varman* (ព្រះបាទសម្តេច ព្រះនរោត្តម សីហនុ វរ្ម័ន), King of Cambodia. He may be the last reigning “*God King*”.

In addition, the mentioning of “*a king named Toussarith, who comes from the north trying to seize power from the Thamek White Race at the fortress in Phnom Penh, but he loses power and decides to retreat*” may be interpreted as the north Vietnamese trying to

negotiate a withdrawal from Cambodia with the sponsors of the *1991 Paris Peace Agreement*.

The Complete Vietnamese Withdrawal from Cambodia

After the crowning of *King Thomakthonin* by the *Thamek White Race*, *Puddh Tomneay* also prophesied that on the year of the Rooster, the evil enemies would surrender and finally retreated from the kingdom completely. The population then started to come out of the forest and down the mountain one by one (លុះដល់ឆ្នាំកោបព្យាសក៍ ពួកទម្ងន់អស់វិទ្ធី ថយអស់ពីព្រះនគរបរវររាជឋាន មនុស្សចេញពីព្រៃភ្នំក្រវ៉ាថ្ម). This part of the prophecy is very specific in its wording. It said that “*the enemies retreated completely (ថយអស់) from the kingdom.*” It is also quite accurate considering its time frame when it mentioned that this complete retreat would take place on the year of the Rooster. The year of the Rooster which started from April 13, 1993 and ended in April 12, 1994 would probably match the time when the Vietnamese pulled its soldiers out of Cambodia completely.

Another Major War

If my interpretation of the prophecies are correct, Cambodia has still not find her peace yet. Another major war will take place in the near future. *Puddh Tomneay* prophesied there would be seven years of war until bloods become common sights. This next war would almost completely destroy the country.

The Ambiguity Concerning the True Authorship of the Prophecy

Personally, I am more inclined to say that *Puddh Tomneay* is the work of a Khmer *Horasastr* named *Puddh* rather than that of the *Lord Buddha* for the following three reasons: 1) The described events were too well tailored to the history of Khmer civilization; 2) I do not believe that the *Lord Buddha* was solely interested in Cambodia

and then neglected the rest of the countries of the world; and 3) The *Prophecy* has always been called *Puddh Tomneay* (ព្រះពុទ្ធនិទ្ទេស) instead of *Tomneay Rabas Preah Puddh* (និទ្ទេសរបស់ព្រះពុទ្ធ).

The choice of words or phrase is very important. “*Puddh Tomneay*” means either “*The Prophecy of The Buddha*” or “*The Prophecy of Puddh.*” It would have been very easy to choose the phrase “*Tomneay Rabas Preah Puddh (The Prophecy of The Buddha)*” or “*Tomneay Rabas Ta Puddh (The Prophecy of Mister Puddh)*” to eliminate any confusions and uncertainties. The ambiguity of using the phrase “*Puddh Tomneay*” may be purposefully chosen to confuse the people and create interest and generate curiosity on this subject, especially if the author were not the Buddha. If a “fortuneteller” with a name other than “*Puddh*” would prophesy about Cambodia, nobody would pay any attention. Therefore, this “fortuneteller” would purposely use the pen name “*Puddh*” to confuse the reader on the origin of *Puddh Tomneay* and also to generate interests in the prophecies. It was a good marketing ploy since the author has generated a sustaining interest on this subject for many generations.

The Origin of the Prophecy

Having said that, I will deduce that this *Horasastr* lived during the period of *Jayavarman VII (or Thommo Reachea)* since he was able to call the correct name of a king in the past (*Preah Ketomealear a.k.a. Jayavarman II*) but was not able to predict the correct names of any kings beyond the *Leper King (either Jayavarman VII or Thommo Reachea)*. However, this *Horasastr* was pretty accurate in his general predictions. He was able to mention quite accurately the names of Khmer cities and places, such as *Oudong Rechey (actual name is Oudong Meanchey)*, *Chaktumuk Royal Palace*, *Wat Unnalom*, *Vihear Preah Keo Marakat*, *Psar Bak Touk*, and *Phnom Penh*.

The Chicken or the Egg?

The fact that *Puddh Tomneay* was able to prophesy about the emergent of these cities and places comes to mind the classical question of chickens and eggs. Which one comes

first, the chicken or the egg? Were Khmer rulers, high ranking government officials, monks, educators, and laymen influenced by *Puddh Tomneay*? Were they consciously or subconsciously named the cities and places after the names described in the *Prophecy*? Was *Puddh Tomneay* accurate in its predictions or were the events shaped by the people's strong beliefs and superstitions, wishing to mirror the *Puddh Tomneay*'s prophecies? Did the *Prophecy* correctly predict that these events would take place?

