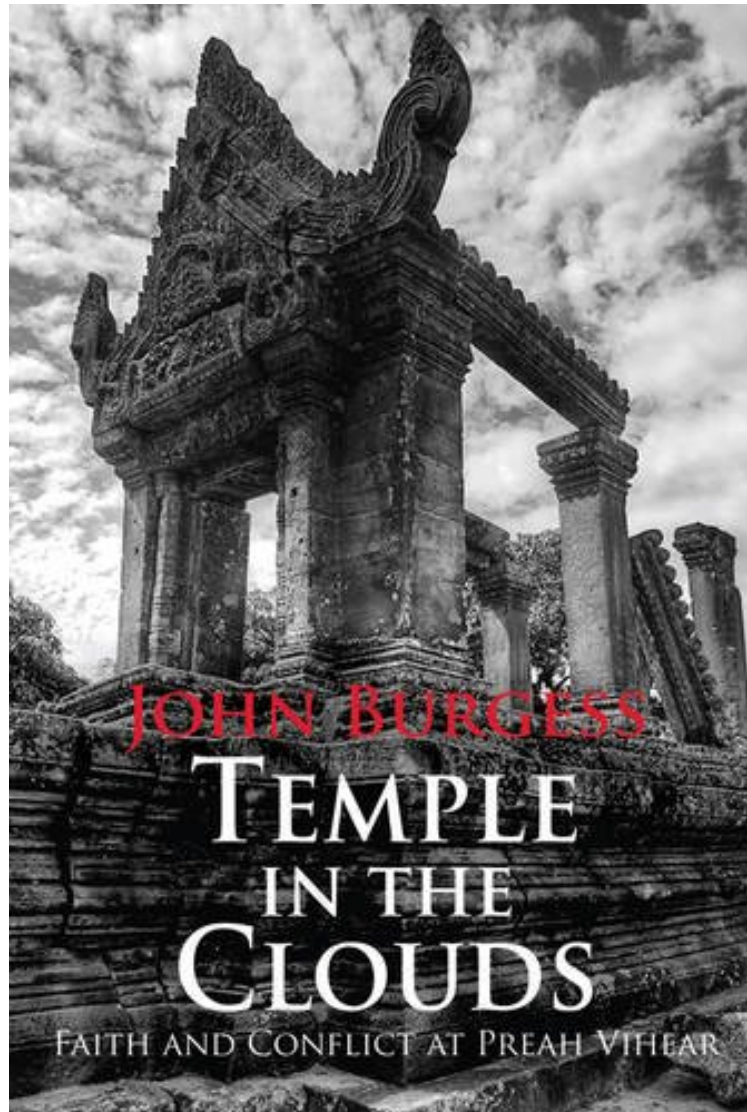


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Temple in the Clouds: Faith and Conflict at Preah Vihear

John Burgess

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John Burgess : Temple in the Clouds: Faith and Conflict at Preah Vihear before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Temple in the Clouds: Faith and Conflict at Preah Vihear:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Burgess brings Southeast Asian history to lifeBy Kent DavisThe title perfectly captures the reality of this ancient Khmer temple, perched atop a Dangrak Mountain cliff face in a remote corner of Cambodia. Despite its heavenly setting in the clouds disputes over temple control have ignited civil and military conflicts between the kingdoms of Cambodia and Thailand for more than a century. Burgess tracks the temple's twisting story, from obscure sacred origins to dramatic developments in our modern era.His investigation

begins with the earliest inscriptions documenting the actions of Khmer Empire kings and temple visits by Hindu high priests of that era. Then the temple is lost to oblivion, vanishing from written records for centuries. In the 19th century French explorers bring the temple to Western awareness for the first time, with Burgess sharing personal insights from the first-hand experiences of Etienne Aymonier, Lunet de Lajonquiere and George Groslier (see *In the Shadow of Angkor - Unknown Temples of Ancient Cambodia*), all of whom faced a hostile environment with bandits, inclement weather, snakes, tigers and wild elephants to unlock the temple's secrets. In the 20th century his focus turns to shifting politics as France, Britain, Cambodia and Thailand struggle for control of vast regions of Southeast Asia, one of which includes the temple itself. As the Cold War grows the site becomes a military flashpoint that evolves into an international courtroom drama. Legal decisions are made but unrest continues. With an eye for detail Burgess blends journalistic discipline with true writing talent. The result here, as in his other books, is readable, captivating historical high adventure. No other publication gives readers such a clear view of Preah Vihear's meaning; past, present and future. The book features excellent graphic design, plenty of clear illustrations, and is printed on creamy soft stock giving readers all the pleasures and convenience of ink and paper. If you enjoy Cambodian and Thai history I also highly recommend Burgess's other books. His first non-fiction title, *Stories in Stone: The Sdok Kok Thom Inscription and the Enigma of Khmer History*, offers a detailed and personal exploration of another key temple. His first fiction novel, *A Woman of Angkor*, is a brilliant tale of the construction of Angkor Wat. This work is the most readable, entertaining and historically accurate tale of that era.

Perched atop a five-hundred-meter cliff in the far north of Cambodia, Preah Vihear ranks among the world's holiest sites. It was built a millennium ago as a shrine to Hindu god Shiva by the same civilization that gave the world Angkor Wat. Sadly, it has been transformed recently into a battlefield prize, first with Cambodian factions during the Cambodian civil war, and later (to present) it has been the focus of sometimes violent border disputes with Thailand. In *Temple in the Clouds* former Washington Post foreign correspondent John Burgess and author of two previous books on Cambodia, draws on extensive research in Cambodia, Thailand, France and the United States to recount the cliff top monument's full history, ancient and modern. He reveals previously unknown legal strategies and diplomatic maneuvering behind a contentious World Court case of 1959-62 that awarded the temple to Cambodia. Written in a lively, accessible style, *Temple in the Clouds* brings new insight to one of Southeast Asia's greatest temples and most intractable border conflicts. With 50 photographs, plans and maps.