

# **PAD saves the nation from supernatural attack**

Wednesday 19 November 2008, by [Chang Noi](#) (Date first published: 10 November 2008).

On 29 October, Sondhi Limthongkul spoke from the PAD stage, broadcast over ASTV, about a new front in his fight to “save the nation.” He said:

*“For many years past, the powers of many sacred things including the spirit of the city pillar, the Equestrian Statue of King Rama V, Phra Sayam Thewathirat, and the Emerald Buddha, have been suppressed by evil people using magic. ‘Suppress’ does not mean destroy, because sacred objects cannot be destroyed, as they have too much power. But ‘suppress’ means not allowing them to emit their power, by encircling them. This is true. So we have just finished rectifying this in the last two to three weeks. Like at the statue of the Emerald Buddha. Behind it there is a stone. Evil-minded people allied with some in the Royal Household Bureau to allow a Khmer adept to go behind the Emerald Buddha and take the stone away, because that stone is the important thing for emitting the power.”*

The idea of protective forces is a major part of saiyasat or supernaturalism. It has nothing to do with Buddhism but reaches back to older folk beliefs. Most villages have a shrine for a protective spirit. Cities have a pillar. No new house is erected without a ceremony.

Sondhi has selected sites closely associated with the Chakri dynasty. The Emerald Buddha is the Palladian statue of the dynasty. The city pillar was erected by King Rama I to mark the foundation of Bangkok. King Rama IV invented Phra Sayam Thewathirat because he felt Siam needed more protection in the colonial era. The Equestrian Statue of King Rama V has been converted into a guardian spirit by popular acclaim. Sondhi claims this complex of monuments that protect the nation and monarchy have come under sustained attack.

In old Siam, there were laws which permitted use of supernaturalism for defensive, protective purposes but outlawed any usage with aggressive and malicious intent. Today there are no such laws but the same distinction remains in conventional practice. Wearing protective amulets is fine; cursing is questionable; rites to cause harm are unacceptable. This distinction is expressed by describing aggressive and malicious usages as “Khmer.” In fact, there is no evidence that Cambodian supernaturalism is aggressive. Here “Khmer” is just a Thai word for “nasty.” But of course this vocabulary reflects a narrow-minded bundle of bad-neighborly prejudices.

Earlier Sondhi openly accused Thaksin of being behind the destruction of the Erawan Brahma statue in March 2006. Sondhi said Thaksin wished to thwart political forces rising up against him. Thaksin called the accusation “insane.” Sondhi does not need to be so explicit this time but he seems to imply the same thing on a larger scale—a massive attempt to disrupt the spiritual forces protecting nation and monarchy.

Sondhi went on to describe his efforts in defense. *“The [base of the] Equestrian Statue is like this [draws hexagon with his hands] with the statue inside. Tacks had been inserted at the six corners so that the statue of the revered king could not emit its power. We drew out the tacks from all six places.”*

Presumably these tacks or nails are supernatural, imaginary articles fixing an imaginary magical wall around the statue to pen in the spiritual forces. Presumably too, Sondhi's team used ritual to remove them rather than digging up the tarmac. He mentioned that "masters and adepts pulled out each of them." He went on to describe preventive measures for the future. Here the actions seem to have been real rather than imaginary.

*"I must thank the women of the PAD because after [the tacks] were pulled out, to ensure they would not be replaced, they took sanitary napkins from menstruating women and placed them on the six points. Experts said that the spirit adepts were furious because they could not send their spirits back; their magic was rendered ineffective."*

Ideas about the fearful power of female sexuality are fundamental to a structure of male supremacy. In both Buddhism and supernaturalism, males are privileged to acquire superior spiritual status. Only men can become Buddhist monks. Only men can draw yantra diagrams, activate amulets, utter incantations, and use all the other techniques of saiyasat. But female sexuality poses a terrifying threat to these powers. Thus monks have to remain celibate and avoid contact with women. Serious adherents of saiyasat also practice celibacy. Casual users remove their amulets before lovemaking to prevent their efficacy being annulled.

Menstrual blood is the most powerful symbol of this terrible, destructive power. There are rules and conventions about avoiding contact with this fearful force. In the past there were many restrictions about female underwear. But Sondhi is possibly breaking new ground by making active use of this substance as a weapon.

Since the clip of this speech appeared on YouTube (search on "Sondhi"), contributors to several blogsites have concluded that Sondhi is "mad." Certainly he seems muddled. Clearly he is espousing narrow-minded chauvinist prejudices about Thailand's neighbors and about women. Possibly his efforts to defend the capital's sacred sites are a form of desecration. The police, Fine Arts Department, and mayor's office went to inspect the Equestrian Statue on the day after Sondhi's revelation, but no proceedings have resulted.

Sondhi concluded this part of his speech by asking: *"We're talking about saving the nation. Is this part of saving the nation?"*

How do his PAD colleagues and supporters feel about this new front in the fight to "save the nation" and about Sondhi's weapons of choice? Somsak Kosaisuk, Somkiat Pongpaibun, and Pibhop Dhongchai seem to be hard-headed rationalists. Chamlong Srimuang's Santi Asoke Buddhism belongs to a purist tradition which is highly antagonistic to saiyasat, though Chamlong might share some of Sondhi's chauvinism about male supremacy.

How far can someone go as a self-appointed defender of religion and nation? When does the weaponry exceed some frontier of acceptability—slingshots, used golf clubs, guns, menses? What comes next?

---

**P.S.**

<http://www.geocities.com/changnoi2/protection.htm>