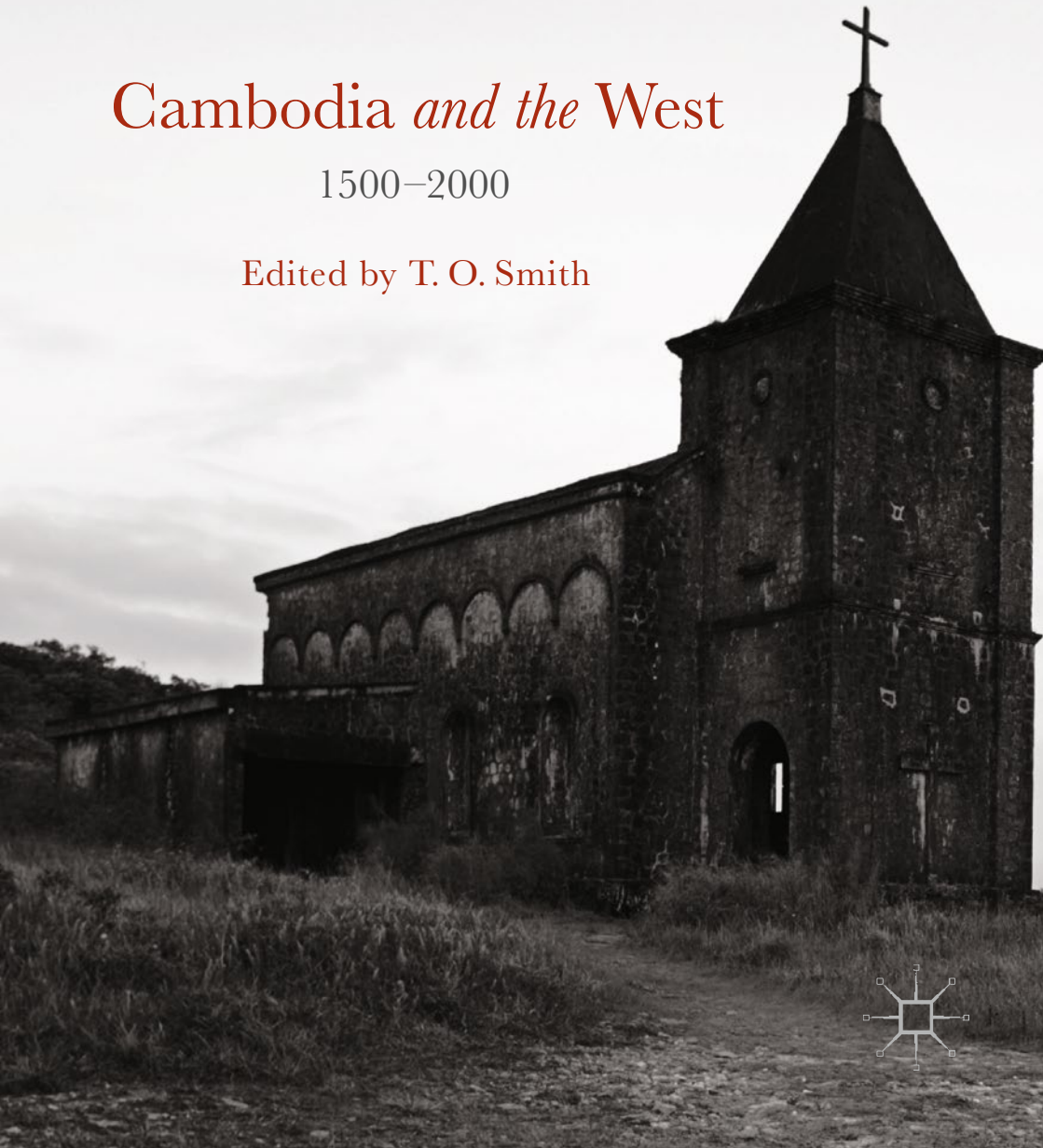
Cambodia *and the* West

1500–2000

Edited by T. O. Smith



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I would like to express my warmest thanks to all of the essay contributors for not only producing sterling chapters, but also assisting with other issues and queries as needed. Indeed, when at the last minute one contributor was forced to pull out of this project, Trude Jacobsen selflessly stepped into the breach and produced a second chapter in order to meet the publication deadline. Academia is increasingly fraught with family, teaching and boorish-administrative burdens; thus it is a pleasure to be able bring together a highly qualified and collegiate group of contributors to work on a project much bigger than our own areas of research. To this end, I also need to thank my wife, Elizabeth, for all of her sterling support and encouragement.

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photographer (https://www.iseas.edu.sg/centres/nalanda-sriwijaya-centre). I am very grateful to all of the copyright holders who have supported the use of information and quotation from their archives or publications in the chapters contained within this edition.

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The Devil's Milk: A Social History of Rubber (2011). He became interested in Cambodia during the Indochina War and considers himself very fortunate to have been one of David Chandler's graduate students at Monash University.

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CHAPTER 1

Cambodia and the West: An Introduction

T. O. Smith

Cambodia's relationship with the West began in earnest with early European attempts at exploration and informal imperialism in the 1500s. It has continued unabated (with the United Nations peacekeeping operations of the 1990s and the Khmer Rouge trials of the 2000s) up unto the present. Despite a number of sophisticated academic accounts, which reference Cambodia's difficult relationship with the West, historians of Cambodia's recent past have been understandably content to focus upon the rise and fall of the barbaric Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s as part of the wider American War in Vietnam. Consequently, little attention has been given to the evolution of Cambodia's longer and often troubled transnational interplay. This current collection considers Cambodia's problematic relationship with the West, not solely within the traditional context of the Vietnam War or the Khmer Rouge genocide, but as part of a wider story of Western imperialism, transnational history and globalisation from 1500 to 2000 and up to the present day.

Nevertheless, to shroud the themes represented in this volume with a title such as *Cambodia and the West* could be construed by some as challenging. This is because the meanings of the words 'Cambodia' and the 'West' are not easy to define. On the one hand, this work is part of a larger narrative of globalisation, where constructs of regional western and eastern civilisation clashed, intersected and combined during the last 500 years

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and created a global modernity.[1] On the other hand, the very mention of the word 'Cambodia' in the early twenty-first century evokes modern western notions of state formation. But the very hypothesis of Cambodia as a national entity is fraught with problems of its own (from both western and eastern worldview perspectives)—namely: does the concept of a Cambodian national identity and statehood hinge upon traditional notions of kingship and territory, or other societal and cultural constructs?[2]

Hence, although this collection sits squarely within the study of globalisation and competing 'national' identities, it attempts to define neither 'Cambodia' nor the 'West', but instead allows each author to explore a chronological timeframe and relevant themes as they deem fit. This enables the study to analyse Cambodia's interaction with the West from the early periods of European expansion, to formal French colonialism, British peace enforcement after World War Two, independence and modernisation during the early Cold War, the United States dominance in the region after the French imperial denouement, the United Nations peace process of the 1990s, and the Khmer Rouge trials that are still proceeding as this is written.

In many respects, Cambodia's historical relationships with the West are intertwined within a complex set of bonds with its regional and local partners. A habitual theme in this regard is how Cambodia used western assistance to counteract dominance by its more powerful Siamese and Vietnamese neighbours. This recurring theme thereby challenges the simplistic and often circumspect notion of Cambodia as merely a victim of regional circumstances, and reinforces Cambodia's role as an occasionally astute local (yet transnational) player.

Thus, in the second chapter of the study, Kenneth Hall analyses this complex rapport through the lens of the first Cambodian interactions with the West (the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Dutch) c.1500–1800. Cambodia's ensuing financial growth from these early exchanges certainly transformed not just the nature of the Cambodian elite but also the kingdom's commercial position in the region. Crucially, Hall's analysis of the Asian deerskin trade alongside other mercantile change demonstrates the existence of increased Asian revenues which were subsequently required for enlarged national bureaucracies and international power-plays (for example in trade, diplomacy, and military conquest).

Following Hall's study of early imperial flirtations between Cambodia and the West, John Tully and Trude Jacobsen consider the international dynamics concerning western influences during the French colonial epoch.

Tully focusses upon how the French believed that Cambodia could act as a buffer towards British activities in Siam, while encouraging French commercial dreams of improving access to China. Jacobsen's early to mid-twentieth century chapter examines French approaches to education and emancipation as well as the visual, performing and intellectual arts.

British influence in Cambodia is highlighted in T.O. Smith's chapter. This looks at British peace enforcement actions on the ground immediately following the conclusion of the Second World War. Smith also analyses British diplomacy between Thailand and Cambodia from 1945 to the restoration of the lost western provinces of Cambodia in late 1946.

Jacobsen and Kenton Clymer both tackle Cambodia's Cold War connections: but from internal and external perspectives. Jacobsen's decolonisation chapter (set against a French attempt of imperial rebirth and Cold War failure, before France's retreat from its Asian empire with the Geneva Conference of 1954) outlines Cambodia's independence, modernisation, corruption and increasing criticism from the West between 1945 and 1975; whilst Clymer's chapter explores themes pertinent to American diplomacy from 1958 onwards—the problems of Cambodia's Cold War neutrality, the advantage to the United States of the Lon Nol republic, the disastrous Pol Pot regime, which was followed by the diplomatic benefits for America of a Third Indo-China War and eventually a negotiated peace.