Prior to the modern day Cambodia (before many Cambodians could read and write, probably around the 1900s), most people believed that *Puddh Tomneay* was truly the words of the *Lord Buddha*. The belief was deeply ingrained in the minds and souls of Khmer citizens. The prophecies acted as some kinds of remedies that brought hopes to the people when situations in the country became very desperate. It is therefore very possible that people used the prophecies to influence on bad events with the hope of reversing bad situations to good ones. They may have adopted some of the names of cities and places from *Puddh Tomneay* to bring them good luck.

Ent Tomneay

I did not spend too much time interpreting the second part of the *Puddh Tomneay* when it started to describe the appearance of *Indra*, angels, and mythical elements in nature for the following three reasons: 1) I personally feel that this section is not a part of the original "work" of the *Puddh Tomneay*; 2) The prophecies are too general in nature. They are not specific enough to warrant a deep study and analysis; and 3) There are no true correlations with historical facts.

It is believed in some Cambodian communities that there are two prophecies, one is called *Puddh Tomneay (Puddh or Buddha's Prophecy)* and the other is *Ent Tomneay (Indra's Prophecy)*. This *Puddh Tomneay* that I have translated is probably the combination of the two prophecies. The *Ent Tomneay* seems to be somewhat a more recent version of the prophecy, I had decided to spend only a minimum time on this section.

Conflicting Dates

I do not claim to have all the answers to the riddles in the *Puddh Tomneay*. I am still a little troubled by some inconsistencies in the dates between the *Puddh Tomneay* and the historical events. Some of the events are off by a few decades. The riddles that seem to correspond to the Khmer Rouge era was described in the *Puddh Tomneay* to take place around the year 2500 of the Buddhist era (1957 A.D.). The conflicting dates may have something to do with the way the years are calculated.

There are two schools of thought on when the Buddha was born. According to Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, they place the year 543 BC as the year when the Buddha achieved the ultimate stage in the realization of Nirvana (Buddhist Year = 2539; Christian Year = 2539 - 543 = 1996). However, Western and Indian historians tied the date of Nirvana with the date when the Indian Emperor Asoka was consecrated. The Emperor Asoka consecration was in 268 BC. According to the long chronology calendar, the Nirvana date was determined to be 218 years before the Emperor's consecration. Therefore, the Buddha's birth date is reported in most literature as 486 BC (218 + 268).

Converting the Buddhist year to the Christian year as I described earlier may not be quite exact but it is just an approximation.

The above opinions are only my humble observations and interpretations of *Puddh Tomneay*. I feel that my job of translating and interpreting the *Puddh Tomneay* is essentially complete.

Kenneth T. So a.k.a. សេនា ខុង ថៃ
(Mission Viejo, June 22, 1996)

CONCLUSION

The reason *Puddh Tomneay* has not been well understood by the people because it is precisely very hard to understand. It is so because it was written in Khmer and Pali combined with riddles and the use of obscured languages. I hope that my small contribution to translating and interpreting this *Prophecy* will clarify some of the meanings and ultimately encourage our Khmer intellectuals and international scholars who are interested in the history of Khmer civilization to further do research on this subject.

The influence of *Puddh Tomneay* on Cambodia's histories and politics cannot be ignored. Had any Khmer kings in the past ruled the country according to *Puddh Tomneay's* prophecies? Had the beliefs in *Puddh Tomneay* guided any actions of those rulers and politicians?

During the Khmer Rouge regime, were those leaders ruled Cambodia according to their beliefs in *Puddh Tomneay*? Did Pol Pot believe he was *Preah Bat Thamek Reach* coming to rescue Cambodia? After the CPP leaders liberated the Cambodian people from the hellish lives under the Khmer Rouge and proclaiming themselves to be the saviors, did Heng Samrin, Chea Sim, or Hun Sen believe they were fulfilling the prophecy?

It was reported that Marshall Lon Nol strongly believed in *Puddh Tomneay*. In addition, it was rumored that he thought of himself as *Preah Bat Thamek*. This rumor could probably be verified by conducting interviews with some of the people that were close to the Marshall. Most of these people had already passed away but there are still a handful of them alive.

