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DISCOVER CAMBODIA

VOLUME 7 — 2014

Celebrating Glorious Past, Moving Forward

CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY DAY

Sunday September 7th 2014 at Cambodian Buddhist Temple

13800 New Hampshire Ave, Silver Spring MD 20904

Prasat Thom at ancient city of Kok Ker, the lost wonder



Promoting Khmer Culture | Celebrating Khmer Achievements | Strengthening Khmer Voice

Bridging Distances | Healing Rifts | Building Bonds



The Cambodian Community Day, in collaboration with the Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. and the volunteers from the Cambodian communities around Washington DC Metro area, presents the 2014 Cambodian Festival featuring classical/folklore dances, Lakhon Bassac show entitled Preah Chinavong, a preliminary Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant, and much more.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. and the Cambodian Community Day wish to thank all Lakhon Bassac and Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant Organizing Committee members, volunteers and their families; individual and group organization sponsors; business advertisers, professional and non-profit communities, all artistic performers and musicians, all Cambodians, Americans who come to support us today. The Lakhon Bassac performance and Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant are results of hard work of many dedicated people, without whom it may not be possible. They are all volunteers with an exemplary mindset to serve the Cambodian community and to promote, present and preserve Khmer culture.

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

September 7, 2014



Dear Friends:

On behalf of the residents of Montgomery County, it is my great pleasure to extend warmest greetings to the visitors and volunteers at the 12th annual Cambodian Community Day.

You have a full day of activities planned that celebrate and preserve Cambodian culture while bringing together members of the Cambodian community.

Congratulations on your event, and thank you to all the members of the Cambodian community for your contributions to the diversity of Montgomery County and for the many ways that you demonstrate your commitment to family, community, our nation and the world.

Best wishes for a successful event.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive



On behalf of Cambodian Community Day (CCD) members and Board of Directors, thank you for coming and joining us today to celebrate our culture, abundant heritage and achievements. I like to challenge everybody to look back to our country glorious past, recognize and acknowledge our ancestors' achievement, learn from their experiences and move forward to achieve even better in life. Remember, past is not dead. It has just passed. I believe a nation without its past is a nation without a foundation. It is just a tree without a root that the wind could blow away anytime. In that sense, please help build strong Cambodia. Help build strong communities in the USA and anywhere in the world. The first and utmost important step in this process is to be proud of our ancestors.

CCD organizes today's event to present, promote and preserve the Khmer distinctive culture. There are classical/folklore dances performed by Cambodian Buddhist Society Cultural Group (CBSCG), Lakhon Bassac performed by CCD volunteers, and a preliminary Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant. It is important to note that Lakhon Bassac, a form of Khmer traditional entertainment, is said to be an endangered art by UNESCO. We perform today just to show the characteristics of this type of entertainment, mainly characters, costumes, and music. It is not so much about how the story goes.

The purpose of the Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant is to promote self-esteem and nurture self-confidence of young Cambodian girls as their lives progress to a more mature stage. We prepare to transform the Khmer communities to be a much stronger community by engaging ourselves in cross cultural and ethnic groups at the international arena.

We hope you enjoy every bit of our festival. Please continue to support our cause.

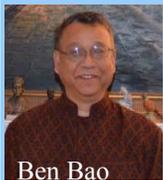
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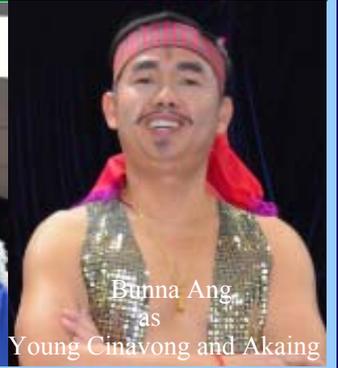
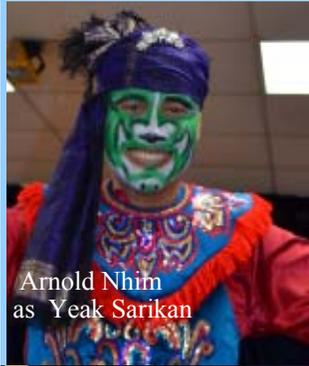
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Sincerely,
Ben Bao
CCD President

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE គណៈកម្មការរៀបចំ

 Ben Bao Master of Ceremony	 Sophia Tep Lakhon Bassac Master	 Natalie Chhuan Lakhon Bassac Master	 Ithara Phlong Dress Maker	 Seng Chao Dress Maker	 Salang Bao Music Master	 Chanthary Koch Music Master	 Mealy Chhim Make-up Artist	
 Khuy Lim Khmer and English	 Ratanak Srey Khmer and English	 Sochietah Ung Lakhon Bassac Master		 San Yos Dress Maker	 Chum Ngek Music Master	 Heng Chao Make-up Artist		
								

Lakhon Bassac Performers

 Son K Sim as Preah Chinavong	 Preoun So as Botum Sorya	 Saody Sok as Sovann Rekha	 Phon Bun as Yeak Molivorn	 Bunna Ang as Young Cinavong and Akaing		
 Arnold Nhim as Yeak Sarikan	 Heng-Koung as Ta Eiysey	 Sokeal Touch and Sam Aun As Yeakhaney				
 Phikrun Teng Guard	 Salang Bao Elder	 San Yos Elder	 Sophiny Biv Entourage	 Bunna Ang Young Chinavong	 Everest Chhay Bloomer Guard	 Tara Chhay Bloomer Entourage

I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all those attending CCD festival today. I am excited to present the 2014 Miss Cambodian American Beauty Preliminary pageant. This pageant is a cultural and educational event that seeks to celebrate the talent, beauty and intellect of young Cambodian American women. My goal is to promote self empowerment in our youth as well as cultural awareness of our rich heritage.



This is the second beauty pageant that I have been involved in the Cambodian Community; the first one held in 2011 was very popular and has attracted one of the largest audiences ever at Vatt Budhhikarama. This year, we are doing it again!

They say that beauty radiates from within us, well I couldn't get over the beauty that each of our contestants has. They are no doubt gorgeous on the outside, but it is so much deeper than that. They are absolutely beautiful from the inside as well. These young women understand that participating in this pageant contributes to the development of networking, public-speaking and leadership skills that are surely conducive to educational and professional goals.

Our pageant is divided into 2 parts. Today, you will have an opportunity to witness a group of accomplished young women showcase their talents, poise and grace. On January 3rd, 2015, you are invited to join us at the Miss Cambodian American Crowning gala at Harvest Moon Restaurant, Falls Church, Virginia.

To everyone at CCD, Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc, PCI Committee, volunteers, and sponsors – words cannot suffice to communicate my gratitude for your efforts. It is truly your time, effort, and resources that have ensured the success of Miss Cambodian American beauty pageant. Enjoy the show!

Ithara Phlong
Program Director
Miss Cambodian American Beauty Pageant





CHHOMNIMOL SOKHON

Hello, my name is Chhomnimol Sokhon. I am 16 years old and will be a junior at Urbana High School. I enjoy soccer and lacrosse and have a strong interest in the arts such as drawing and dancing, particularly Cambodian traditional dancing. In 5 years, I see myself pursuing a degree at a university while also continuing to participate in activities relating to my experience and love of Cambodian traditional dancing. I value the uniqueness of my Cambodian heritage and would like to share my Cambodian culture with others.

DANICA BUTH

Hello, my name is Danica Buth. I am 16 years old and will be a junior at Manassas Park High School. I enjoy playing volleyball and volunteering in community service activities such as the food and coat drive through the National BETA Club. My future aspiration is to attend college and go on to receive a medical degree. As a Cambodian American, I have a lot of pride in my Cambodian heritage and the beauty of its culture. I hope to show my pride and promote the culture through my participation in community activities such as the Miss Cambodian American Pageant.



DANI TANG

Hello, my name is Dani Tang. I am 16 years old and will be a Junior at Tuscarora High School. I am very active in sports, particularly lacrosse, volleyball and basketball. I am a strong believer in volunteering and participate in various community service projects. In 5 years, I see myself at the University of Maryland pursuing my dreams in the field of medicine. Being Cambodian American means carrying the traditions forth into American culture and promoting diversity. I believe that as Miss Cambodian American, I can spread the culture and history to those around me.

ISABELLE HUM

Hello, my name is Isabelle Hum. I am 20 years old and will be a junior at the University of Maryland at Shady Grove majoring in Communications. I enjoy singing, dancing, going to Zumba classes, traveling and spending time with my friends and family. I hold my Cambodian heritage near and dear to my heart. I love participating in any cultural shows and events to represent my heritage. Early this year I visited Cambodia for the first time. This trip has piqued my interest to learn more in depths about my Cambodian heritage and about my ancestors. I believe that knowing your heritage can help you know who you are and to be the best you can be in the future. Becoming Miss Cambodian American would allow me to inspire young impressionable Cambodian American girls to believe in themselves and to be strong even when faced with adversity such as bullying.





LUCILLE PANN

Hello, my name is Lucille Pann. I am 21 years old and am a graduate of William Penn Senior High School where I was active in sports, particularly track and field, tennis and soccer. Currently, I am enrolled at the Community College of Philadelphia. In 5 years, I hope to be successful in my own chain of restaurants utilizing Mom's wonderful Cambodian recipes. Family is very important to me because without them I would not be striving as hard to succeed. I am a hard worker who lives by the virtues of respect, kindness, courage and honesty. I am also a thrill seeker who likes to try new things as well as meeting new people. To be Cambodian American is to have great strength, ambition and patience. I find that the two cultures are complete opposites yet there is a balance as I discover my identity as both. Becoming Miss Cambodian American would allow me to inspire other young Cambodian Americans and to show them that there are no limits to success.



PAULA CHEA

Hello, my name is Paula Chea. I am 19 years old and will be a sophomore at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) where I am a premed student majoring in Biomedical Engineering. I am part of VCU's honor society fraternity and am currently on the Dean's List. I have varied interests, from my Cambodian heritage where I teach Cambodian traditional dancing to assisting students with special needs at a special needs facility. I am an avid pianist as well as being a black belt in Choi's Dragon TaeKwondo. Five years from now, I see myself graduating from a medical school and continuing to pursue my dream of becoming a Rheumatologist. I also see myself continuing to teach Cambodian dancing and doing everything I can to help spread the Cambodian culture. Being Cambodian American means respecting your roots while balancing the cultures of being American.