Finally, in contrast to the historians noted above, Kevin Doyle and Fergal Quinn conclude the study, from a communications studies perspective, by examining the United Nations peace process of the 1990s, human rights monitoring, refugee protection, international development aid, and the Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal of more recent times. In addition, Doyle and Quinn aptly close the current volume by briefly looking to Cambodia's future. In doing so, they consider what the outlook may entail for Cambodia's increasingly complex, fraught, and entangled relationships with both the United Nations and the West.

In many respects, therefore, the current volume touches upon the need for further study concerning Cambodia's difficult relationships with the West and its wider international history.

To this end, it is evident that comparative borderlands studies of pre-colonial and colonial Cambodia with other geographical areas of European expansion in the nineteenth century are missing from the current historiography. In this matter, comparisons between Cambodia and Kashmir might be fruitful. The similarities between both kingdoms on the verge of European new imperialism are striking. Both reflect indigenous societal

identities shaped by violence, which were often naively challenged by the European elites. Yet, this violence was systematically and historically woven into the local, regional and international fabrics of each kingdom—and it may have survived the illusions of each European 'civilising' mission. Nonetheless, in spite of the inherent parallels, many restrictions hamper a comparative Cambodian-Kashmiri academic enterprise. These prohibitions do not exist from a Cambodian Studies perspective (David Chandler, Penny Edwards, Milton Osborne and John Tully having already forged useful analyses of violence, kingship, patronage and the Cambodian borderlands societal identities before and during the early French colonial period),[3] but rather, further comparison is currently hindered by the haphazard logistics (and somewhat controversial debates) presently associated within contemporary Kashmiri Studies.[4]

Similarly, with the volume of secondary literature now being produced concerning the advance of the Cold War within Southeast Asia, plus the growth of recent archival access to previously closed and critical primary sources, a reappraisal of Cambodia's position in the western sphere of influence during the Cold War epoch clearly awaits future assessment and vitalisation.[5] In addition, the imminent completion of the recent Khmer Rouge trials will further provide future scholars with yet another rich seam of dynamic comprehension concerning Cambodia's international and economic interplay within wider regional and global geopolitics.[6] And finally, the current evolution of international concerns along the Mekong River will no doubt provide said future scholars with more historical, political and contemporary transnational complexities to dissect, inform and debate.[7]

In the meantime, the current volume must suffice as a link to further studies. In doing so, *Cambodia and the West* attempts to provide a bridge to future scholarship by bringing together an interdisciplinary team of established and emergent scholars working in the disciplines of history, political science, and communication studies. This has enabled the individual authors to contribute towards a historical-whole larger than our own specialist time periods and areas of research. Therefore, this book uniquely offers a reappraisal of Cambodia's troubled relationship with the West in order to understand more broadly Cambodia's troubled interaction with the West and the consequences for the Cambodian people.

Notes

1. A wider discussion of the long and complex evolution of globalisation as an academic discipline can be found in T.O. Smith, 'Europe, Americanization and Globalization', (review article), *European History Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2 (April 2007): 301–9. For an excellent introduction to globalisation see J. Osterhammel and N.P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).
2. P. Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 1–12.
3. For example: D. Chandler, 'Normative Poems (Chbap) and the Pre-Colonial Cambodian Society', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2 (September 1984): 271–9; D. Chandler, 'An Anti-Vietnamese Rebellion in Early Nineteenth Century Cambodia: Pre-Colonial Imperialism and a Pre-Nationalist Response', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (March 1975): 16–24; P. Edwards, 'The Tyranny of Proximity: Power and Mobility in Colonial Cambodia, 1863–1954', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3 (October 2006): 421–443; Edwards, *Cambodge*; M. Osborne, 'History and Kingship in Contemporary Cambodia', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 7, no. 1 (March 1966): 1–14; and J. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A history of the protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, (Oxford: University Press of America, 2002).
4. A useful assessment of the current challenges facing Kashmiri Studies can be found in C. Zutshi, 'Whither Kashmir Studies?: A Review', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4 (July 2012): 1033–47; likewise, some of the forth-right issues associated within the controversial nature of Kashmiri historiography can be seen in A. Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy Kashmir 1947* (Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1994), viii, and A. Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: the Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute 1947–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) iv; finally, a helpful introduction to Kashmiri identity and violence can be found in B.S. Singh, *The Jammu Fox: A Biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh of Kashmir 1792–1857* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), and Singh also discusses some of the problems associated with Kashmiri historiography, xi–xiv.
5. Email message, D. Chandler to the author, 11 March 2017.
6. For a recent analysis of the future direction of Cambodian Studies see T.O. Smith, 'Cambodia: Paranoia, Xenophobia, Genocide and Auto-Genocide', in C. Carmichael and R. Maguire (eds.), *The Routledge History of Genocide* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 122–34.
7. Email message, M. Osborne to author, 25 January 2015.

CHAPTER 2

The Coming of the West: European Cambodian Marketplace Connectivity, 1500–1800

Kenneth R. Hall

As Asia's historical development receives increased attention in the brighter spotlight allowed at the present moment by the confluence of newly uncovered and revealed art and archaeological sites, new analytical approaches and data collection methods, and an enhanced embracing of a multidisciplinary approach scholars are able to generate a more fully three dimensional sense of the region, its peoples, and the patterns of their lives. As we are at such a fortuitous moment in the study of Asian, and particularly Cambodian or Khmer historical studies, it is important to take a moment to examine the interactions, challenges, and regional and globally collaborative partnerships based at different points of time in the meeting of mutual goals, needs, and/or priorities, when done in the name of supporting existing institutions to better address locally perceived priorities, or in the context of externally originating and sometimes violently introduced commerce focused policies and approaches.

The following study provides an overview to the Cambodian kingdom's political, social, and cultural path in the sixteenth through eighteenth century via the lens of its economic interactions as crafted by the

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local courts and social elite and religious leaderships, and that was increasingly challenged by the increasing presence of privately and state-sponsored individuals and forces who quickly transitioned from marketplace collaboration to efforts at commercial manipulation, bullying, and often at times violent actions to meet both their economic needs and to confront Eurocentred expansionist political policies and conflicts. In an Asian context, the old pre-sixteenth century trade patterns disappeared and the sixteenth century saw the formation of a new trade pattern centred in the South China Sea and the extended eastern Indian Ocean, as wider East Asia became more the focus of the expansive international maritime trade network. The Ming China ban on China-based oceanic trade, long crumbling, was halted and diffused. Melaka, Macao, and Manila became new European maritime trade centres, and Hoi An displaced prior Cham ports-of-trade on the central Vietnam coastline.[1] While admittedly it is an artificial construct to use centuries as benchmarks, the present review is placed within such a frame only to help make it easier both for new readers to the region's economic historical development to gain a sense of how Cambodia's history was shaped by internal agents as well as external factors, as also to provide the well-read scholars of the more intimate and larger region a greater context for more nuanced factors that helped to mould Cambodia's identity as it navigated through an approximate three hundred year period of transformation, self-direction, and response to challenges that were confronting not only that kingdom but also its neighbours.

With such a purpose in mind, case studies are used along the way to help define several of the watershed or transitional loci in an effort to encourage the reader to use them as an entry point to further research and reflection whether on the issue of religious conversion by a Khmer king from Buddhism to Islam and its associated cultural, political, and social implications, commercial expansion, territorial invasions from the Thai to the Viet to the ultimate regional outsiders, the various mainland Western Europeans and their flotillas of merchants and mercenaries. In this wider Asian context, the Cambodian Phnom Penh urban centre was in the midst of this transitional era. It thrived amidst the many agents, especially Chinese and other maritime diaspora.[2]

Introduction

During the fifteenth century prior to the introduction of a Western presence Khmer civilisation shifted from the longstanding agricultural heartland north of the Tonle Sap 'Great Lake' to the eastern Tonle Sap and

Mekong River region, notably where the strategic Tonle Sap river linked with the Mekong River south of modern-day Phnom Penh. This transition was set in motion by environmental and ecological issues consequent to the failure of the longstanding rice-based agricultural system under the management of a networked Angkor court and Buddhist temple clerical elite.[3] New opportunities for Cambodian trade with Ming China in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries repositioned the eastern Phnom Penh (*Ponomping*) region in such a way as to control maritime commerce in the Mekong River basin to the south and north (see Fig. 2.1).