Throughout history and up until now, Cambodian leaders or rulers (even Cambodians in general) had always believed in fortunetelling. They had used fortunetellers to advise them on when to leave on their trips, which dates to start their battles, when to start their

weddings, and when to build schools or temples, etc. Sometimes the rulers did not receive the advices directly from the fortunetellers but they received them from their wives who in turn got them from their own personal fortunetellers.

As to the current leaders in Cambodia, it was reported that Hun Sen (or his wife) has his personal fortuneteller and "*Krou Santhit*" (A person who goes into a trance while his soul is replaced by that of a Khmer hero of the past or certain figure in Khmer mythology) who advise him on things to do. Hun Sen and/or his wife believe that this "*Krou Santhit*" can call on powerful forces to protect the Second Prime Minister from his enemies.

There are people from the Hun Sen, Chea Sim, Norodom Ranariddh, Sam Rainsy, and the King's camps who seek advices from fortunetellers and/or "*Krou Santhit*". I was told by a person (to remain anonymous, I will not reveal this person's name) who has regularly participated in these kinds of consultations or sessions with "*Krou Santhit*" in Cambodia telling him/her that Hun Sen has 100 different "*Baramei*" (some kind of external force protecting his persona) while Norodom Ranaridhh has none. This person further told me that the Ranariddh's camp is now asking their "*Krou Santhit*" to use his "power" to help build up the First Prime Minister's "*Baramei*".

We, Khmer overseas, may view the above described practices as backward and full of quackeries. We tend to dismiss that fortunetellers and "*Krou Santhit*" have no place in politics. However, the courses of history had many times been affected by the advices of these people who had been very close to the people in power. Nostradamus, the most famous foreseer, was very close to the wife of the French king Henri II. After the death of the king during a horse combat predicted by Nostradamus, the queen replaced the king as the absolute monarch and relied very often on Nostradamus advices. Rasputin, the Russian mystic monk and fortuneteller was a favorite of the imperial family. His advices to the Czar had changed history. Mrs. Nancy Reagan's personal fortuneteller had regularly given advices to the First lady on how to schedule the President's itineraries. Undoubtedly the US policies had been affected in this fashion.

Many of the monks, fortunetellers, and "*Krou Santhit*" who believe in the *Puddh Tomneay*, may be the ones who have the most influence on the Cambodian people. The history of Khmer civilization cannot be separated from *Puddh Tomneay*. The two's are

intricately linked together. For some Cambodian people, they are awaiting the arrival of *Preah Bat Thamek Reach* the same way the Jews are awaiting the arrival of the Messiah.

The US philosopher Eric Hoffer (1902-1983) once said, "*Those in possession of absolute power can not only prophesy and make their prophecies come true, but they can also lie and make their lies come true.*"

The next few years will be very interesting for Cambodia. The chapter on atrocities, abused of power, infighting among friends and enemies, diseases, sins, and sex has not been closed yet. The seven-year war that may equal or surpass the Pol Pot's era is yet to come according to the *Puddh Tomneay*. When will this cataclysmic event occur is not clear, but the *Puddh Tomneay* seems to indicate that it will be in the near future. But according to the second part of *Puddh Tomneay*, which I believe is called *Ent Tomneay*, a *Preah Bat Thamek Reach* will come to rescue Cambodia. Can this second part of the *Prophecy* be as accurate as the first part?

I do not expect the seven-year war to come true. For the sake of Cambodia and the Cambodian people who have already suffered so much, the Cambodian elitists had better learned to take advantage of this relative peaceful time and the goodwill of the United Nations, the Western countries, and Japan to rebuild Cambodia to its place of former glories. The window of opportunity may be slipping away very fast for Cambodia because not only the Western countries may run out of patience due to Cambodia bickering but they may also have their own economic problems to solve in their own countries and have therefore decided to totally ignore Cambodia once and for all.

As of now Cambodia cannot count on ASEAN to come to her rescue because she is in no position to dictate the agenda to the rest of the ASEAN members. Due to her economic weakness as well as intellectual and military weaknesses, Cambodia is going to be only following the ASEAN policies. Cambodia will just be a pawn, or to put it bluntly she will just be a slave for ASEAN. The time is not right for Cambodia to join ASEAN at this moment.

It is better for Cambodia to solve all the problems at home first and rebuild her intellectual community as well as her economy before she can join ASEAN with dignity. I hope that the Cambodian elitists can put all their own interests aside and get on to the

real business of the country. The welfare of the state must come before any political parties or any cult of personalities.

I hope that the great Israeli politician Abba Eban was right when he said "*History teaches us that men and nations behave wisely once they have exhausted all other alternatives.*"