SAMANTHA DALY

Hello, my name is Samantha Daly. I am 20 years old and am graduate of Glenelg High School where I actively pursued drama, through programs in school as well as programs outside of school where I was able to combine my two loves – drama and working with special needs kids. In 5 years, I'd like to make a difference within the special needs community. I feel that I am unique in that I am the oldest of 6 and of mixed ethnicity. To me, to be a Cambodian American means to learn who you are and to accept your differences. I believe the pageant can help me show everyone you don't have to know the language to appreciate the culture and to know yourself.





Coaching session offered by Kathy Shi and Doreen Yan, committee members from Pacific Culture International(PCI)



Coaching session on public speaking offered by Sarah Kith, MSOD



ABOUT CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY DAY ទិវាសហគមន៍ខ្មែរ

Mission, Vision and Goal:

The Cambodian Community Day (CCD) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose members are enthusiastic people sharing common interest to promote, present and preserve Cambodian culture and heritage. We believe in the value of keeping and passing on our cultural heritage to our children. We work to strengthen Khmer voice, empower Khmer community, bridge distances, heal rifts and build bonds among Khmer and other ethnic groups. Our vision is to do everything we possibly can to erase a bad perception about Cambodia as a killing field. Our country has so much to offer. Our heritage is abundant, but our young children know little about it. Most of us, Cambodian-Americans, are away from our homeland and adopt America as our own. We have a duty to keep our tradition and culture by showing them to our children. That is a small thing we can do.

What We Do:

In the past fourteen years, we have employed different means to having the world to recognize Khmer civilization as an oldest and more prestigious culture of all times. One of the most noticeable of our work in the Washington DC area is a yearly Cambodian Festival which draws thousands each year to attend. The goal of the festival is to bring Cambodian and American communities from all walks of lives together in recognition of Khmer achievements that strengthen the Khmer voice and to exhibit Cambodian heritage. The festival showcases classical/folklore dances, performance shows, traditional music ensemble, traditional games and children activities.

Beside the festival, we have participated in many cultural events to represent Cambodia such as Asian Festival in DC and in Northern Virginia, Asian American Pacific Heritage month in Prince William County Virginia, Catholic Cultural Heritage month just to name a few. Quite often throughout the year, our members have gone out to serve our community on a ad hoc basis. Visit our website today at www.CambodianCommunityDay.org.

How We Operate:

The CCD is operating solely on a volunteer basis. None of members, directors and officers get paid whatsoever. In 2013, CCD organized a full-blown Yeeke Mak Theung. This year, we have an honor to bring you Lakhon Bassac and the preliminary Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant. During Khmer New Year in April 2014, we have organized a children traditional clothing show.

Important dates to remember

- Saturday January 3rd, 2015
Final Competition of Miss Cambodian-American Beauty Pageant, Harvest Moon Falls Church, Virginia





THE CAMBODIAN BUDDHIST SOCIETY, INC.

The Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. (CBS) was organized in 1976 and incorporated in the State of Maryland in 1978 as a non-profit, religious and educational organization. It is the first Cambodian Buddhist temple to be established in the United States. Its headquarters, Vatt Buddhikarama or Cambodian Buddhist Temple, was located first in Oxon Hill, then in New Carrollton, Maryland. It moved to the present Silver Spring location in 1986. The Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc. has four-fold objectives:

1. To conduct Buddhist services;
2. To conserve Cambodian culture;
3. To provide training; and
4. To provide humanitarian assistance.

CBS is governed by a Board of Directors of 15 members. The Board consists of 3 Buddhist monks automatically selected without vote and 12 members elected bi-annually by members of the Cambodian Buddhist Society. Also, two internal auditors are elected. Four stranding committees are created to perform different tasks:

- Committee in charge of ceremonies,
- Committee in charge of cultural affairs,
- Committee in charge of security and public relations,
- Committee in charge of construction and maintenance.

CBS presently has 2 major buildings: residential building with Ceremony Hall and Vihara or Buddha Hall. A Stupa is under late stage construction. When finished, it will store Buddha Relic and people's ash. Vatt Buddhikarama holds in its collection many Khmer and Buddhist texts. Its facilities have been used on several occasions by other Buddhist traditions for Buddha teaching and meditation.

The Cambodian Buddhist Temple is not only a place of worship, but also serves as a Cambodian American community center. It is the main contact for government agencies to reach out to Cambodian Americans. It is a temporary shelter for the homeless and a feeding place for the hungry.

The Cambodian Buddhist Temple conducts religious services on all Buddhist days, Buddhist holidays, and traditional holidays. It performs services at the Temple or at private homes for private ceremonies, such as memorial services for departed ancestors or birthday celebrations. Daily chanting takes place every morning and evening at the Temple. Under its youth program, CBS conduct a Sunday school comprising Khmer language, dance and music classes. The school is open to all young people ranging from ages 6 to 20. Two kinds of dances (classical and traditional dances) are taught by former teachers and dancers in Cambodia. Khmer music is taught by Master teacher who has received award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Lakhon bassac ភ្លេងបាសាក់

WHAT IS LAKHON BASSAC

OVERVIEW

Lakhaon Bassac is a traditional opera play, a Cambodian type of entertainment. It is one of the most popular plays in Cambodia in the old days, especially in a rural countryside, performed in dry season (summer) after harvesting crops during a festival.

The performers consists of skillful actors, beautiful voice vocalists, wardrobe specialists, make-up artists, skillful musicians, and more. They form their own group and give themselves a name (a business name). At a countryside, villagers hire them to perform for their guests' pleasure during a special occasion or festivity. It is always outdoor performance and during nighttime. Prior to 1970 (before the Cambodian civil war), it is almost always that the festival organizer builds a makeshift opera stage and the performance group brings their own stage materials and equipment. Today, the performance group has their own mobile stage unit. They will take care of everything so that the organizers can sit back and enjoy the show.

In the city, mainly Phnom Penh and some provincial towns, there are commercial opera houses or theaters with a published schedule of performance. Prior to 1976, there were two famous opera houses in Phnom Penh, Lakhon Phsa Tuoul Tumpoung and Lakhon Phsa Silep. Also, Cambodians are still memorializing two iconic Lakhon Bassac stars even though they already passed away: Mr Saing Sarun and Mrs. Chek Mach.

ORIGIN

Lakhon Bassac originates from 'Lakhon Treoung Klok', a type of an opera show performed in the Bassac region of Kampuchea Krom, a Cambodia lowland region that is now part of South Vietnam that was given to Vietnam during a century-old French Protectorate era. Lakhon Bassac made debut into Cambodia in the 1930s. Quite often, Mr. Ly Suon, known as Merchant Chha Kruon, brought a Lakhon performing troupe from Kampuchea Krom to Phnom Penh and have them performed in Cambodian high-land provinces along the Bassac River. The performances became very popular and people began to call it "Lakhon Bassac". Lakhon Bassac is also influenced by Chinese opera, known to be the original root of this kind of opera, and the Vietnamese opera as Cambodian low-landers have been living under the Vietnamese rule.

In the 1960s, Lakhaon Bassac was strongly promoted by well-known actors such as Mr. Sang Sarun and Ms. Chek Mach. Today, Cambodians still consider them as legendary performers. Their unparalleled voice is so beautiful that no one today can be a match-up to such a high caliber of singing and performing art. In 1993 the Ministry of Culture of Fine Arts officially recognized Mrs. Chek Mach as Virak Selapakarini (Grand Master of Artist). She died in 2011. Not much is known about Mr. Saing Sarun's biography. He is no longer on earth. We do not know how and when he died. Most of us presume that he died during the Khmer Rouge era during which almost all of highly skilled performers were killed. Saing Sarun and Chek Mach voices remain with us on taped recordings.

Presently, this form of Cambodian entertainment is on the brink of collapse due to the influence of modern cultures. Very few performing troupes exist for hire and we do not even know if there is any opera house or theatre in Phnom Penh or elsewhere.

CHARACTERISTICS

Lakhaon Bassac is a performing art that tells a complete story or a legend. The legend always consists of a story about Kingdom reigned by a King and a Queen. They have a prince who has to endure an adventurous journey from the luxurious royal palace to a deep jungle searching for knowledges, wisdoms, warrior skills and magic power from a legendary master called Ta Eiysey (a character as an old wise man, wearing white clothes, a funny-looking walking stick, and a long white beard) who seems to live in a secluded, mountainous area. The prince's journey is usually accompanied by a personal servant, a comic character with spectacular gestures that move audiences into laughing. At the Asrom (house) of Ta Eiysey, there is a servant called AKeang, also a comic character.

The king, the queen and the prince represent a good spirit, a good guy. The Yeak (a giant character sometimes called Asura) reigned a Nokor Yeak (Yeak's Kingdom). Despite the ugly-looking appearance, not to mention the size, the Yeak sometimes has a wife also a Yeak, sometimes a beautiful wife woman. However, the Yeak always has a very beautiful human daughter, most stories, she was born from a lotus flower. The Yeak found her by chance and raise her as a daughter.

Lakhon bassac ភ្លេងបាសាក់

While the prince learns his fighting skill and magic power from Ta Eiysey, the Yeak acquires his skill from Ta Eiyso. Ta Eiysey and Ta Eiyso are similar characters.

The Yeak is said to represent an evil spirit, a bad guy. But each story is complex and hardly judged. The beauty of the princess, the Yeak's daughter, always catches the prince's attention. He sneaks into the Princess palace and lures her into loving him. Once the Yeak finds out, the war breaks and the magical power fighting begins between the Prince, who just completes his training, with the Yeak.

The Lakhon Bassac is not characterized by how the story goes. Story can be told by other mean such as a movie producer could just take the story and shoot a movie out it. To call a show Lakhon Bassac, it has to have the following main characteristics:

Costume: the male star, usually the prince is wearing a costume sewing with a very complicate patterns. The costume and the crown are decorated with beautiful jewelries. His weapon is an arch and bows or a stick.

Yeak: he/she always looks ugly.

Performance (prince): jumping up and down, turning around, and waving his weapon according to the sound of a drum. He sings a song with a music that choreographed specifically for this type of entertainment.

Performance (Yeak): jumping up and down, turning around, and waving his weapon according to the sound of a drum. He sings a song too, but his voice is a yelling style as to scare people of.

Music: a scene is always preluded with a sound of a drum and a melodic sound of a low-pitch fiddle and a dulcimer.

Ta Eiysey and Ta Eiyso: Ta Eiysey is a master of the prince. Ta Eiyso is a master of the Yeak. They both wear similar clothes and live in a secluded Asrom (house).