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century shifts of Cambodia civilisation to the south, in response to the above mentioned maritime trade opportunities with the Ming, are documented in twenty-one tributary missions said to have been sent by the Cambodian court to the Ming court between 1371 and 1432 that solicited Ming trade and military support against their evolving Thai rivals to the West. Historian Milton Osborne asserts that the fifteenth-century Cambodian elite became 'less rigidly tied to religious foundations and ceremonial duties of Brahmanical [clerical] bureaucracy [a legacy of the Angkor era], and eager to exploit the possibility of profitable commercial relations with China'.[4] As Osborne argues, revisionist histories based on recent studies of the Chinese and Western records of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century transitional era no longer assert the sudden collapse of the Khmer realm post-Angkor, but instead a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century transformation, as the still-viable Cambodian monarchical realm networked with the Ayutthaya court to the west, in an exchange of 'people, ideas, texts, and institutions that included a major migration of prisoners of war during the fifteenth century and the following incorporation of the western Battambang [which had previously been under Angkor control] and what is today the northeast Thailand region [as linked to the lower Chaophraya River basin via the Mun River Ayutthaya] realm.'[5]

This fifteenth- and sixteenth-century transition from an exclusively agricultural realm to one focussed upon regional and international commerce promoted the resurgence of the Cambodian court and crossover Buddhist temple monks (often members of elite families), who were foundational to sustained royal trading monopolies in partnerships with the Phnom Penh-centred regionally resident international maritime diaspora communities.[6] Despite the optimistic perceptions of major changes in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Cambodia social and economic order as characterised in both regional materials and in the initial sixteenth-century European accounts, subsequent seventeenth-century

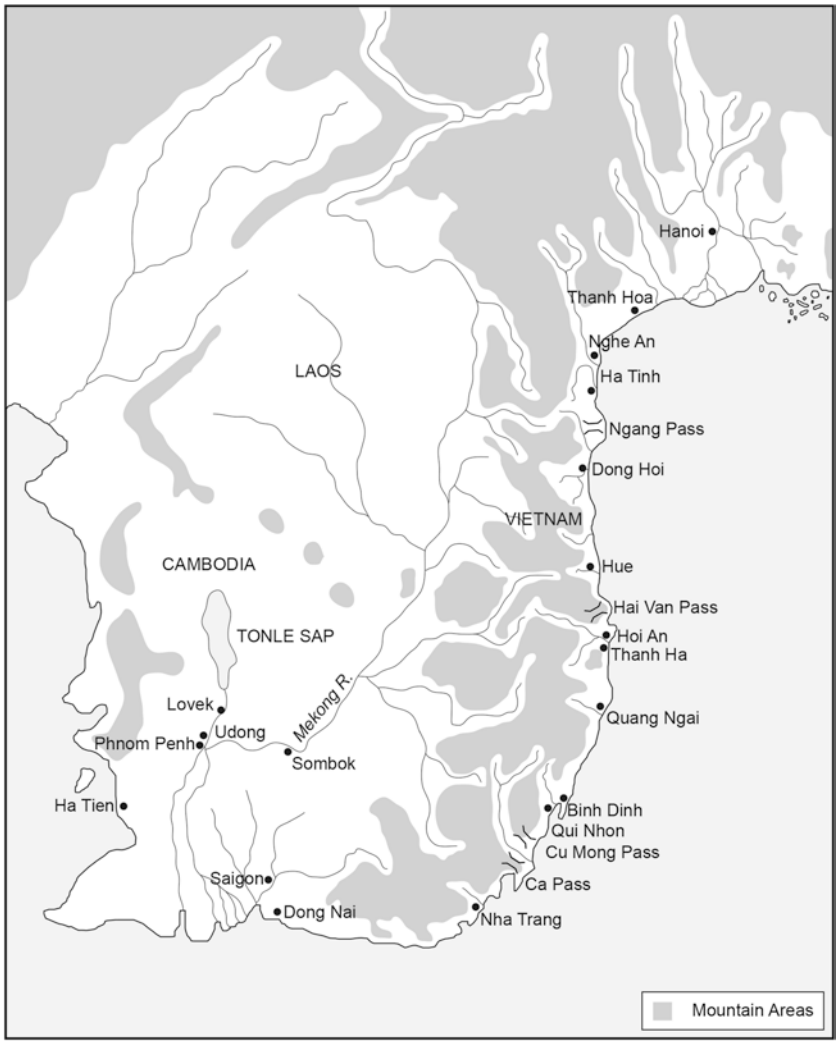

Fig. 2.1 Map of Eastern mainland Southeast Asia c. 1700

Western generated reports are not optimistic about the long-term potential of Cambodia's new commercially-based societal networking due to internal and regional issues that created a sense of concern for them as

newly arrived maritime-based merchants. According to these seventeenth-century Western records, the sixteenth-century Cambodian political, economic, and cultural resurgence was ultimately negated in the seventeenth century by renewed regional fragmentation consequent to traditional Buddhist monastic order and Cambodia court segmented alliances, as these contrasted to the neighbouring Vietnam and Thai regions to the east and west where regional authorities embraced innovative secular, economic, or religious centrality.[7]

Early Western residencies in Cambodia followed the Portuguese seizure of Melaka in 1511. In addition to Phnom Penh, sixteenth century Lovek [*Levek*] and Srei Santhor [*Sombok*] were sequential upstream Cambodian courts that were key intermediary provisioning centres surrounded by international diaspora residential clusters. Following several other intermediary court residencies Udong [*Oudong*] became the most prominent among the former Cambodian court sites in the eighteenth century. Ultimately Phnom Penh would become the primary urban centre due to its Mekong River commercial connections, sometimes residency of the Cambodian court, and the base of the most prominent Cambodian Theravada Buddhist clerical order. For their part, Westerners considered Phnom Penh to be the strategic Cambodia market clearing house for goods arriving from the upstream and downstream transported by variable local and international Khmer, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese diaspora communities.

Regional and international products were unloaded and loaded on local and international ships and boats that navigated the Mekong River and linked tributaries. There was a necessary portage around a substantive upstream waterfall north of Phnom Penh that required smaller local vessels to sail north from the falls to the Lao and northeast Thai regions (via the Mun River network), as these linked with several overland transit options via mountain routes and upstream riverine passages to the Vietnam coast.[8] The Cambodia emporium trade increased during the sixteenth century when a variety of Asian (Chinese, Japanese/Ryuku, Chams, Lao, Thai, Malay, and Indonesians) and Western maritime diaspora (Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch) settled on the riversides at or nearby Phnom Penh. There, the multi-ethnic merchant diaspora negotiated commodity exchanges that were ultimately subject to the Cambodia court administrators' review. The following flow chart represents Cambodia's international marketplace c. 1500–1800, an age in which significant related political and social changes took place in the Khmer realm (Fig. 2.2).

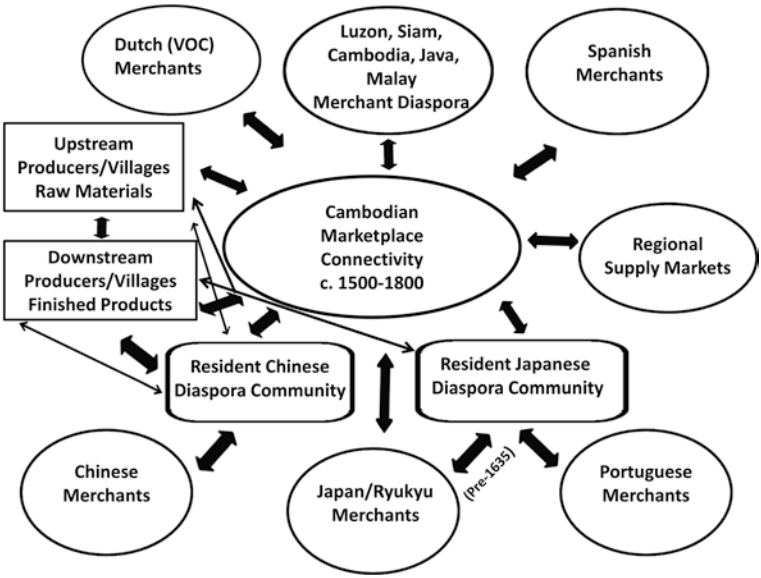

Fig. 2.2 Cambodian marketplace connectivity c. 1500–1800

The 1500s

Sixteenth and seventeenth century Cambodia lacks solid documentation, as remaining Cambodia-generated chronicle accounts of that era are idealised storylines rather than being rooted in verifiable and otherwise substantiated historical events. Thus Western, Chinese, and Japanese sources provide the initial proven and externally verifiable historical records and Western observations of contemporary Cambodia. The Portuguese commander Afonso de Albuquerque's receipt and forwarding of letters posted in early sixteenth-century, following his 1511 conquest of Melaka, confirm Portuguese contemporary contact with Cambodia. This is acknowledged in the return letter from Portuguese king Manuel I to Pope Leo X, published in Rome [c. 1512]: 'the envoys of the King of Cambodia, one of the most powerful among the Moors on land and at sea…' voyaged to solicit d'Albuquerque in Melaka. This correspondence offers the first reference to Cambodia in a Western source.[9] The following traveller's account *Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (1512–1513) provides details:

> The Kingdom of Camboja is found along the coast which, (going) in the same direction, touches Champa [the central and southern Vietnam region].

> The said king is pagan and warlike. His land (extends) far into the interior. He is at war with those of Brema [Burma] and Syam, and sometimes with Champa, and is subject to none. The people of Camboja are warlike. The land of Camboja has many rivers. On (these) there are numerous *lamcharas* [coastal ships] that often travel to the coast of Syam, to the region of Lugar [Ligor on the Bay of Bengal coastline of the central Malay Peninsula]. They join together in squadrons to (attack) all they meet. The land of Camboja (produces) a great quantity of victuals: it is a country which has a great number of horses and elephants.
>
> The land of Camboja produces much good quality rice, meat, fish, and local wines. And this country has gold from the Battambang [western Cambodia] area and Laos [in the north]); it produces lacquer, many elephants [for regional military and labor purposes], tusks, dried fish, and rice. Trade goods in Camboja (include) fine white Bengalla [northern Bay of Bengal] cloth, a little pepper, cloves, cinnabar, mercury, liquid storax, and red pearls.
>
> In this land the lords incinerate themselves [on a funeral pyre—as Buddhists] on the death of the King (as well as) the King's wives, and the other wives on the death of their husbands. And they have their head shaved around the ears as a mark of elegance….[10]

Moreover, Asian diaspora were most prominent and Westerners minimal in the eastern Cambodia marketplace until the 1570s, when Spanish and sometimes partnering Portuguese political initiatives enhanced the European marketplace presence. Chinese and Japanese diaspora were the initial intermediaries, who acted as state agents on the behalf of the Cambodian court and landed elite as marketers of local products in the South China Sea region and in return secured external commodities for local consumption. In the early sixteenth century the Phnom Penh regional marketplace dealt in imported yarn (mostly Chinese and Japanese silk threads), sulphur, mercury, copper, lead, and porcelain largely supplied by Chinese primary and Japanese secondary commercial diaspora who lived near Phnom Penh—said by Portuguese sources to number 3000 in the early sixteenth century.[11] In the following seventeenth century the Dutch attempted to control the southern Mekong River international passage to the South China Sea, but failed for various reasons including lack of resources and the support of the other resident maritime diaspora who tended to act on their own behalf rather than forming a collective commercial community.

