

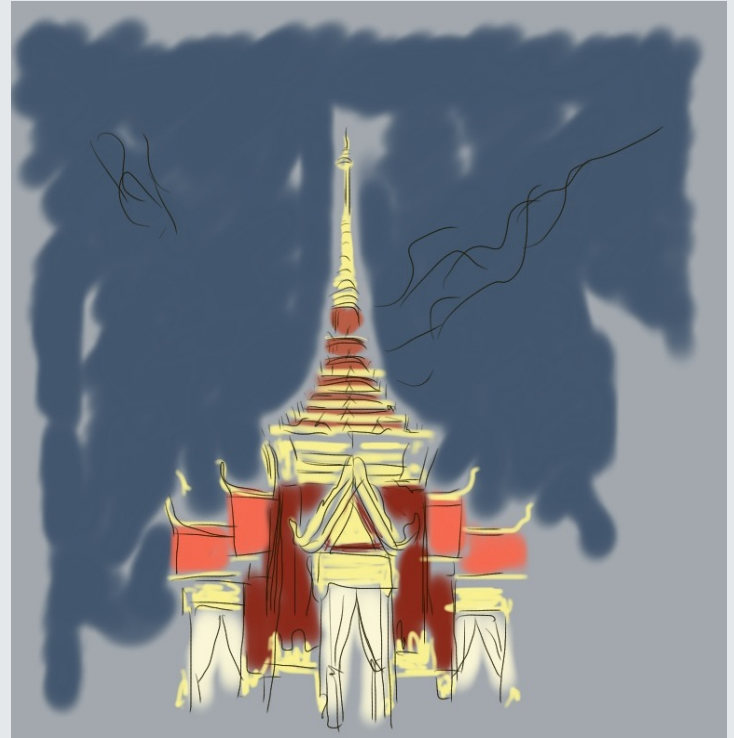
# Past Lives Present, Tense: Past-life memory in Twenty-First century Cambodia

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Jeudi 3 mai, 10h00-12h00

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*Sihanouk's Meru Pavilion at night (E. Davis)*



*Sihanouk's funeral  
(E. Davis)*

Past-life memory in Cambodia is common. In Buddhist scriptural practices, past-life memory is usually thought of in terms of the Buddhist cycle of *samsāra*, where past-life memory is often a prerequisite for advanced stages of spiritual accomplishment. However, in practice, past-life memory is often deeply disturbing to the rememberer, their family and their community.

This presentation discusses multiple examples of contemporary past-life memory out of Davis' fieldwork in Cambodia, highlighting the practices that surround such memory and uses to which such memories are put. Examples include the Cambodian Prime Minister, a young girl who remembers being her own uncle, a spiritual leader who claims to be the most important Buddhist leader of the Cambodian twentieth century as well as the repeated subject of national scandal because of his claims, and another woman who put two families together in her youth, and has maintained their connections into her eighties. These memories and rituals challenge many Western notions about the self and its construction in ways that may be productive.