Lakhon bassac story រឿងព្រះបរិសេស

THE PREAH CHINAVONG STORY IN A SNAPSHOT

Researched and written by Ben Bao

PART 1

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom named Sophornarith ruled by King Atitvong and Queen Kesor Sovann. King Atitvong had a brother named prince Chem Sa who was the heir apparent. His wife's name is Bopha Vatei. King Atitvong had a son named prince Sovanavong, while prince Chem Sa had a daughter named prince Chin Bopha. When the prince and princess grew up, King Atitvong married them. He also crowned Prince Sovanavong to ascend the throne of the kingdom of Sorphornarith in his place. King Sovannavong and Queen Chin Bopha had a son named prince Chinavong, referred to as Preah Chinavong throughout the story as the word "Preah" is a Khmer word that is a merely translation of the English word "Prince".

Also, King Sovanavong had three concubines. The first concubine is Tess Pisei. Together with the King, she had a son named prince Piseivong. The second concubine named Noun Thida and together with king, she has a son named prince Nounvong. The third concubine is Roth Rekha who also had a son with the King named prince Rothvong.

Preah Chinavong was the King's favorite. The King gave more affection to him and would punish any maids and other sons who dared to upset Preah Chinavong. This had caused two of the concubines, Noun Thida and Roth Rekha, to be jealous with Preah Chinavong who was also a successor to the throne. One day, out of a hateful feeling, the maids of Noun Thida and Roth Rekha attempted to kill Preah Chinavong by luring him to eat a food that contained a poison in it. Well aware of the situation, Preah Chinavong refused to eat it. In the meantime, his half-brother, Nounvong and Rothvong just came back from a stroll in a royal garden. They felt hungry. Unaware that the poisonous food was prepared and left for Preah Chinavong, they partook the food and were killed. Realizing their mistakes, the maids attempted to cover up their acts by pounding, pinching and scratching the bodies of prince Nounvong and Rothvong, leaving scars all over them. Then they went to tell their mothers that Preah Chinavong killed Nounvong and Rothvong.

The two mothers informed the king what happened. The King was furious. He ordered Preah Chinavong to be detained in an iron cage and tossed it into the sea despite the plea made by Queen Chin Bopha. Luckily, the Naga king found Preah Chinavong, lifted the cage and carried it through the water to his kingdom. The naga's King tore down the cage and let Preah Chinavong out. He then raised him as his own son for three years.

In no time, Preah Chinavong became a favorite figure in the naga's kingdom and at the same time naga's population suffers widespread diseases and death. Nagas then became jealous of Preah Chinavong and attributed all calamities to his mythical power. They went to protest and asked the Naga king to expel Preah Chinavong. Understanding that he could no longer keep Preah Chinavong in his Kingdom, the naga's king ordered his soldiers to bring Preah Chinavong to land and asked him to pursue acquiring magic powers, fighting skills and wisdom from a hermit, a person known as Ta Eisey, a person who lives in a secluded mountain area hard to be found. Wondering several days in a deep jungle looking for Ta Eisey, Preah Chianavong was very tired and went to sleep under a big tree. In the meantime, there was a female giant (Yeak) nearby. She discovered the prince and fell in love with him. She secretly took and kept the prince in her cavern. One day, while the female giant was sleeping, the prince escaped and made his way through the forest again. When the female giant woke up, she realized that Preah Chinavong had escaped. The giant then set out to chase after the prince. She was very angry. When she found him, she smashed him to the ground and left him to die.

There was a hermit (Ta Eysey) nearby who was walking around doing a meditation. He came across the body of the prince. He revived the prince and let him stay with him at his cottage known as Asrom. Ta Eysey was a very wise man who would not accept anybody as a student unless he sees that the person is trustworthy and has a potential to learn. He could see that Preah Chinavong would be a good candidate. Then he accepted Preah Chinavong as his student when the prince humbly requested it. Ta Eiysey then began teaching him the magic and fighting skills.

After acquiring all learning skills from Ta Eiysey the prince felt homesick. He then asked his master permission to leave Asrom and rejoin his parent. With a magic power, Ta Eiysey then created an arch and arrows as well as a sword for Preah Chinavong to use as weapons. While traveling through the forest near his parent's kingdom Sophornarith, Preah Chinavong met prince Piseivong, his younger brother, who happened to take a stroll in the same area. Without knowing each other, the two engaged in a fight. Prince Piseivong and his troops were defeated and were chased after by Preah Chinavong into the royal palace. King Sovannavong and Queen Chin Bopha recognized Preah Chinavong and were very happy to see their son again.

Lakhon bassac story រឿងព្រះបិតាវង្ស

Cont'd

PART 2

There was a giant (Yeak) king named Molivorn and a human queen named Pichet Rekah. He ruled the kingdom of Soeunghak Kohkrai. They had two beautiful human princesses. The first one was Botum Sorya. They found her in a lotus flower as a baby and raised her up. She was very beautiful princess. Another daughter was Sovan Rekha, their natural daughter.

There was a neighboring Yeak's kindom, Konnthop Kohkrai, ruled by a much more powerful giant king named Tuos Sakann and a wife named Kessalei. They were a friend of giant king Molivorn. They also have a giant son named prince Sarikann. Princess Botum Sorya had a wish to marry a handsome prince, so she sent out her picture in a mirror to all surrounding kingdoms via an Indra, a king of gods, hoping that one day a right prince saw it and will come to meet her.

Giant king Tuos Sakann heard about Botum Sorya's beauty. So he went to propose Botum Sorya to Sarikann. Giant prince Sarikan also wanted to meet Botum Sorya in person as he never saw her before. When he arrived at the kingdom Soeunghak Kohkrai, he asked to see princess Botum Sorya in person. But the ladies-in-waiting mistakenly brought her sister Princess Sovann Rekha instead. Seeing the mixed-up situation and also out fear of giant king Tues Skann, giant king Molivorn agreed to the proposal, strongly convinced that if Botum Sorya disagreed as she was waiting for her husband in her wish to appear, he would marry Sovan Rekha to Sarikann. When Sovan Rekha showed up, giant prince Sarikann did not make any argument. After receiving the assurance, Giant Sarikann got back to his kingdom.

Meanwhile at kingdom Sophornarith, Preah Chinavong asked his mother, Queen Chin Bopha, to pay a visit to a stupa of his uncle and aunt. The Queen agreed to fulfill her son's wish. At the stupa, Preah Chinavong spotted the picture of Botum Sorya placed by the Indra (a Hindu king of gods).

He couldn't help falling in love with her. He asked his parents to let him go and search for the lady in the picture. They agreed and Preah Chinavong set out a journey to look for love. Half way in the journey, he met the Indra, the king of gods who placed Botum Sorya's picture at the stupa. He agreed to accompany Preah Chinavong to the kingdom of Soeungha Kohkrai. At the kingdom, Preah Chinavong went into the palace of Sovann Rekha at night, wheedling love out of the princess. At the end, he discovered that she was not the person in the wish. He then asked Sovvan Rekha to take him to Botum Sorya's room. Preah Chinavong and Botum Sorya fell in love.

At the same time giant Tuos-sakann got ready. He led his soldiers to the kingdom of Soeungha Kohkai in order to celebrate the wedding of his son Sarikann. Upon arrival to Soeungha Kohkai, they learned that Princess Botum Sorya had a human husband. He was very furious. He asked his friend giant Molivorn to kill Preah Chinavong. Giant king Molivorn refused. A war started. Giant Tuos-sakann was defeated by Preah Chinavong. Seeing that Preah Chinavong is a powerful prince, Molivorn married the two princesses, Botum Sorya and Sovann Rekha to Preah Chinavong.

Later, Preah Chinavong left his father-in-law and returned to the kingdom of Sophornarith, bringing only Princess Botum Sorya along, leaving Princess Sovann Rekha behind with his father-in-law. They travelled on a mechanical swan. While they were in the middle of the ocean, a strong wind blew and broke the mechanical rope, sending them into the water.

Preah Chinavong and Botum Sorya were separated. Preah Chinavong reached the shore and lay asleep under a tree. While he was sleeping, a monkey named Kamhaul Peanor stole his arch and sword and ran away. The monkey met a giant king named Chettra. The giant killed the monkey and brought the weapons along to his kingdom. Waking up, Preah Chinavong found that his weapons were gone. He set out to look for them and came across a dead monkey. The prince revived the primate. After learning about what happened, he and the monkey continued his search for Botum sorya. Fortunately, they discovered the surviving Botum Sorya who was rescued from the sea by crocodile Sovann Or-rai and now lived with among a swarm of angels. They had a son during their stay and the swarm of angels. After spending his time with them for a while, Preah Chinavong left Botum Sorya for the kingdom of giant Chettra in order to get back his weapons. Arriving at the kingdom, the giant made no argument and gave back the weapons back to Preah Chinavong. He also married him to his daughter, Princess Anhchaun Pichet.

In the meantime, Princess Botum Sorya was staying with the angels. There was a powerful hunter who came to the area and scared all the angels away. The hunter captured the princess and made her work as his maid. After the hunter and his wife died, Botum Sorya journeyed through the forest, carrying her child, in search of her husband. She met a child spirit who invited her to be his god mother.

Further on, they came across a white elephant, and the child spirit took the animal and used it to carry Botum Sorya and her son. They arrived at the kingdom of Samol, The Samol's residents saw the white elephant, brought the news to their king. The king ordered his soldiers to seize the white elephant. The child spirit wanted to give the white elephant to the Samol's king voluntarily without fighting on one condition, and that is the Samol's king must give a good treatment to his god mother, Princess Botum Sorya. The Samol's king agreed to take care of the princess and her son as his children.

In the meantime, Preah Chinavong was happy staying with Princess Anhchaun Pichet, the daughter of Giant Chettra. One silent night, monkey Kamhaul Peanor came to see the Prince and reminded him about Princess Botum Sorya staying with the angels in the forest. Preah Chinavong secretly sneaked out at night and headed for the angles' palace. He then learned that a hunter took her away. Spending his time there, Preah Chinavong fell in love with an angel and together they had a baby girl. He then left the angel to join Princess Botum Sorya at the kingdom of Samol.

When Princess Anhchaun Pichet woke up, she did not see her husband, Preah Chinavong. She knew that her husband must have gone back to his kingdom, so she hurried setting a journey to the kingdom of Sophonararith. To her disappointment, she only saw her father-in-law, King Sovanavong. Preah Chinavong was not there yet.