The first assertions of Portuguese and Spanish diaspora residency and ongoing attempts to gain Cambodian court favouritism in terms of increased access to certain goods and lower prices are detailed in the 1590s records of

the Portuguese merchant Diego Velosa (sometimes known as Diogo Belloso in Western sources). He was said to have been a sometime resident and favourite at the Lovek court, in partnership with the Spaniard (born in Peru) Blas Ruiz de Hernan Gonzaloz (n.d.), who had travelled overland from the Cham coastline in central Vietnam to promote a potential institutional linkage between the Iberians and the Cambodian monarchy.

While the Portuguese had established diplomatic ties with the Cambodian court at the beginning of the sixteenth century, finally in the 1550s an ongoing presence at the Lovek court was established by the Dominican priest Gaspar de Cruz (c. 1520–1570), whose stay was short-lived as he was forced out by court-linked Buddhist monks, and sailed onward to Macao in 1557.[12] The Dominicans tried again and had two Dominican priests and a Franciscan friar dispatched, who remained in Cambodia from 1583 to 1585. The Cambodian monarch tolerated their presence at his court to solidify his profitable monopoly of trade with the Portuguese: as also a Portuguese friar, who arrived by overland transit from Vietnam and now ministered to a small congregation of Chams, Malays, and Japanese Christian diaspora resident near Phnom Penh.[13]

During the Thai-Cambodian War of 1583 the Cambodian monarch recruited Portuguese mercenary troops, an action made possible by his agreement to allow Franciscan and Dominican priests to provide religious services in Phnom Penh. Thai invaders in turn took these Christian clerics to Ayutthaya. Thereafter there are no recorded Christian clerics in Cambodia until the 1590s, when several priests who assisted as intermediary business agents at the royal court provided religious services to the numbers of Portuguese mercenary troops, supplied with gunpowder weapons, who had relocated to Cambodia from Melaka and Macao.

In the absence of Portuguese Melaka interest in taking advantage of this Cambodia foothold, the above mentioned Portuguese mercenary Diego Veloso, assisted by several resident Iberian clergy, solicited the Spanish Manila authorities to send Spanish mercenaries to Cambodia. In 1593, Spanish mercenaries Gregorio Vargas Machuca, who had arrived overland from the Champa realm, and Blas Ruiz de Hernan Gonzales, originally from Peru who had come to Cambodia via Manila, linked with Diego Veloso to convince the Manila Spanish authorities to send military aid and missionaries to Cambodia with promises of consequent commercial and Christian conversion returns. When the Thai commander took the Lovek court he sent Veloso and the Christian missionaries to Ayutthaya,

but Ruiz seized a ship and sailed to Manila to raise a mercenary force to invade Cambodia. He returned with three vessels and 120 Spanish soldiers who sailed up the Mekong River to Phnom Penh in 1596.[14]

Veloso, who had by then escaped from the Thai realm, commanded one of the three Manila-based ships, but wrecked it on the coastline south of the Mekong Delta. He subsequently arrived on foot in Phnom Penh with his remaining forces. The third ship was blown off course to the Melaka Straits. When the Manila-based expedition arrived they faced six Chinese junks carrying members of the Phnom Penh commercial diaspora community who attacked the Spanish ships but whom the Spanish were able to defeat. Following this victory, the Spaniards killed the reigning Cambodian king and burned substantial wooden buildings in Phnom Penh. This was part of the larger Cambodian-Spanish War fought between 1593 and 1597. In 1598, Ruiz and Veloso backed a new king, who granted them territorial rights over two strategic southern provinces on the eastern and western sides of the Mekong River basin, which allowed them to control the lower Mekong River passage into the South China Sea.

Subsequently Veloso tried to convince the Melaka and Manila-based Iberians to build a Spanish garrison in the southern Mekong River basin, and was able to secure financing at Manila. In 1599, therefore, Veloso sailed to Cambodia from Manila with a fleet of four ships. Two were shipwrecked in an ocean storm and the survivors retreated to Macao. Two ships sailed onward to Phnom Penh, and with the support of a Japanese ship piloted by a half-Portuguese mercenary sailed up the Mekong River to take control of the Phnom Penh and its Chinese, Japanese, and Malay diaspora communities. In reprisal for the subsequent sack of the Malay residencies, the Malay community united with Cambodian forces to lay siege to the Spanish quarter and their ships, and then killed all the Spanish, therein effectively ending Spanish presence in Phnom Penh and the lower Mekong River basin. In the aftermath the Spanish and Portuguese were no longer relevant in Cambodia and their intentions of making Cambodia a Portuguese/Spanish colony ended, although independent Portuguese diaspora remained as interpreters and traders allied with Cambodian monarchs. There was no subsequent interest in Spain, Portugal, or Manila to reassert a Straits of Melaka or mainland Southeast Asia presence, as this opened the opportunity for Dutch regional expansion following their conquest of Portuguese Melaka and strategic seventeenth century relocation at Batavia on the northwest Java coast.[15]

1600s

Seventeenth-century Cambodia was a major participant in Asian international trade, as in the 1600s Cambodia controlled the lower Mekong basin from Phnom Penh to the southern Vietnam coastline. Cambodia and neighbouring Thai Ayutthaya in the west and Nguyen Vietnam centred at Hue on the central Vietnam coastline conducted substantive trade with the Japanese, Dutch, and Chinese maritime diaspora. In 1637 the Dutch East India Company based in Batavia (today's Jakarta) established a trade centre outside Phnom Penh twenty kilometres south of the then Cambodian court at Udong. Trade in Cambodia was enhanced by the Tokugawa shogunate's policy of *Sokoku* (1635–1853), temporary closure of Japan to foreigners, notably Portuguese and Japanese overseas diaspora, and acceptance of the Dutch and Chinese maritime diaspora as designated maritime traders in Japanese ports. The Dutch were welcomed consequent to their lack of effort to proselytise their Protestantism, although numbers of Chinese diaspora active in Japanese ports and elsewhere in Asia had converted to Christianity.[16]

Trade access to Japan was critical to the Dutch, as their ability to trade in maritime Asia depended on their access to Japanese copper and silver bars, which were minted into regional coinage that was the contemporary medium of exchange in India and variably in wider seventeenth-century Asia. The Dutch especially profited from the sale of Cambodian forest products and deerskin hides in Japanese markets, as dried deerskins breastplates were a critical and virtually mandatory 'armour' for Japanese samurai as detailed below. In the early seventeenth century a new Dutch trade factory in Cambodia was adjacent to the Japanese residential community outside Phnom Penh.

In 1642 a twenty-two year old became King Ramathipothei (r. 1642–1658), whose Malay, Japanese, and Portuguese diaspora followers murdered his predecessor, several members of the royal family, and numbers of their court-linked supporters.[17] The Portuguese alliance with the new king was a threat to the Dutch, who were at war with Portugal globally. The new king also enjoyed strong mutually beneficial linkages to Middle Eastern and Malay Muslim diaspora, and to enhance his international linkage with the Western Indian Ocean he converted to Islam. In doing so, he purposely marginalised longstanding court-linked Cambodian Buddhist monastic orders and set in motion numbers of clerical and linked court elite murders. The Dutch resident-in-chief ('chief factor') in

Cambodia since 1637, Pieter van Regemortes, made an issue of the Cambodian court's allowance of local Portuguese to ship their merchandise to Japan on Chinese diaspora ships. In 1642, on van Regemortes' orders a Dutch ship seized two Chinese junks and their cargo at the mouth of the Mekong River. The new monarch officially demanded restitution, but did nothing as van Regemortes had bribed the Cambodian king. In March 1643 van Regemortes sailed to Batavia to solicit a commitment from the Dutch Governor Antony van Diemen (1593–1645), who affirmed van Regemortes' stature by naming him Batavia's ambassador to the Cambodian court.[18]

Van Diemen's fleet of three warships and over 100 soldiers and seamen sailed from Batavia in September 1643, arriving at the Cambodia Dutch trading post six weeks later with a letter from van Diemen to the Cambodian king requesting that he enhance Dutch commercial interests in Cambodia. If the Cambodian monarch refused, van Regemortes was authorised to remove commodities from the Dutch warehouse and declare war on Cambodia by blockading the Mekong River downstream to prevent seaborne trade from the South China Sea with Cambodia. In the subsequent response the Cambodian monarch requested van Regemortes' presence at the court in November 1643. Complying, van Regemortes and his embassy reached the Udong court's marketplace on their way to the palace, where they were murdered by the king's troops. Following, Cambodian military and Chinese diaspora seized the Dutch warehouse, murdered the warehouse workers, snatched the two Dutch ships that were anchored nearby, and imprisoned their crews. In all, fifty Dutch residents and soldiers were killed and sixty sailors jailed.