At the giant kingdom Soeunghak Kohkrai, Princess Savann Rekha missed her husband dearly. She asked her father to accompany her to the kingdom of Sophonararith to join her beloved husband. On the road, giant Chettra, who also followed his daughter, Princess Anhchaun Pichet, met giant Molivorn at the entrance of kingdom Sophonararith. The two giants vied for the passage. Their daughters spotted them and shouted for Preah Chinavong's help. Having heard his name, they knew that Preah Chinavong was the husband of their daughter. They got into the kingdom, but did not see Preah Chinavong. They met only their in-law King Sovannvong and asked him to take care of their daughters. As time went by, the two princesses were so anxious to know what was going on with her husband. They left their father-in-law in search of their husband. Half way through the forest, they came across giant Viroth, who treated them contemptuously. But the princesses won victory over the giant. They took the giant and brought him along. On the way, they met the hermit (Ta Eysey) who was the master of Preah Chinavong. The hermit advised the giant to embrace moral practice. After a while, they left the hermit to continue looking for her husband, together with giant Viroth as their servant.

Preah Chinavong was travelling with Botum Sorya and his monkey Kamhaul Peanor from the kingdom of Samol to his kingdom Sophonararith. During the trip, the monkey set out to look for fruits. He met giant Viroth. They fought each other. The monkey was defeated and was tied up by the giant. Giant Viroth took the monkey to the two princesses who then realized that the monkey Kamhaul Peanor was her husband's servant. They went to see Preah Chinavong afterward. Together they continued their trip, reached kingdom Sophonararith safely, and reunited with their parents.

After spending a happy time of reunion, Princesses Botum Sorya and Savann Rekha asked their husband to accompany them to the kingdom of Soeungha Kohkrai. Princess Anhchaun Pichet also left for her kingdom. After all of his wives went back to their kingdoms, Preah Chinavong started to think about the Naga world. He went to visit them.

Each of Preah Chinavong's wives had a child. Princess Botum Sorya had a prince named Botumvong, who later married a Naga princess. Princess Savann Rekha had a son named Rekhavong. He later married a daughter of Lady Kenor-rei, who once took care of Princess Botum Sorya. Princess Anhchaun Pichet had a son named Anhchaunvong. He married the daughter of Princess Anhchaun Pichet's maid. All lived happily ever after.





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the ancient khmer city of koh ker រាជធានីខ្មែរសម័យមហានគរ កោះកេរ្តិ៍

OVERVIEW

Angkor era is known to be rich, glorious, and powerful. There are plenty of temples that were built with various architectural infrastructures, by Khmer kings from generation to generation. Gradually, the kingdom kept expanding. New settlements were founded, old settlements were enlarged to become the center of culture, administration, and politic.

Koh Ker covers a large area comprised of many different temples in varying state of ruin, but they illustrate the power and vision of the Khmer Empire during Angkor era (800AD – 1400AD) though presently lost in the jungle. It was briefly a capital city of the Khmer Empire during Angkor era. It is located in northern Cambodia, in Srayong Cheung village, Srayong commune, Kulen district, about 49 kilometers west of the provincial town of Thbeng Meanchey and is about 120 kilometers (75 mi) away from Siem Reap. The Koh Ker complex is on the Chhork Koki highland. The region is filled with jungle and sparsely populated. There are more than 180 sanctuaries found in a protected area of 81 square kilometers (31 sq mi). Most of them are hidden, not fully demined from decades of war making the area even inaccessible. So far, 96 temples have been found in Koh Ker area. These temples were not constructed near each other. Today, many of them are no longer standing; some overgrown by forest and many others are buried underground. Only about two dozen monuments can be visited by tourists.



Prasat Thom Complex in the vicinity of Koh Ker

Prasat Thom known as Koh Ker temple was the state temple of Jayavarman IV (928-941). Jayavarman had an armed conflict with Harshavarman I and his brother Ishanavarman II. He moved from Angkor to Koh Ker and built his capital there, some 100 km to the northeast of Angkor. A stone inscription dated 921 states, "Jayavarman IV left the city of Yashodharapura to reign at Chok Gargyar taking the Devaraja with him." Devaraja means King of Kings. Another stone inscription found at Neang Khmao temple (a temple within Koh Ker area) said: after king Ishanavarman II died in 928 AC, Jayavarman IV announced himself as King of Khmer Empire and his new capital was at Koh Ker. Koh Ker was an impressive royal capital of Brahmanic temples, 35 meters high, and its design resembles a seven-stepped stupa. The temple faces west toward Angkor city. It was built to worship Treypuanesvara, the god of happiness. This major achievement can prove that Jayavarman IV was a king of wealth and power.

Under his reign, Jayavarman IV implemented an ambitious building program. He built an enormous water-tank, Raha baray, and about forty magnificent temples. The center of the ancient city was in the north-east corner of the baray (water-tank). At least ten thousand inhabitants lived there during the rule of Jayavarman IV according inscriptions. One of the most significant temple complex is a double sanctuary: Prasat Thom and Prang. It is a seven tiered and 36-meter (118 ft) high pyramid decorated with impressive two-meter high shrines of linga. It is more likely served as a state temple of Jayavarman IV. The sanctuary follows a linear plan and not a concentric one like most of the temples of the Khmer kings. Some structures are parallel. Others are rectangular. Laterite, sandstone and brick were used those temples. Laterite and sandstone were of excellent quality. There were quarried in great quantities in the region and the transport of stones was no problem. The bricks produced were small, regular and very solid. A thin layer of organic mortar of unknown formula was used. Sanctuaries built with bricks stay in much better condition than those built with laterite. The roofs of some temples in Koh Ker were constructed from woods and were covered with tiles. Concerning wood materials abandoned for thousands of years, no wood artifacts are presently left.

Under Jayavarman IV the style of Koh Ker was developed and the art of sculpture reached a pinnacle. A great variety of wonderful statues were chiseled. Unfortunately, none of the immense, expressive and beautiful sculptures are left at the site. Because of its remoteness, the site of Koh Ker was plundered many times by looters. Sculptures of Koh Ker can be found not only in different museums but also in private collections. Masterpieces of Koh Ker are offered occasionally at auctions. These pieces in present times are considered stolen art. Some statues were put away by government organizations to protect them from looters. Many masterpieces of Koh Ker are now in the collection of the National Museum in Phnom Penh.

This city of Koh Ker, however, lasted for only 20 years. It was abandoned immediately after Jayavarman IV's death. His successor, king Rajendravarman II, moved the capital back to Angkor with an unknown reason. Because of the returning of the capital from Koh Ker to Angkor, many historians believe that the Jayavarman IV was a "usurper king". It is because that monarchy in Cambodia at the time had no rule of succession. Many questions remain unanswered. What was really happening in tenth century concerning Jayavarman IV and his city, Koh Ker? What was the reason behind his relocation of the capital from Angkor to Koh Ker?



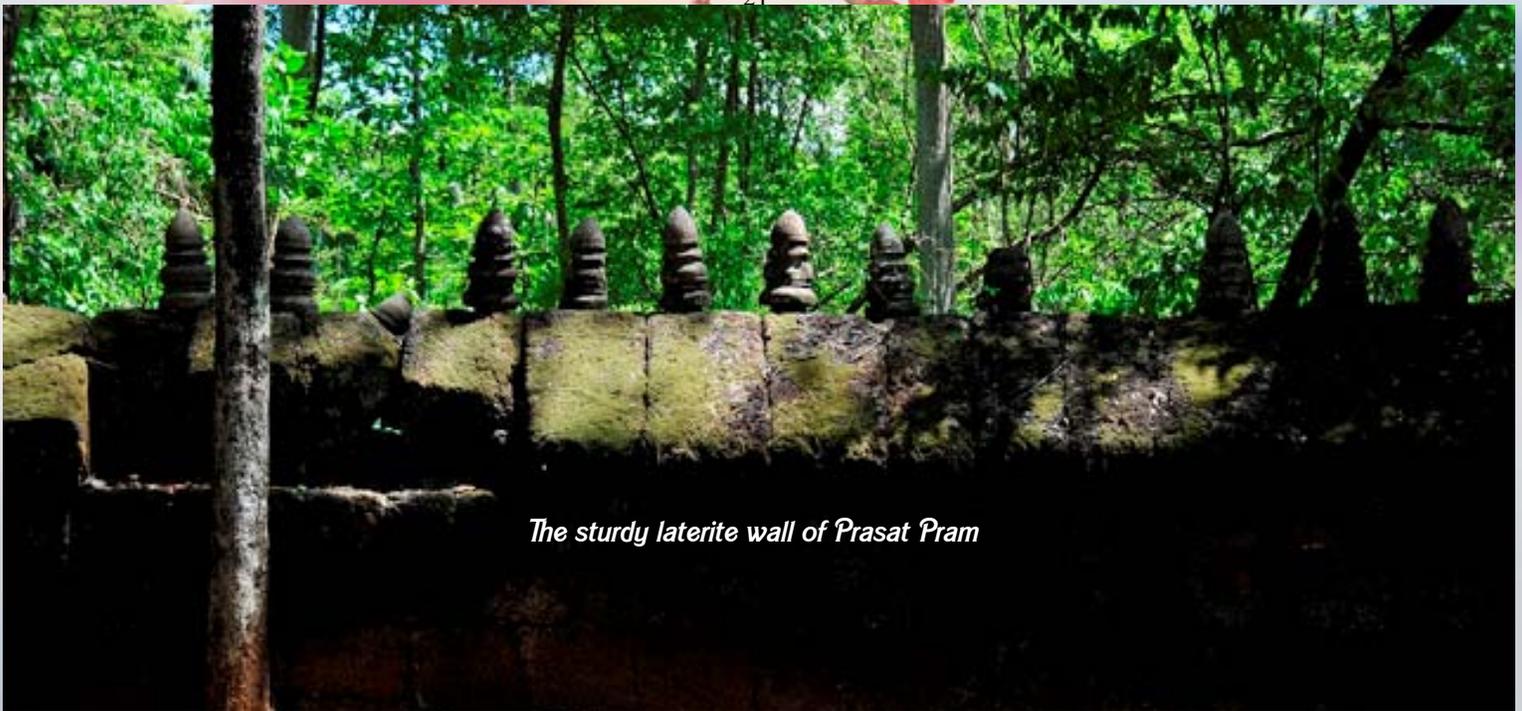
1. Prasat Pram (see map)

The most south sanctuary Koh Ker group is the Prasat Pram, so named to honor the five towers in the temple complex, two of them are spectacularly adorned in tree roots of the strangler fig. Of the five towers, three are made of brick standing in a row on the same platform. They face east. Two other towers are facing west and standing in front of the platform. One brick tower has diamond shaped holes in the upper part. This fact indicates that this tower once served as a fire sanctuary (fire cults were very important during the era of the Khmer kings). The other building is small, made of laterite and in bad condition comparing to the brick one. The bricks of small regular size are held together with an organic mortar

of unknown composition. The temple is surrounded by a moat which was dug to protect the temples from invading enemies. The temple splendid view awaits visitors who dare to explore the hidden ancient city as this is the first stop. There was once stood a lingam at each tower. This beautifully carved lintels were looted. The temple gopuram (entrance) is on the east side and is now collapsed.