A third Dutch ship anchored south of Phnom Penh was boarded by Chinese diaspora offering beer and rice wine to the crew if they would come ashore. Suspicious, the Dutch captain seized the Chinese and forced them to admit that they were agents of the Cambodian king, and detailed the capture of the other two ships and the Dutch warehouse. Eluding Cambodian pursuit the remaining ship returned to Batavia at the end of January 1644, arriving shortly after word of the massacre had reached Governor-General van Diemen. Subsequently the four Chinese prisoners were executed following a public trial, and van Diemen dispatched a punitive naval attack on Cambodia and a blockade of the Mekong River downstream in March 1644.

The Batavia-based fleet sailed into a trap as the main ship arrived at the site of the Phnom Penh Dutch factory, but received no court recognition.

Withdrawing, the Dutch ships were temporarily trapped by pontoon bridges across the Mekong River south of the city. Sustaining significant numbers of casualties in hand-to-hand combat, several of the Dutch ships broke through the bridges, and retreated to the South China Sea and ultimately returned to Batavia. Subsequently Governor General van Diemen planned to send another fleet of ships in an alliance with the King of Siam, who wanted to restore Thai control over Cambodia. This did not however take place as van Diemen died in 1645, and his replacement considered such an expedition to be too uncertain and costly. He did request the release of Dutch prisoners, who returned to Batavia in 1647. Thereafter the Dutch presence and interest in Cambodia was limited.

1700s

The eighteenth-century segment of this study counters historian Anthony Reid's 1990 assertion of a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Southeast Asian 'Age of Crisis' that tends to be Euro-centric, basing its projected 'crisis' on the marginal European presence in eighteenth-century Southeast Asia. Reid attributed a mid-seventeenth century watershed that disengaged Southeast Asians from the world economy for the next three centuries.[19] Against this, historian John Whitmore and other eastern Asia and Southeast Asia specialist scholars have subsequently suggested the need for a new spatial understanding of Southeast Asia relationships between land and sea, coastal and inland regions, and among port cities and their hinterlands.[20] At its height in the eighteenth century, large regions of eastern Asia experienced protracted peace and prosperity on the foundation of a tributary-trade order at a time when Europe was continuously at war.

After the Dutch seventeenth-century failure in Cambodia, there was marginal European contact that has often been characterised by Western historians as marking the steady decline of Cambodia beginning in that era as Cambodia was caught between territorially and commercially expansive Thai and Vietnamese realms to their west and east.[21] Both intended to annex Cambodia and controlled international access to Cambodia and its valued commercial goods, as well as its waterways that provided extended regional internal access for exploration and expansion of political authority in various direct and indirect ways. As a result, a 'theatrical' monarchy was to be found engaged in court based ceremony rather than direct interventions to protect Cambodia's extensively rural populations.

Nguyen Vietnam authorities, based in Hue, had by then weakened and/or displaced the remaining rulers of the previously dominant Cham kingdoms on the southern and central Vietnam coastline and incorporated Khmer and southern Chinese diaspora populations in the Mekong River Delta. In doing so the Nguyen controlled eastern access to the Mekong River as well as the overland passage from the Vietnam coastline to the upper Mekong River that was populated by a mix of Khmer, Lao, Chams, and mountain populations. Similarly, the contemporary Thai Ayutthaya-based realm that controlled western Cambodia became the most prominent regional intermediary in Western trade with Cambodia. In 1772 Thai forces burned Phnom Penh, and subsequently controlled the Cambodian throne by the end of the century.[22]

Eighteenth-century Cambodian court-linked bureaucratic elite and Buddhist monks periodically raised Cambodian forces to block Vietnamese and Thai efforts to permanently annex Cambodia.[23] Despite Thai and Vietnamese threats and interventions, Phnom Penh remained the core of Cambodian identity. Eighteenth-century Cambodian kings and queens built and maintained a palace in Phnom Penh, renewed their links with the Buddhist church, and rallied troops to sustain Cambodian authority against their neighbouring rivals. Against the perception of a Cambodia in *stasis* and on the brink of collapse, recent revisionists report new Cambodian legal codes (*chbab*) in that era, which were taught to Cambodian children in Buddhist schools and became the foundation for subsequent Cambodian nationalism.[24] The code paired acceptable social conduct (and proper pronouns as appropriate to a person's status as speaker and recipient) with a societal hierarchy according to age, wealth, intellect, and clientage—as these were denied when the French colonised Cambodia in the mid-nineteenth century.[25]

Over the course of the eighteenth century Cambodia authorities lost their control over the middle and lower Mekong Delta and its Gulf of Siam ancient port of Banteay Meas (which was surrounded by a centuries-old circular earth mound that provided protection against annual oceanic saltwater flooding) as well as maritime shipping access to the early Funan civilisation in the upper Mekong River delta. The subsequent regional port-city of Ha Tien (see Fig. 2.1) on the Cambodian and Vietnam border in the 1730s became a Chinese diaspora international maritime centre mostly populated by 'Ming loyalists'.

From 1749 Ha Tien was incorporated into the Vietnamese Dong Nai province. The prominent 'Ming loyalist' Chinese diaspora had relocated

from south China to the riverine systems of the southern Vietnam coastline following the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Qing; in 1679, 3000 Chinese refugees arrived to settle in the Mekong Delta.[26] In 1761, 35 junks sailed from Canton to Southeast Asia, 30 of which were those of Chinese diaspora. There was also a significant coincident transition in the international trade, as previously China and Japan's maritime trade with Southeast Asia was in luxury goods, most notably regional sappanwood that was the valued source of a stable red dye—and deerskins that were exported for Japanese samurai consumption. This initial 'luxury' commodity trade transitioned to a bulk trade that centred on the export of eastern Southeast Asia rice to China, displacing prior Southeast Asia rice production and local culture that was based in subsistence agriculture.[27]

Cambodia to the northwest was a major source of buffalo and cattle draft animals that were vital to Vietnam's seventeenth and eighteenth century agricultural transition. The evolving urban centre of Saigon's prior name Ben Nghe, 'ferry for young buffalos', reflects Saigon's role as a destination for Cambodian buffalos, as also Cambodian cattle for ploughing fields that were foundational to Mekong delta regional agricultural transformation to the mass production of rice.[28] Recently international historians have distinguished this regional transition as coincident to the rise of a largely open South China Sea 'Water Frontier' maritime and wet zone, which stretched from the Vietnam coastline to the Sea of Siam, as the port of Ha Tien became a destination for Cambodian products as an alternative to prior riverine transport of upstream Cambodian goods to the downstream Mekong River Delta. In this era there was increasing use of firearms; in 1787 a French missionary, Bishop Pigneaux (1741–1799), purchased 'several cargoes of [gunpowder] arms and ammunition' in the south Indian French port of Pondichery to provision Mekong delta Vietnamese troops.[29] There was, however, continuing use of Cambodian combat elephants in regional warfare, as battle in the Mekong Delta region remained dependent upon the shipments of Cambodian elephants overland from Phnom Penh and Battambang.[30]

During this transitional era Cambodia was weakened by civil wars among Khmer royal factions. Two Khmer power bases still existed in the Srei Santor region on the Mekong River northeast of Phnom Penh (bordering Vietnamese regions to its north and east) and at Udong-Lovek northwest of Phnom Penh. Srei Santor's court head was known in contemporary records of the Vietnamese and Cambodians as the 'Water King', and the Udong-Lovek courts were headed by the 'Mountain king.'

The continuing Phnom Penh commercial, political, and Buddhist centre was 'shared' by the two courts. The 'Water King' was said to favour the Vietnamese on the eastern Water Frontier and in the 1670s and 1680s was strategically linked to the Vietnamese community in Saigon and the regional 'Ming loyalist' diaspora, who had taken residency in the lower Mekong River basin. The 'Mountain King' was linked to Siam in the west via Battambang (Fig. 2.3).

The Cambodian Legal Code (*Kram Srok*) of 1693 confirmed that the Udong-Lovek based government did not control the lower Mekong; the coastal areas of Ba Thac (today Soc Trang) and Koh Haong Peam Me So (present-day My Tho) were dominated by semi-independent local Khmer chiefs called *Okna*. Chinese settlers in the lower Mekong basin engaged in local conflicts, as in the 1680s Vietnamese joined the secondary Khmer king Aug Tan to defeat the Chinese maritime diaspora rival Yang Yandi, who invaded Cambodia in 1682 with 70 ships and 3000 men in an attempt to govern the northern Tien Giang River Mekong Delta commercial network from My Tho and Saigon to Phnom Penh—in contrast to the south-

Fig. 2.3 Udong Temple and Periodic Cambodian Court Centre West of Phnom Penh (photograph by author)

ern Han Giang River passage, and was assassinated by a follower in a subsequent 1688 invasion. Failing in both instances, the Chinese diaspora turned to South China Sea piracy, linking with a Taiwan-based maritime diaspora fleet to attack trading ships in the Mekong River system—the *Tien Giang* route from downstream Xoai Lap to Saigon and upstream Bien Hoa (which was technically Cambodian at that time) to collect shares of boat cargoes as 'protection money' in opposition to the contemporary regional rival Dong Hai Chinese diaspora network. Therein the first structured coastal and river network in the eastern Water Frontier was in place in the late seventeenth century substantially due to the relocation of the Ming-loyalist diaspora from southern China. In 1699 the diaspora pirates, backed by the central Vietnam Hue-based Nguyen rulers and led by the Chinese diaspora pirate chief Chen Shangchuan, invaded Cambodia and briefly occupied Phnom Penh in 1700.