Sadly, just like many other temples throughout Cambodia, Prasat Pram has fallen into dereliction during years of civil wars, lootings and neglect. Nowadays there are some local tourists visit the sites to pray and to make food offerings to their ancestors during religious festivals.





The sturdy laterite wall of Prasat Pram

2. **Prasat Krahom** (see map on page 20)

Prasat Krahom is the second-largest structure at Koh Ker, which is named for the red bricks from which it is constructed. Sadly, none of the carved lions for which this temple was once known remain, but there are remains of stone archways,

galleries, impressive stone carvings grace lintels, doorposts and slender window columns. The brick tower has an entryway with one real door and one ornamental symbolic stone door. Each side of the temple has scattered carvings at its feet. Rows of fallen columns and fragments of statues are everywhere tantalizing glimpses into how the temple once would have appeared.



3. *Prasat Neag Khmao* (see map on page 20)

Further north is Prasat Neag Khmau. It is part of the large Koh Ker temple complex. Constructed of sandstone and brick in the style of Koh Ker, the temple was built by King Jayavarman IV (AD 921-941) in the 10th century for the worship of Brahmanism. The site originally consisted of three temples built side by side, however, only two are still standing, and both are heavily damaged. The temple got its romantic name from the dark bluish colour of its laterite. The eye-catching colour is caused by an oxidation process. The tower is built of laterite on a square sandstone basement. It is still in good condition. The main door opening to the west has a lintel carving depicting Brahma on a lotus, surmounted by a large undecorated pediment in the shape of an inversed U. Originally it had a wooden western Gopuram.



4. *Prasat Bak* (see map on page 20)

Prasat Bak is north of Prasat Neag Khmau and is on the west side of the road. It is small square sanctuary built of laterite, one side only measure 5 m (16 ft). it stands upright but it is not well preserved. Its roof has been collapsed. It is currently in a very bad condition. Though this temple, west of the road, is situated right in the center of the Southern Group, where temples are usually exactly on an east-west

axis, Prasat Bak's axis is slightly shifted towards the north-east, where the Rahal Baray is located. At least until 1960, the temple has been housing a colossal statue of Ganesha in form of a large stone elephant. Ganesha is a Hindu god, son of Shiva and Uma. He is depicted with a human body and an elephant's head. The head is now part of a private collection outside Cambodia. Prasat Bak is sometimes called Prasat B or simply monument B in the list of Lunet de Lajonquière.



5. *Prasat Khna* (see map on page 20)

It is a small sanctuary decorated with beautiful sandstone carvings just off the road toward northern group. The temple is in ruin and is mostly covered up by forest. There is a brick library in the south-east corner of the Prasat Khna complex. There are a group of Lingas and a stone carved with peculiar scenes in high relief. At the edge of a stone are representations of the nine planets and eight mothers and eight great gods.



6. *Prasat Damrei* (see map on page 20)

Prasat Damrei means "Elephant temple", as it is noted for the large adorned sandstone elephants, facing outward at the four corners of the foundation of the central Prasat terrace. It has an enclosure and is standing on a high platform. On each

of the four sides is a staircase with about ten steps which were once flanked by carving stone of lions. Today, only one remains. There are remarkable elephant sculpture carvings in sandstone standing at each corner. Only two remain. A Sanskrit inscription found at this temple gives evidence for a lingam on the top of the pyramid.



7. *Prasat Chrap* (see map on page 20)

Prasat Chrap has two concentric enclosures. In the center, three tall laterite towers stand in a row, all of them lost their front walls. There are two more brick sanctuaries (or maybe library buildings) facing the principal group, but only remnants left.



8. *Prasat Chamres* (see map on page 20)

Prasat Chamres is a single red brick tower, situated a little bit deeper in the jungle, in between the larger complexes of Prasat Banteay Pee Chean and Prasat Chrap. It can be seen in the distance before Prasat Chrap. The superstructure of Prasat Chamres is completely overgrown by forest. It is a jungle temple that is harder to reach.



9. *Prasat Banteay Pichom* បន្ទាយព័រជាន់ (see map on page 20)

The Prasat Banteay Pichorn (a two stories fortress) is in a ruin state. It has two concentric enclosures. The Laterite tower at the center belongs to the library. The long gallery was once surrounded by remnant eight smaller shrines made of bricks.





Remnant of Prasat Banteay Pichorn
ប្រាសាទបង្គោលព័ទ្ធជាត់



Sanskrit inscription on the ruin temple column

10. Prasat Andong Kuk or Sralao អណ្តូងគុកឬស្រឡៅ (see map on page 20)

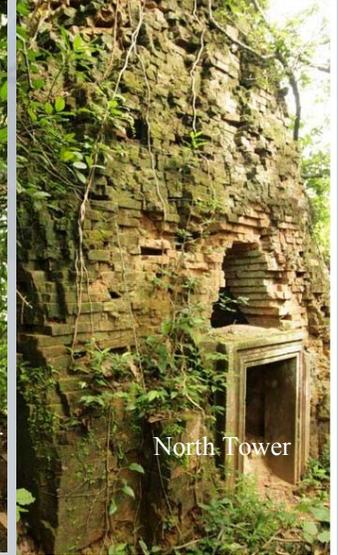
Prasat Angdong Kuk or Sralao or Sralau located north of Prasat Pichorn. It is almost consumed by forest. It is made of sandstone and has a sculpture of lotus petals on the temple front. Although the door frame is damaged, most of the temple is in good condition.



Tower viewed from the west



Central Tower

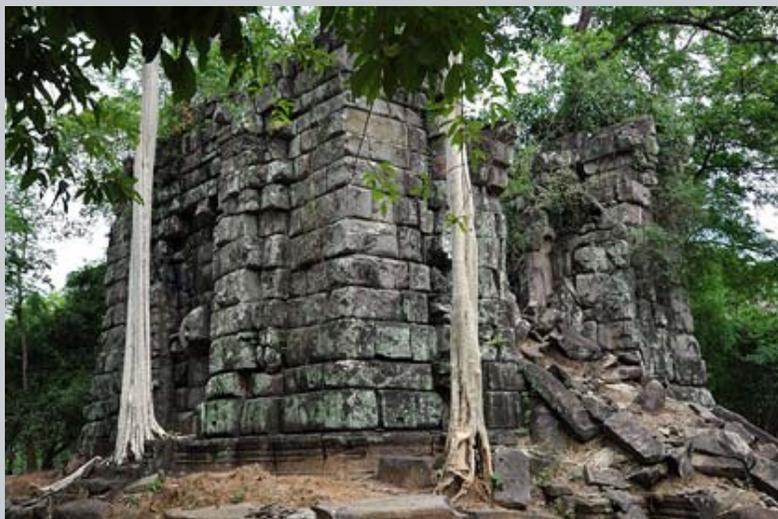


North Tower

11. Prasat Leung/Balang (see map on page 20)

Prasat Leung is a group of three huge single Prasats, all of them housing Shiva Lingas. The largest is called Prasat Leung Moi or Prasat Balang. It enshrines one of the largest and best preserved Lingam found in Cambodia. This Shiva-

phallus is 2 m high and almost 1 m wide. Both Lingam and Yoni were carved out of the bedrock. The Prasat Balang is the first of three Linga-Shrines standing along the ring-road. It is a square laterite building standing on a platform and has one doorway and an open roof.



12. Prasat Thom (see map on page 20)

The principal structure at Koh Ker is Prasat Thom, dominated by a seven-terraced sandstone pyramid, Prang, standing over a hundred feet high. This site can be considered a double sanctuary consisting of Prasat Thom and Prang.

The pyramid, called Prang, was probably the state temple of Jayavarman IV. Construction of the sanctuary was started in 928 AD. At ground level one side of the square building measures 203 ft. The height is 118 ft. Originally on the top platform stood a huge lingam probably more than 13 ft. high

and having a weight of several tons. Inscriptions say that it was the tallest and most beautiful Shiva-lingam. The lingam probably stood in a shrine, which some researchers say could have been about 49 ft. high. On the north side of the pyramid is a steep staircase leading to the top. The original stairs are in a very bad condition as is the bamboo-ladder, which was constructed in the 20th century, so it is forbidden to climb to the top of the pyramid via this route. There is however a new staircase which can be used to ascend to the top of the pyramid. Concerning the seventh level some scientists say, this was the platform of the shrine because on its sides beautiful reliefs of Garudas were made.



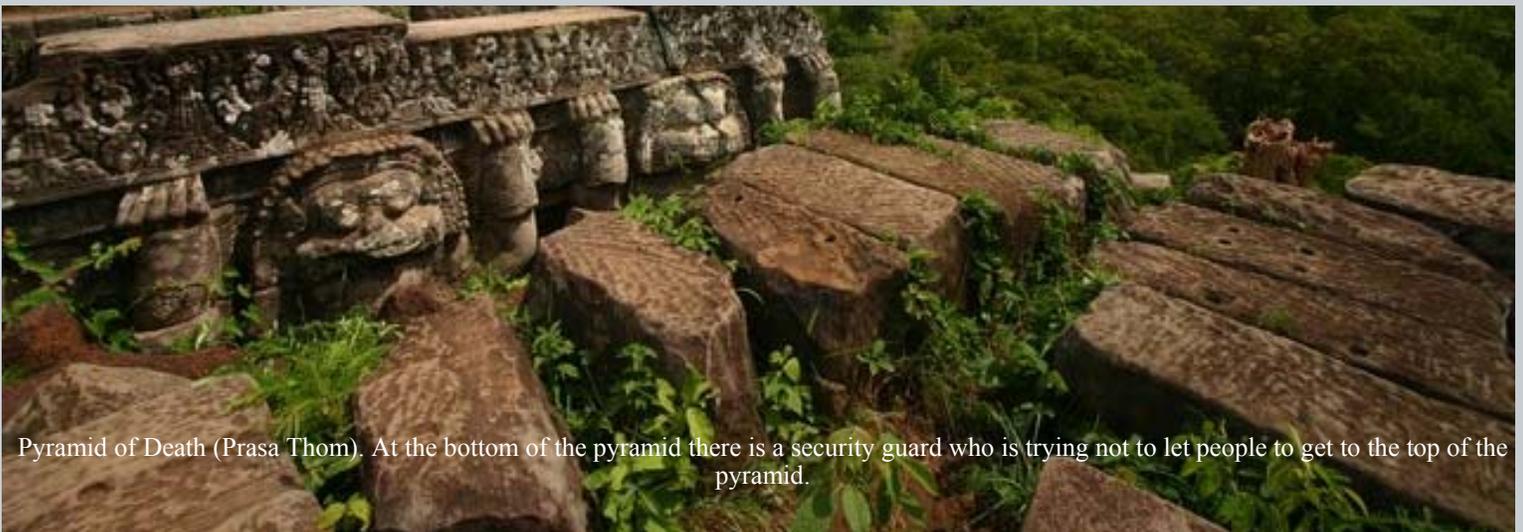
At the top of the pyramid



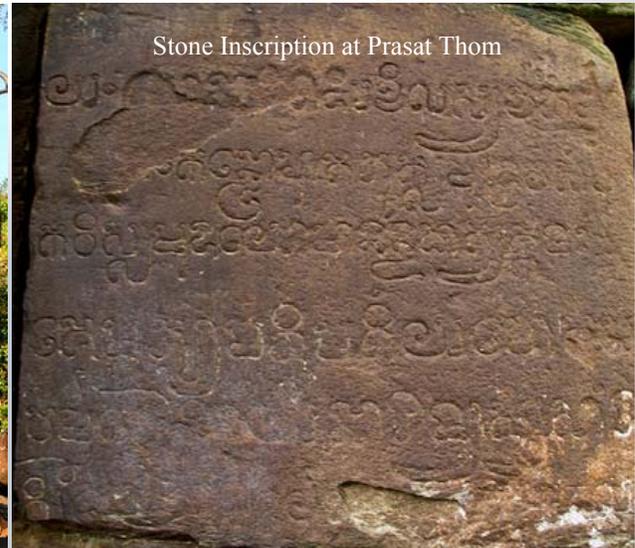
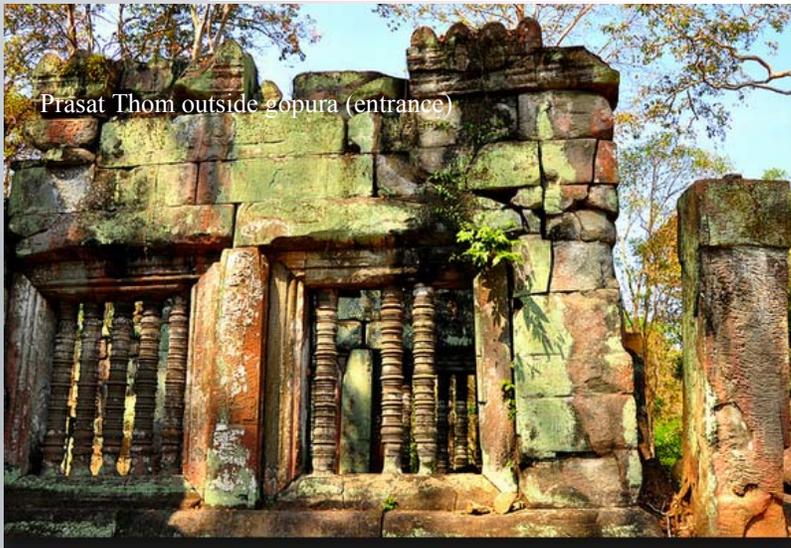
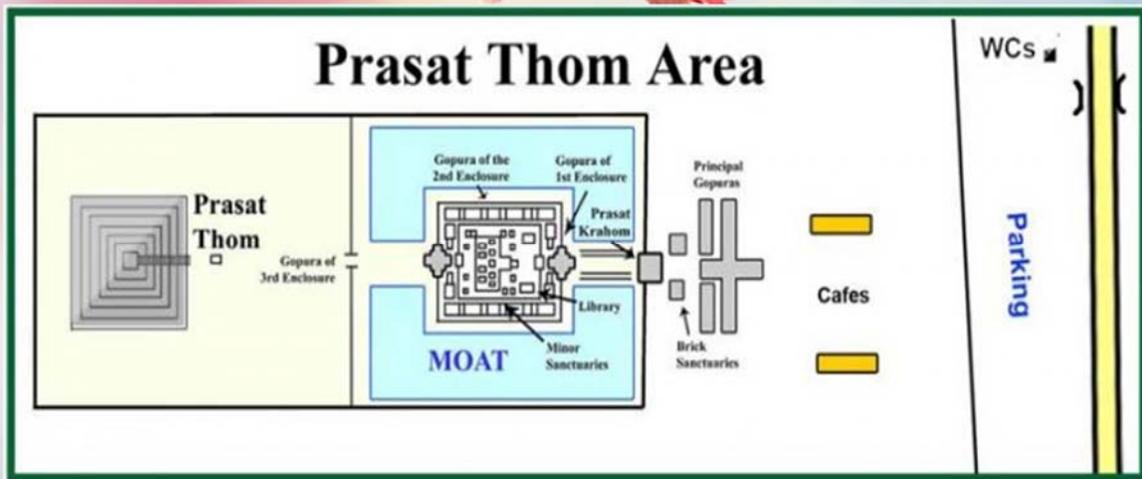
Some parts of the Prasat Thom, including the moat and the inner enclosure, were likely built before 921 AD. The sanctuary was expanded under the reign of Jayavarman IV and has now two surrounding walls inside of the moat. The first wall (inner wall) is made of brick; the second wall (outer wall) with a length of 217 ft. and a breadth of 180 ft. is made of laterite. Two doors are in the east and in the west. In the center court is the sanctuary and opposite it are two so called libraries. Nine towers in two rows stand behind the sanctuary on a rectangular platform (one of five, one four towers).

Twelve smaller prasats surround the platform. All 21 towers once housed lingas.

Behind the court with the pyramid is an artificial circular hill named Tomb of the White elephant. "The white Elephant" is a well-known legend in Southeast Asia. There are different theories about the hill. Some say that this structure could be the foundation of a second pyramid, or that it could be the grave of Jayavarman IV.



Pyramid of Death (Prasa Thom). At the bottom of the pyramid there is a security guard who is trying not to let people to get to the top of the pyramid.



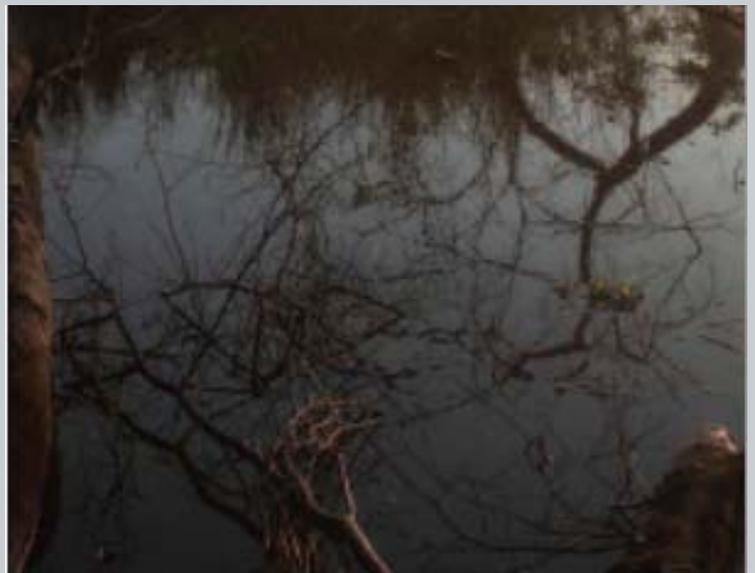
Also located within the Prasat/Prang complex behind the ruins of the entrance-pavilion and the laterite towers is an impressive red brick tower, called Prasat Krahom (krahom = red. See Prasat Krahom on page ??)

Srah and Baray

Srahs and barays are reservoirs, or water-tanks, generally created by excavation and embankment, respectively. It is not clear that the significance of these reservoirs was religious, agricultural, or a combination of the two.

Rahal

The huge Baray (water-tank) called Rahal is the largest object at the site of the ancient capital Koh Ker. Its length is about 1,312 yd and its breadth is about 612 yd. The water-tank has three dams covered by steps of laterite. The orientation of the Rahal is not from east to west like the huge water-reservoirs in Angkor; it follows an orientation of North 15° West. Because the most important monuments at Koh Ker have the same orientation one can conclude that the Baray was constructed first for them. The Rahal was carved out partly of the stone ground, but it is not clear if a natural hollow was the reason for its orientation. Currently most parts of the Baray are dried out and covered by grass. Some puddles can be seen in the corner next to the double-sanctuary.



13. *Trapeang Andong Preng* (see map on page 20)

Located 219 yards south of the double-sanctuary, Prasat Thom/Prang, a basin is dug into the earth with a length of 44 yards. It has steps of laterite on all sides. During the rainy season the water stands to a depth of 23 ft. The Trapeang Andong Preng does not belong to a temple. But it could have been a royal bath, because near this place was once the wooden palace of the king.



14. *Prsat Chen* (see map on page 20)

Prasat Chen (Chinese Temple) is on the west side of the street. It belongs to the north Koh Ker temple group. Three laterite towers (partially collapsed) stand on the same platform. In front of them are the remains of two brick libraries. Perhaps, it can be described as towers of Vishnu god standing on a vast battle field. It has two enclosures. There are two pavilions at the entrance of the first enclosure, one represents the battle of two monkeys (Valin and Surgriva) and the other, the battle of Bhima and Duryodhana in the Hindu epic Ramayana. The main entrance door (now collapsed) was itself a sanctuary with a square central room (one side measured 4 m (13 ft)). A fragment of a multi-armed statue of Vishnu was found in front of the tower in the middle. In this temple are five inscriptions. They mention the names of all the numerous peoples connected to the temple site and their function.



An ancient statue of a Hindu god believed to be more than 1,000 years old was discovered under roots of a tree in April 2012. It had been excavated and sent to the Preah Norodom Sihanouk Museum, in Siem Reap province. It is a statue of Preah Neareay, with four arms, but the arms are broken off at the shoulders, there is no head and the legs are broken at the knees.