In the early eighteenth century the Vietnamese consolidated their control over the Mekong River network; in 1753 the office of the Kinh Luoc Cao Man (Royal Delegate in charge of Cambodia) at Ben Nghe (Saigon) commanded troops in Bingh Khanh (Khanh Hoa) and others, as Saigon became the political and military centre of the eastern Water Frontier. A large Vietnamese expedition against Cambodia in 1754 annexed more Cambodian land, which gave the Vietnamese control of the Tien Giang trade route. In 1755 a new military base was established at the Chinese trading centre of My Tho upstream from Saigon. This consolidated Vietnamese authority over the main Mekong River waterways as the Bassac lower Mekong River branch south of My Tho had been attacked by Khmer troops in 1747, likely led by the Khmer 'governor' of the Khaet Bassak (Soc Trang) region south of the Hau Giang River, but was defeated.[31]

In all this ongoing territorial transition the Chinese diaspora communities maintained their autonomy. In 1755 Khmer troops attacked a Vietnam force on the Tay Ninh Plateau, where Vietnamese were expelling Chams who relocated to Cambodia. The Vietnamese retaliated by sacking Phnom Penh. At that time the Vietnamese controlled the Tay Ninh Plateau to the Mekong in the west, and the eastern half of the Mekong Delta as the Nguyen administered the east bank of the northern Mekong River branch. The Vietnamese court asserted its power in the Western frontier by taking the Tra Vinh and Ba Tach provinces (currently Tra Vinh and Soc Trang) in repayment for backing a new Cambodian king, as in the 1750s the Vietnamese were extending their power to the Western Water Frontier.

The base of the eighteenth-century Mekong Delta regional economy was rice production for the export market. A key factor was the Tay Son Rebellion against the Nguyen c. 1773–1802. Prior to the rebellion the Hue-based Nguyen Dang Trong government required 341 boats of rice (5000–6000 tons annually) for the export market.[32] During the rebellion rice shipments from the south were cut off, resulting in a devastating famine in central Vietnam, but freed southern Vietnam to market rice in the international maritime marketplace to the advantage of elite Vietnam merchants (*lai*), who managed large shipments of rice (in contrast to petty and 'land' traders). The southern Vietnamese *lai* benefitted from their access to substantial local hardwoods that were ideal for large boat construction.[33]

The Gulf of Siam became a factor in maritime exchange in the late eighteenth century with links to the Malay Peninsula. In the eighteenth century Chinese diaspora 'coolies' populated islands in the Gulf of Siam and became the first of the 'offshore production' centres.[34] The French horticulturalist and missionary Pierre Poivre, at that time traveling in the region, reported that southern Vietnam vessels were notable for hugging the coasts.[35] But the coastline maritime transit was productive in connecting the Mekong Delta to the Gulf of Siam, sailing with the strong coastal currents and making stopovers at small ports where they were not taxed on their rice trade for local products: most notably iron,[36] tin, and pepper. Ha Tien was during that century the only major port on the Gulf of Siam coastline, and had connections to the Chinese diaspora trading system on the southern Vietnam coast and overland and riverine connections to the Cambodian realm to the north.

Mekong Delta trade with Cambodia (referenced in contemporary Vietnamese records as the 'western protectorate') was dominated by Vietnamese traders, using a *Ghe be* boat with a greater cargo capacity than other river craft. The town of Cai Be on the Vietnam-Cambodia border, which remains a key intermediary small rural urban centre to this day, was nearby the production centre of betal nuts among eighteen networked regional villages. Another borderline product was red salt produced in regional Chinese diaspora villages, which gave salted fish a unique flavour. Red salt was traded for locally-constructed small Cambodian canoes made by hollowing out regional large trunks. These big trunks were also transported via the river network to the downstream Mekong Delta region, where they were used in the construction of large seagoing ships.[37] During the era of deerskin trade every boat carrying deerskins downstream from Cambodia was taxed fifteen to forty-five skins by Vietnamese tax collectors depending on the size of the boat.[38]

Deerskin Markets and Marketing in the Pre-nineteenth Century Commercial Era

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) was intent on monopolising Southeast Asia regional trade, but as noted above failed to do so in Cambodia where sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch Company representatives contended against the variety of Asian diaspora competitors. Key to VOC initial participation was their need to achieve reliable access to regionally produced and desired commodities to exchange for Japanese silver and copper—in contrast to the Portuguese, who had a stable regional port-of-trade presence initially based in Melaka and subsequently in Macao, and the Spanish, who used their Manila coastal urban centre to transition shipments of silver from their New World silver mines into the Asian marketplace. Import-export Spanish trade with China heavily depended on Chinese and Sulu Sea regional maritime diaspora.[39]

In consequence, the Dutch initially attacked Spanish and Portuguese ships, or captured Chinese ships to acquire silver and regional commodities, and thus were widely regarded as pirates by Asia's rulers. Subsequent Dutch control over deerskin exports from Taiwan and marketplace competition in wider Southeast Asia resulted in Dutch acceptance within Japan's marketplace, whereby the Dutch gained critical access to supplies of silver and copper from Japanese silver and copper mines that funded most of the Company's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Asian commercial activities.[40]

In the mid-1620s the VOC established a permanent port-of-trade base on the southwest coast of Taiwan, where they accessed Chinese silk for re-export to Japan as supplied by Chinese maritime diaspora, and local deer hunted by Taiwan's indigenous populations. Deer rapidly became the second most valuable commodity in the VOC's sixteenth-century trade with Japan, as Japanese samurai culture required considerable deerskins for what was considered a socially, culturally, and militarily requisite component of samurai dress and armour. Therein, the Dutch sought additional deerskins from Cambodia and Thai Ayutthaya.[41]

In the early 1640s the Dutch Company shipped roughly 100,000 deerskins annually to Japan. In contrast, contemporary competing Chinese diaspora shipping carried 92,710 deerskins from Cambodia to Japan in 1643[42] and 128,000 in 1644.[43] In 1643 the Chinese maritime diaspora attacked the Dutch factory in Cambodia, taking roughly 100,000 deerskins that year and in several years following for shipment to Japan.[44]

Clearly, as demonstrated in the following table, there was a newly forming and robust Asian trading pattern in the seventeenth century, inclusive of Cambodia as a major deerskin exporter.[45] The charted eras of diminished Cambodia deerskin exports are consequent to Cambodia's periodic warfare with their Thai and southern Vietnam multi-ethnic neighbours, who could restrict or confiscate upstream-downstream commodity flows (Table 2.1).[46]

Recent archaeological research in southern Cambodia's Cardamom mountain range has added significant regional documentation of contemporary deer hunting practices that provides a local dimension to the overview of sixteenth and seventeenth century regional deer hunting for export. In exploring early cave sites, archaeologists from the University of Singapore and the Royal University of Cambodia have discovered wall paintings of elephants that date from the era of Angkor civilisation and extend from the sixth century to potentially the early nineteenth century, as there is written evidence that up to the early nineteenth century Vietnamese rulers were still receiving royal elephants from southern Cambodia.[47] This is consistent with the known density of elephants in Cambodia during these and earlier times, as they were hunted, captured, and herded for agricultural use (clearance of fields, heavy duty lifting, development of irrigation systems, and in the transit of local goods) and service for military, religious, and governmental agencies and export to the China Sea region. To the surprise of the archaeologists, there were what are thought to be additional sixteenth- to eighteenth-century paintings of deer herds, as the caves appear to have at that time been used as a base for regional deer-hunters. These wall paintings coincide with the reported sixteenth- and seventeenth-century extensive southern Cambodia deer hunting that ultimately linked to the high volume export of deerskins

Table 2.1 Seventeenth-Century Junk Trade Shipments from Southeast Asia/Taiwan to Nagasaki (as per Japanese records)

	Northern Vietnam	*Southern Vietnam*	*Cambodia*	*Siam*	*Dutch*
1651–1660	15	40	37	28	2
1661–1670	6	43	24	26	14
1671–1680	8	41	10	26	38
1681–1690	12	25	9	31	23
1691–1700	6	29	23	19	18
1701–1710	3	12	1	11	2

from modern day Phnom Penh via the downstream Mekong River system to Japan (Fig. 2.4).[48]

Clearly the volume and profit of the international eastern Asia deerskin trade supported new regional urban growth, monetary and commodity marketplace opportunities, and the potential development of commercial, bureaucratic, and military agencies. The formation of 'national' gunpowder armies and navies depended on the training supplied by contracted international soldiers and mariners who advanced local use of the new military technologies. This paired with and empowered evolving Southeast Asia regional monarchies and corporate communities, as also the Dutch VOC corporate body, the variety of competing regionally-based merchant diaspora networks, and new regional land- and sea-based agencies. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries eastern Asia merchant communities gained wealth and powerful influence in their variety of local and international business and diplomatic engagements as demonstrated in the Western records of the seventeenth-century Cambodia court. Eastern Asia's initial embrace of global maritime trade was vital to its early neutralisation of Western imperialist ambitions, as the sixteenth- and