The Ancient Khmer City of Koh Ker is researched by Ben Bao and Lowell Cole.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koh_Ker

http://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Koh_Ker

<http://www.canbypublications.com/maps/SR-KohKerMap.htm>

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Overview

Wedding ceremony is a joyous event in any culture. For Cambodians living abroad, having the traditional ceremony requires understanding and preparation. In a modern society, life has caught up into many different things. Young Cambodians often ignore the significance of keeping their own culture. They tend to think it is their wedding and they have the right to do whatever they want. They are correct in a sense. Being home away from home, we just need to preserve our identity, our roots, our culture. For those who have decided to follow the Khmer tradition discover that their lives greatly enhanced with an intangible, untouchable feeling of satisfaction. They are always glad that they did the Khmer traditional wedding as part of their whole wedding plan. The benefit of having an everlasting memory in their life far outweighs the inconvenience of enduring a tedious process (changing clothes often, long sit-down on the floor, etc).

Khmer wedding is a long process in which many Cambodians have done or participated in the process. However, do they really understand each episode in the process? Khmer wedding music is so sentimental. To the ears of many, it sounds monotone and they cannot distinguish one from another. Do you know what song needs for what wedding episode? In the United States, the ceremony is shorten to fit the overall schedule. Doing a full-blown ritual would take all day or longer. Therefore, you need to select only a few episodes. Do you know what to select and do you understand the meaning of it? Khmer traditional wedding musicians are hard to find in the United States and elsewhere beside Cambodia. Therefore, you

resort to playing pre-recorded songs as opposed to live music. To mimic the whole ceremony step-by-step without live music requires some understanding and preparation. And that is what the article is all about. The wedding guideline is tailored specifically for people who live the United States. It may differ from the practices in Cambodia or elsewhere. Traditionally, people sit on the floor. Offering and gifts are also arranged on the floor. Nowadays, it is not uncommon that participants are sitting on the chair and wedding stuffs are arranged on the table covered with beautiful table cloth.

Prelude

Khmer wedding is almost always performed at the bride's residence. There is a respected person called Achar. He is normally very knowledgeable of Buddhism, who directs and mediates the whole ceremony. Although the event takes place at their residence, the bride's family selects a representative called Meba, a married couple who are one of the closest friends of the bride's parents. Similarly, the groom selects a representative call Chao Moha. The three groups of people are the officiants of the ceremony. Beside them, off course, elders, families and friends from both sides participate in the ritual.

The ceremony starts in the very early morning with a ritual of requesting ancestors to give them a right moment to start and to bless the participants, the house, tents, and all places where they conduct the ceremony. This episode is called Som Peelear (request a right moment). The music to play in this episode is called Homrong.

Groom Procession

The groom's procession re-enacts the Cambodian tradition based on legend and history. The procession symbolizes the trip of the first Khmer prince, Preah Thong, to the Naga Palace to ask King Naga's permission to marry Princess Neang Neak. The prince was a foreigner exiled from his homeland, and during his travels he encountered and fell in love with the Naga Princess.

The procession is also a reflection of Cambodian social affairs. In the old days, marriage was arranged by parents. A man would ask his parents to go and request permission from the girl's parents for a marriage. The man's parents, family and friends would prepare a trip, bringing gifts and offerings to the

girls' residence. Parents on both sides had tremendous influence on the decision-making process in the courtship. This tradition has evolved to a more modern practice. It is quite common now that the man and woman have already fallen in love, and the wedding ceremony reaffirm their vow and to honor the tradition.

The music required for the groom processing episode is Chao Preahm. The process is lead by a group of musicians followed by the Chao Moha, the groom and groom maids, then friends and families walking in two rows paired by a man and women, preferably husband and wife. Each pair carries a gift tray of same type. Gift may be fruit, cake, wine or beverages.



Pichchenda Bao & Christopher Plasencia Wedding

The procession ends at the door step of the bride's residence. A make-shift gate may be built to use as an entrance to the bride's residence. This is a place where Chao Moha meets Meba. Chao Moha tells Meba the purpose of the visit and asks Meba a permission to get into the house so that further dialog can take place inside. Meba agrees. Tradition may vary. Normally, the bride is nowhere to be seen. Occasionally another tradition is performed in which the bride comes down, meet and wash the feet of the groom.

Elders Dialog

This is a long ceremony that consists of many activities.

Fruits and Gifts arrangement

Once they are inside, all fruits and gifts are placed on the floors covered with nice carpet in a matching-pair fashion.



Chao Moha

Meba



Seat Arrangement

The family, friends, and guests are seated facing the Achar whose role is to facilitate the conversation. The groom's family and friends are seated on one side, led by their representative, Chao Moha. The bride's side is on the opposite site, led by their representative, the Meba.



The Count-Fruits and Gifts Ritual

Now that they are inside, seated in that fashion and surrounded by friends and family, elders' dialog begins. The bride and groom are not present at this time. The Chao Moha reiterates the purpose of their visit, that is, their son comes to ask permission to marry their daughter. Meba only agrees if Chao Moha brings many fruits, vegetables, flowers, cakes, and gifts. They need to verify by asking a pair of independent persons or just one person to count them in a dance-fashion while music is playing. Typically, there should be 36 kind of fruits of all sorts they can find and all kind of cakes and gifts. The count-fruit ritual is performed by the wedding musician group. If you do not have a live musician, you may want to ask friends or hire a man and a woman if possible, but only woman is fine, to perform the ritual. The music to play is Rorb Phle Chheur.



Illustration photos are from the wedding of Chris Plasencia and Pichchenda Bao

The Groom Appearance

This is an engagement acceptance ritual all over again. The groom appears first. The Meba asks Chao Moha the purpose of their presence. A friendly dialogue begins. The Chao Moha states the purpose and introduces the groom to the bride's family, friends, and guests. The Meba consults with the bride's family, checks the groom's character, and asks the groom to reaffirm his love for the bride. Live traditional wedding music is playing and a singer sings a lyric song that symbolizes a counting of all fruits and gifts brought by the groom.



The Meba customarily satisfies the counting and accepts all gifts.

The Bride Appearance

Since Mai Ba already agrees, the Chao Moha and their people have a right to ask for her presence with a blessing from the Achar. She appears and sits next to the groom. At this time, the Chao Moha and his people have their turn to verify the bride's character and ask her to reaffirm her love for the groom. No Music playing is necessary.



Praying to Ancestors

The ancestor spirits are believed to be caretakers of the living family. They reward the living with good health and prosperity in return for good behavior and obedience. Getting married without this declaration through this ritual is considered disobedient and may anger the spirits. They may cause sickness and bad luck to the couple or their immediate family.

Family bonds are the most important. A marriage is an inclusion of the couple into their new families. At all important events, family and friends are called upon to share in the celebration and offer their blessing. This ceremony calls forth for those who passed away to offer blessings and observe the wedding, if not in body, in spirit. It is time to reflect on those near and dear to our hearts and remember to include them in the happiness.

Achar leads an offering ceremony. The bride and groom are sitting with each other in a kneel-down fashion. There are foods, drinks, lit candles and burning incense sticks. The smoke is believed to be an agent that carries the message to the spirit, and wakes them up so that they can witness the marriage. Family and friends are the spectators.

The music to play is called Kang Soy



The Hair-Cutting Ritual

Before the bride and groom are officially married in the Khmer tradition, they must be prepared through an elaborate cleansing ceremony. In the old days, both bride and groom and their families were busy farming. Their hair grew long and their bodies were not clean.

Heavenly Scissors and Razors

The scissors, razors, comb, mirrors and perfume are sanctified and believed to be sent from heaven by gods. Likewise, a barber and a hair dresser are angels (Tevada) sent by Hindu gods from heaven. Cambodia practiced Hinduism before Buddhism. This so-called “the selling of scissors and razors” (even no actual selling/purchasing takes place) is an old belief that lingers up to present. In this ceremony, a couple (as Teveda) carrying scissors, razors, comb, mirrors and perfume dance as the music plays. Pretending they are lost, they stop and ask a spectator for a direction to the house of the most wealthy people in the area. The bride’s parents are given a wealthy status for one day regardless their actual status. So are the groom’s parents. The spectator gives a direct with a sense of humor as to make people laugh. Finally, the couple

finds the wealthy couple, introduce themselves as angels sent by God Indra from heaven to bring them sanctified scissors and razors to use in the hair cutting ceremony. The wealthy couple accepts the gifts, give it to Achar. The music to play is Lok Kantray or Chap Deu Dei.

Hair-Cutting

The tradition may vary depending on the Achar’s discretion. In some instances, Tevada may be the first who cuts (all are pretending, no actual cutting) bride and groom’s hair while the wedding music (Sarika Keo) is playing. In another instance Achar may be the first or the bride’s parents are the first to start. Families and friends are lining up as couples taking turn to participate in the hair-cutting ceremony.

The essence of the hair-cutting ritual is the would-be pieces of hair from the cut are treated as bad luck hair. They throw them away to avoid misfortune that may have lingered. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Tevada returns to the realm of white candle, the home of gods and deceased ancestors. The music to play is called Sarika Keo.



Chhomthyda Chhuan & Pavan Makhija Wedding



Paula & Felipe Rojas Wedding



The Kat Khansla (the Honoring Parents) Ritual

This episode of the Khmer wedding ceremony is often ignored in the United States. But it is one of the most important and touchy moments for bride and groom parents that should not be ignored. Honoring parents is an important aspect of Cambodian culture. "Honor your parents as you do to god" is a typical Cambodian sentiment that is rooted from the Buddhist teaching about not to forget parent's gratitude called Kun - a kind act or good deed for which ones owes repayment (a debt of gratitude).

The ritual is led by Achar. The bride's parents sit on the chairs (traditionally on the floor). The bride stands behind with an umbrella to shade them. The groom does the same to his parents. Customarily, a musician plays a solo fiddle and a singer sings a lyric song that describes the good deed and care the parent has given to them since the day they were born until this very day of their marriage. This ceremony is so highly emotional that, if the couple understands the lyrics, they may shed a tear.