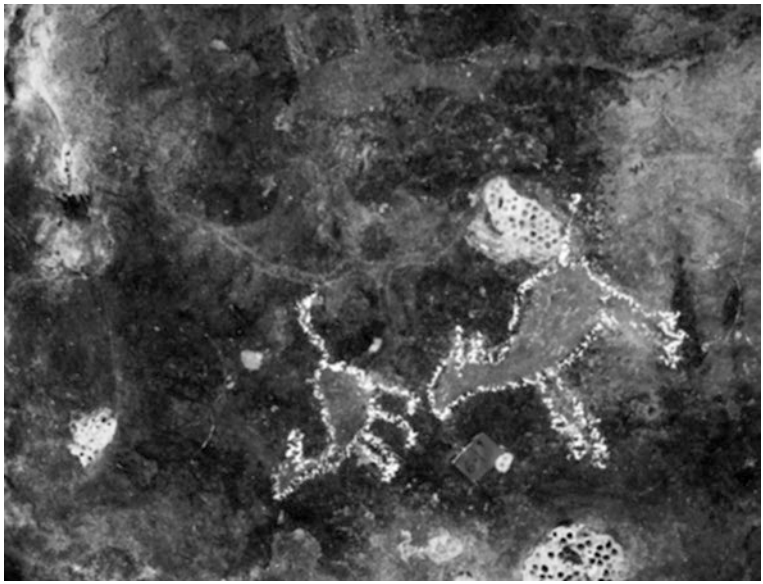

Fig. 2.4 Kanam Rock Cave Site wall painting of deer and deer herd, c. 1600–1800

seventeenth-century deerskin maritime trade and linked regional gold, silver, and copper exchanges demonstrates the vitality of the expansive VOC's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century eastern Asia competitors—to the detriment of the VOC's imperial ambitions.

Sixteenth–Eighteenth Century Cambodia in Overview

Figure 2.5 represents the overlapping functional linkages characteristic of Phnom Penh and wider Cambodia from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries as addressed in this study. From the fifteenth century Phnom Penh evolved as the post-Angkor Cambodian cultural centre over time, as it initially developed as a post-Angkor regional and international commercial and Buddhist centre strategically located on the upper Mekong River and adjacent to the Tonle Sap 'Great Lake' to its west. Prior to the

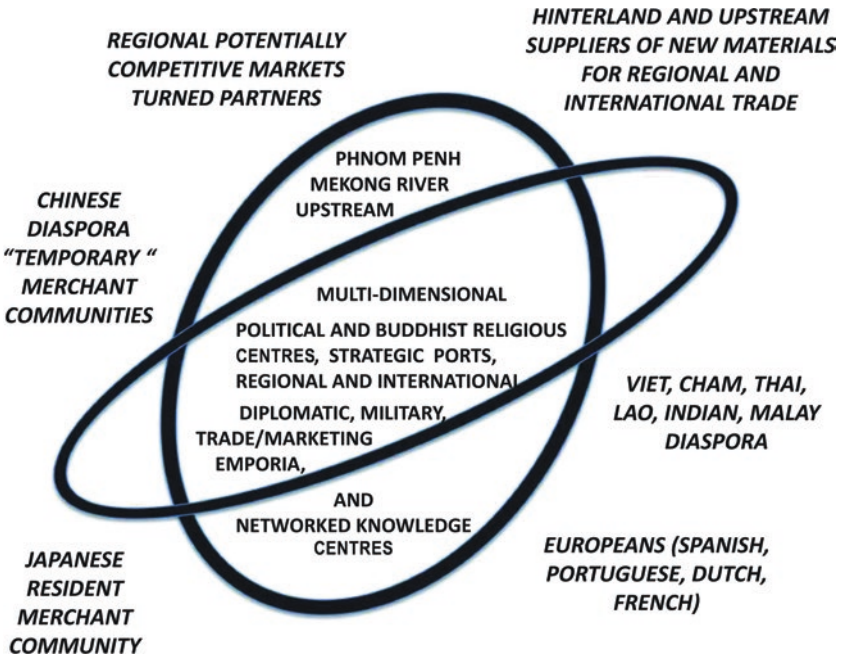

Fig. 2.5 Phnom Penh c. 1500–1800 linkages

nineteenth century, fluctuating Cambodian court centres were twenty to thirty miles to its west and north. For much of this era the Cambodian realm was in military competition against neighbouring Thai forces to its west, Lao to its north, Vietnamese and Cham to its east, and multi-ethnic Chinese, Malay, Japanese, and European diaspora to its south.[49] As such the diagram centres on Phnom Penh's evolution as a multi-dimensional Cambodian centre: as a political, religious (variably Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity), international and regional Mekong River upstream port-of-trade and marketing emporia, and networked diplomatic, military, knowledge, and eventual court centre. It was the recipient of hinterland and upstream supplies of rice and other agricultural production, raw materials including metals and regional ceramics (notably burial jars and every-day ware),[50] and especially in the seventeenth century a major supplier of deerskins that were shipped overland or via the Mekong River and Vietnam coastline network to Tokugawa Japan, in return for a variety of international products.

Conclusion: Sixteenth–Eighteenth Century Cambodia

The Khmer were not the only Southeast Asians to see the multiple and far-reaching advantages of expansion and control over Asian markets that attracted both local and regional merchants and buyers, but increasingly the international Japanese, Spanish, Middle Eastern, and Portuguese maritime merchants with their ships whose hulls were filled with one of the most highly sought after exchange media in that day and age—silver, whether drawn from mines in the Japanese islands or from half way around the world from the Potosi mines of the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru, which for a time financially backed both Spanish and Portuguese voyages of maritime-based exchange and exploration. Like the Khmer, the Thai, Lao, Viet, Ming, and Japanese from the sixteenth century sought to gain a strong foothold and monopoly over certain local Cambodian goods (i.e., salt, pepper, deerskins, elephants, textiles, etc.) in an effort to gain the requisite market-generated funds and related taxes needed to support increasing bureaucracies and expanding military ventures, and institutions that other existing forms of taxation could not.

Over the course of the sixteenth and then the seventeenth centuries the political and social-economic leaders of the Thai and Nguyen realms were able to one extent or another successfully forge flexible partnerships

(i.e., merchants, sailors, captains, clerics, etc., from other global regions) that ensured both their economic prosperity while also attempting to put the Khmer realm into a disadvantaged position by denying it those same resources. The intent of such a multi-prong approach based in part on the critical factor of controlling marketplace-generated revenue was to leave the Cambodian rulers, religious, social elite, and the merchant diasporic communities who traded in that realm in a weakened position. Cambodia's diasporic mercantile communities had to reposition and relocate themselves and accept less advantageous terms, and the rulers would be slowly cornered into having to accept less beneficial familial alignment via the modality of marriage alliances. As well, contemporary political treaties and agreements both led to and were a result of the ebbing of Khmer regional influences in the political and commercial spheres.

These patterns of identifiable Cambodian weakening and loss of regional political, military, and marketplace positions at the end of the eighteenth century were in place by the end of the eighteenth century, as documented in neighbouring Thai, Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese, and European sources. When combined with the increased presence of European merchants and mercenaries sent to locate and ship to various other regional and international markets the most important commodities the Khmer realm offered access to, as well as internal and regional conflicts that sapped its resources and diverted its focus, the Khmer realm's decline in the eighteenth century cannot be laid solely at the feet of 1500–1800 European mercantile and mercenary efforts in the Southeast Asia region. However, it is clear that the European presence was a strong post-1500 external contributor to Cambodia's diminished participation in international trade and its weakened political position in relation to its neighbours in Vietnam and Thailand/Siam, who were also attempting to use local agency to control and restrict where and when European traders could travel within their diverse polities.

The Khmer realm, however, over the course of the seventeenth into the eighteenth century did not concede its place in the regional commercial marketplaces, nor its efforts at politically inspired military expansion that was largely focused on reclaiming lands that its Thai and Vietnam neighbours had temporarily seized. Funded in part by the commercially generated revenue, Cambodia periodically reclaimed its traditional land holds from its Vietnam and Thai neighbours. These military struggles reflected in part the Khmer sense of a unique identity that was only further increased and emphasised as the commercial challenges for control over specific

commodities, such as deerskins, was lost to other regional competitors, particularly the markets of Ayutthaya and the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch merchants who attempted to create a dominant role for themselves in the important riverine and coastal ports-of-trade in post-1500 Southeast Asia.

One final point to touch on is the consistent present and re-imagined Khmer sense of identity being associated with place and purpose, particularly associated with Cambodia's new role in maritime commerce, as well as in spiritual matters and as a source of political authority as portrayed in Fig. 2.5. This concluding image represents the overlapping functional linkages characteristic of Phnom Penh and wider Cambodia from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. In the 1500–1800 era Phnom Penh evolved as the post-Angkor Cambodian cultural hub over time. It initially developed as a post-Angkor regional and international commercial and Buddhist centre strategically located on the upper Mekong River and adjacent to the Tonle Sap 'Great Lake' to its west. As reported, prior to the nineteenth century fluctuating Cambodian court centres were twenty to thirty miles to its west, north, and east. As such the concluding diagram centres on Phnom Penh's evolution as a multi-dimensional Cambodian centre: as a political, religious (variably Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian), international and regional Mekong upstream port-of-trade and marketing emporia, and networked diplomatic, military, knowledge, and eventual court centre. It was the recipient of hinterland and upstream supplies of rice and other agricultural production, raw materials including metals and regional ceramics (notably burial jars and every-day ware), elephants, cattle, and especially in the seventeenth century a major supplier of deerskins that were shipped to Tokugawa Japan, in return for a variety of silver and international products.