The Bok Leak (Crushing Dyke) Ritual

This ritual stems from the fact that in the old days, most Cambodians are farmers who make their own clothes. Leak is a kind of fruit that can be made into dye which can be used to color clothing materials. Now that the bride and groom have reached adulthood, are now married and raise their own family, they need to know how to make clothes and take care of their affairs of life. Bok Leak is a demonstration of how to grind or smash fruit of dyke, Leak. There are four young girls all must be virgin dressed in a very nice Cambodian outfit. They may or may not team with other four young boys. Each of the performer holds a long and big stick up and down

crushing fruits of dyke that are placed in one or two wood-mortars depending on how many dancers. The bride and groom are standing behind watching as if they are learning the process. There are two parts in performance: the first part is a journey to pick dyke, the music is Om Touk; the second part the crushing dyke and the music is Bok Leak.

This ritual is mostly forgotten. Nobody has done this in America. The Royal University of Fine Arts in Cambodia has made this tradition into a folklore dancers. They have added some variations to the original idea to preserve the tradition.



The Beuk Veangnorn (the Open Curtain) Ritual **Rorm Beuk Veangnorn**

This a prelude to a Phtim (Match-Up) ritual, the first of the two episodes. The bride is now in hiding behind the curtain. Achar, Meba and Chao Moha are preparing a match-up ceremony and they need both bride and groom to appear. The groom appears first with the sound of gong . The music Sdach Yeang (the king is coming) is playing while he is appearing. But the bride won't come out until the groom is begging her. A performer plays a role as the groom, dancing and singing to

say please open the curtain and come out.. Song: An Euy Srey An.

Dork Dav (Sword-Drawing) ceremony

The bride has come out now and sits next to the groom. The Dork Dav, sometimes called Haut Dav is a blessing ritual to the bride and groom. Dav (sword) is sanctified and is sent to earth for the groom (Preah Thong) to protect his wife-to-be. Two performers (male and female) dance and sing the blessing lyric song, Nokoreach or Dork Dav.



The Bangvel Porpil (the Passing of Blessing) Ritual

This another prelude to the Phtim (match-up) ritual. In this ceremony, only married couples are allowed to participate as it is believed that they will pass along the special quality or essence which has preserved their union. They are asked to sit in a circle around the bride and groom. Three candles are lit and passed from person to person. Each participant passes his or her right hand over flame in a sweeping motion toward the

couple, sending or throwing the candle incense as a silence blessing on them. Achar recites a special prayer. The candles are passed around the circle clockwise seven times to complete the ceremony. At the conclusion, Achar blessed them and may give them advice.



The Phtim (match-up) Ritual

After the Bangvel Porpil, Achar performs a series of blessing, giving advise to the young couples.

The five advising virtues to the husband:

1. You shall honor and praise your wife
2. You shall not look down on your wife
3. You shall be honest to and not cheat on your wife
4. You shall give your wife a full discretion on household affairs
5. You shall beautify your wife with jewelry

The five advising virtues to the wife:

1. You shall take good care of your husband and household affairs
2. You shall treat your husband's family as if it is your own
3. You shall be honest to and not cheat on your husband
4. You shall manage your husband's earning proficiently
5. You shall not be lazy and careless



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The Tying-Knot Ritual

Cambodian weddings traditionally have a knot-tying ceremony. Unlike what the name implies, it is the guests who tie the knots. Parents of both bride and groom start the ceremony, followed by close family and friends. They give best wishes and blessings to the new couple while they tie thread around

each of the bride and groom's wrists. They were traditionally required to wear them for three days afterwards to preserve the good luck. The ceremony is concluded with special recitations from the Achar and blessings from family and friends. Song to play is Bay Khon Chang Dai.



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The Throwing of Phka Sla Ritual

Phka-sla is a palm tree flower symbolizing the power of blessings. The throwing of Phka-sla concludes the wedding ceremony with jubilation and excitement. The new couple is now officially married. The new couple are led to the room, prepared especially for the honeymoon ceremony where the husband and wife peel bananas and other fruits, and feed each other while friends stand by to watch and applaud. Friends will tease them with every move the couple makes.



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The Preah Thong Taung Sbai Ritual

Before the young couple are led to the room, a ceremony is performed to conclude the wedding process. The wife (Neang Neak) is leading her husband (Preah Thong). They walk around the altar or table of wedding items three times. The husband is holding onto his wife outer garment while walking. The music that is played is Preah Thong Taung Sbai.



The Banh Chok Chek Ritual

The young couple is led to the room. Inside the room, close friends and families await the arrival of the young married couple. The bed is decorated with flowers. The door is closed. The light is off. When the couple opens the door, they all explode into laughter. The music, Laum Neang, starts playing. The couple gets into the bed. A teaser is holding a string of fruit (grape is usually used) and asks both husband and wife to try to grab a bite. While the couple is doing so, the teaser pulls the string up so to have the couple misses the fruit, but to kiss each other instead. Another teaser peels off a banana and hands over to the husband who in turn feeds his wife. The wife also does the same thing to her husband while families and friends are laughing.



បញ្ចសន្តហៈធម៌រោងស្នាមីនិទករិយា

នេះគឺជាពាក្យដែលលោកអាចារ្យប្រៀនប្រដៅដល់គូរស្នាមីករិយាថ្មីនៅក្នុងពិធីភ្ជាប់

ស្នាមីអនុគ្រោះដល់ករិយាមានប្រាំប្រការដូចតទៅ៖

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2. មិនធ្វើអោយហ្មងសៅ ដោយចិត្តឃោរឃៅមើលងាយគ្នា
3. មានចិត្តស្មោះត្រង់ប្រាកដ មិនប្រព្រឹត្តក្បត់ចិត្តករិយា
4. ប្រគល់សិទ្ធិគុហា ដល់ករិយាយកចាត់ចែង
5. អោយគ្រឿងអលង្ការ សម្រាប់ករិយាស្អាតតាក់តែង ដូច្នោះឯងទើបមិនមានទាស់ទែងក្នុងគ្រួសារ។

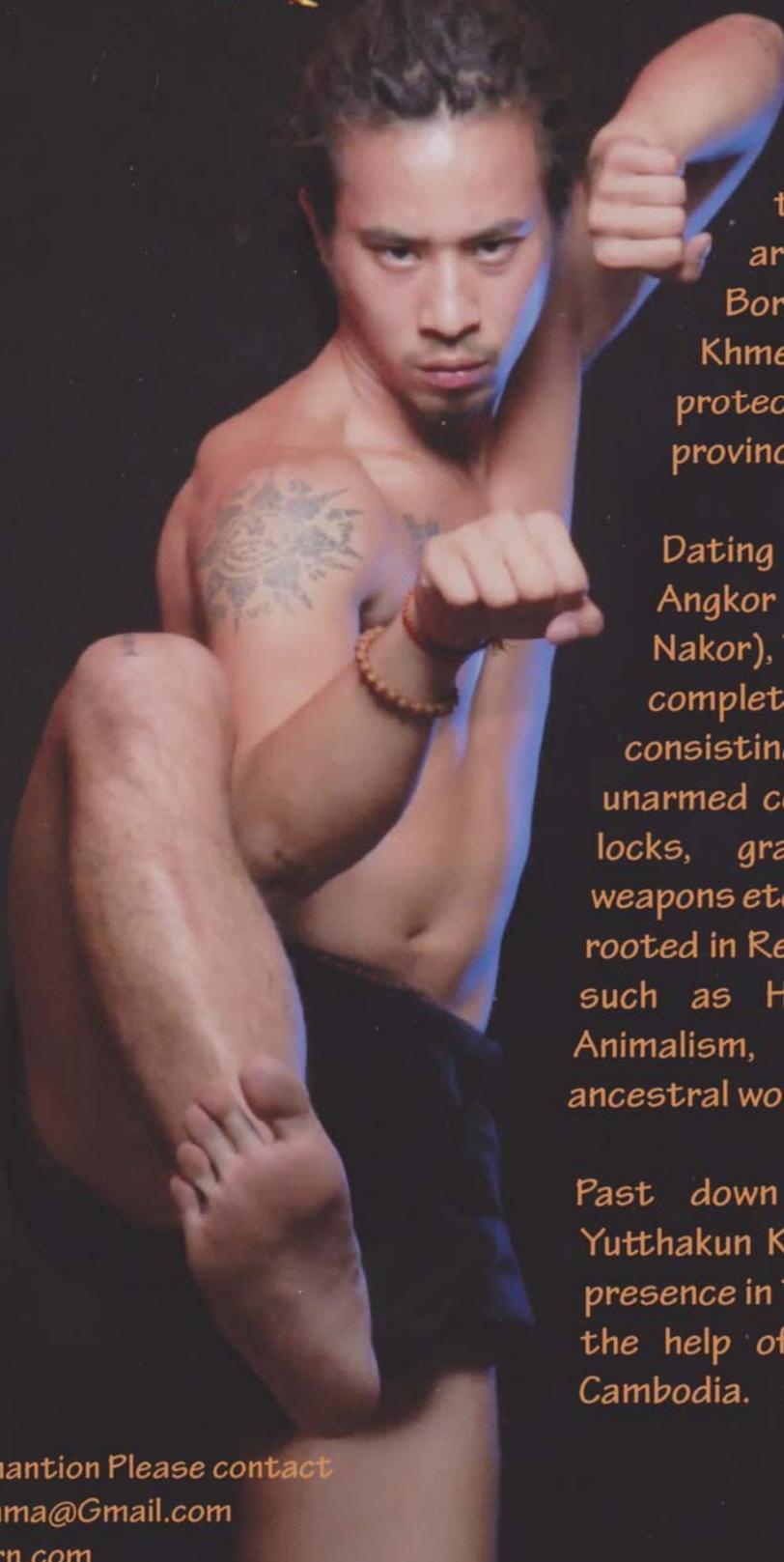
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1. ចាត់ចែងកិច្ចការដោយប្រពៃ មិនអោយអប្រិយក្នុងលំនៅ
2. រាប់អានល្អត្រឹមត្រូវ អនុគ្រោះដល់ទៅ ញាតិខាងប្តី
3. ចិត្តស្មោះត្រង់ប្រាកដ មិនប្រព្រឹត្តក្បត់ចិត្តស្នាមី
4. ទទួលសម្បត្តិប្តី ទុកជាកំណត់បី ក្តីអន្តរាយ
5. មិនមានខ្ជិលច្រអូស ចំពោះកិច្ចការផងទាំងឡាយ ករិយាសង្រ្គោះដូចបរិយាយ ទើបបានសប្បាយ តរៀងទៅ។

Chhomthyda Chhuan & Pavan Makhija Wedding



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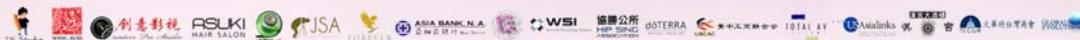
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