The alteration of the Khmer kingdom's commercial significance was, as with most events, not due to a single internal or external factor, nor was it singularly due to regional contests for power and resources with its neighbours or due exclusively to the increasing presence of Europeans. However, it is clear from the evidence presented in the above case studies that there was a tipping point in which the Europeans did play a significant regional role. The considerable resources the Europeans brought with them and used in an exponential fashion when other means of persuasion failed, namely their gunpowder weapons and silver from the Potosi Mines in the case of the Spanish and Portuguese and from Japan in the case of the Dutch, significantly altered the local equation of how commercial and political competitions were 'fought' in the marketplace, as well as on the

battlefield. Growing efforts at regional dominance by leaders of the Ayutthaya kingdom and of Nguyen Cochinchina in their own efforts to gain a more advantageous regional position meant that the Khmer urban centres, formerly among the more significant political, religious, and commercial centres in Southeast Asia, in the eighteenth century lost their importance as a major marketplace that could attract the more important merchant diaspora and itinerant traders from the larger region. As its commercial connectivity shrunk, so did the Khmer kingdom's political and military fortunes.

Notes

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3. Richard O'Connor, 'Agricultural Change and Ethnic Succession in Southeast Asia States: A Case of Regional Anthropology', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 54, 4 (1995), 976–83.
4. Milton Osborne, *Phnom Penh: A Cultural History of Cambodia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 92.
5. Ibid., 93.
6. David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2008), 96–117.
7. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680, Volume 1*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 3–228.
8. Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina and Southern Vietnam in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1998), passim; Li Tana and Anthony Reid, *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyen, Documents on the History of Cochin China (Dang Trang), 1602–1777*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), passim.

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10. Ibid., 109–110.
11. Ibid., 123.
12. Ibid., 20.
13. Ibid., 21–22; note 18, 129.
14. Ibid., 24–40.
15. Ibid., 40–45, 109–124.
16. Alfons van der Kraan, *Murder and Mayhem in Seventeenth Century Cambodia, Anthony van Diemen vs. King Ramadhipati*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009), 1–79; Michael Vickery, "1620' A Cautionary Tale,' in Michael Arthur Aung-Thwin and Kenneth R. Hall (eds.), *New Perspectives on the History and Historiography of Southeast Asia, Continuing Explorations* (London: Routledge, 2011), 157–166, who notes that Cambodia under the new Muslim king (1642–1659) 'Cambodia surpassed Siam in the dispatch of junks to Nagasaki,' against David Chandler's view that 'the Cambodia anti-Vietnam court faction had cut Cambodia off from maritime access [during that era]', 160.
17. Carool Kersten, 'Cambodia's Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the conversion of Raemeathipedei I, 1642–1658,' *Journal of the Siam Society*, 37, 1 (2006), 1–22; Mak Phoeun, *Histoire du Cambodge de la fin du XVIe siècle aud debut du XVIIIe*, (Paris: Presses de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, 1995), passim; Carool Kersten (ed.), *Strange Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia and Laos, 1635–44*, (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2003), passim; George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth Century Thailand*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1977), passim; Yoneo Ishii, *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia, Translations from the Tosen Fusetsu-gaki, 1674–1723*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 153–93; Sun Laichen, 'Saltpetre Trade and Warfare in Early Modern Asia' in Fujita Kayuko, Momoki Shiro, and Anthony Reid (eds.), *Offshore Asia before Steamships*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), 130–154.
18. Hoang Anh Tuan, *Silk for Silver: Dutch-Vietnamese Relations, 1637–1700*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 84–85; Alfons Van der Kraan, 'Anthony van Diemen: From Bankrupt to Governor-General, 1593–1636,' *The Great Circle* (*Journal of the Australian Association of Maritime History*), 26, 2 (2004), 3–23; Alfons Van der Kraan, 'Anthony van Diemen: Patron of Discovery and Exploration, 1636–45,' *The Great Circle*, 27, 1 (2005), 3–33.
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24. Gregory Mikaelian, 'La question administrative du royaume khmere d'apres un code institutional du XVII siècle', *Peninsule*, 35 (1998), 65–168; David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 105–112.
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26. Charles Wheeler, 'Missionary Buddhism in a Post-Ancient World: Monks, Merchants, and Colonial Expansion in 17th Century Cochinchina', in Michael Aung Thwin and Kenneth R. Hall, (eds.), *New Perspectives on the History of Southeast Asia*, 117–136.
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Mekong Region, 1750–1880, 9; Paul Van Dyke, 'Canton-Vietnam Junk Trade in the 1760s and 1770s: Some Preliminary Observations from the Dutch, Danish, and Swedish Records', unpublished paper, International Workshop on 'Commercial Vietnam: Trade and the Chinese in the Nineteenth Century South', Ho Chi Minh City, December 1999. See also Li Tana, 'The Late Eighteenth Century Mekong Delta and the World of the Water Frontier', in Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid, (eds.), *Viet Nam: Borderless Histories*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 69–82; Li, 'Ships and Shipbuilding in the Mekong Delta, c.1750–1840', 117–136.

29. Frederic Mantienne, 'Military Technology Transfers from Europe to Lower Mainland Southeast Asia, c. 18th–19th Centuries,' *Journal of Southeast Asia Studies*, vol. 34 (3), October 2003, 519–534. Equally Chinese, French, and English purchased weapons in Goa, Melaka, Penang, Macao, and Singapore. In 1791 the Vietnamese leader Nguyen Anh ordered 10,000 muskets, 2000 cannons, and 2000 shells. This was part of the Nguyens' response to the Tay Son Rebellion that began to gain ground in its efforts to overthrown the Nguyen rulers the year before.
30. Li, 'The Water Frontier: An Introduction', 10; Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants and Kings, An Environmental History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 261–297.
31. See the Mekong Delta period maps in Cooke and Li, (eds.), *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880*, 136, 157.
32. Li, 'The Late-Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth-Century Mekong Delta', 74.
33. Ibid., 75.
34. See Carl Trocki, 'Chinese Pioneering in Eighteenth Century Southeast Asia', in Anthony Reid, (ed.), *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 117–136, on Chinese farming networks.
35. Pierre Poivre, *Voyages of a Philosopher (Voyages d'un philosophe ou observations sur les moeurs et les arts des peuples de l'Afrique, de l'Asie et de l'Amérique)* by Pierre Poivre, Fortuné-Barthélemy de Félice, 1769, passim.
36. Li, 'The Late-Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth-Century Mekong Delta in the Regional Trade System,' 77. Iron was in constant demand in Vietnam. During the Tay Son rebellion, the Nguyen lords allowed Chinese junks to bring iron to the Mekong Delta in return for tax free rice.
37. Ibid., 79–80.
38. Ibid., 80, as Li Tana cites contemporary Vietnamese government records.
39. Using technology imported from China in the 1530s that increased extraction capabilities, the Japanese Iwami Ginzan mine was able to produce as

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42. Leonard Blusse and Cynthia Vialle (eds.), *The Deshima Dagregisters*, (Leiden: The Netherlands Institute for the History of European Expansion, 2001), 11, Aug. 11, 1643.
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44. Pieter van Dam, *Beschrijvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, Frederik Willem Stapel and Carel Wessel Theodorus van Boetzelaer (eds.), (s-Gravenhage: rijs Geschiedkundige Publicatien, 1927–54), Boek II, Deel 1, 429; See Weichung Cheng, 'War, Trade, and Piracy in the China Seas, 1622–1683', 421–422.
45. See Hall, 'Southeast Asia's Sixteenth-Century Deerskin Trade in Eastern Indian Ocean and China Sea Context.'
46. Li Tana, 'The Inner Region: The Social and Economic History of Nguyen Vietnam in the 17th and 18th Centuries', Ph.D. Dissertation, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1992), 70.
47. D. Kyle Latinus, *Analyzing Cambodian Rock Paintings: Ecology, Social Dimensions, and Networks and Supply/Value Chains*, Technical Report, November 2015, https://www.researchgatenet/publication/283624600_Analyzing_Cambodian_Rock_Paintings_Ecology_Social Dimensions_Networks_and_Supply_Value_Chains.
48. Kyle Latinus et al., 'The Kanam Rock,' *National University of Singapore Nalanda-Srivijaya Center Archaeology Report Series No. 2*, 2016, Fig. 17a, panel 6, used by permission and as the author of this subsequent study was a consultant in the photograph identifications. These cave paintings in the mountains of southeast Cambodia include previous elephant paintings, as this was a continuous longstanding site source of elephants for military,

agriculture, and export. Notably this site is near a major contemporary ceramic kiln burial jar manufacturing centre for the Cambodian marketplace.

49. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, op. cit.
50. *Cardamom Mountains: Body Jars and Cliff Coffins*, Nancy Beavan's exhibit at the National Museum, Phnom Penh, 2015; review in *Khmer Times*, 30 September 2015.

CHAPTER 3

Cambodia in the Nineteenth Century: Out of the Siamese Frying Pan and into the French Fire?

John Tully

At the turn of the nineteenth century, few Europeans were aware of Cambodia's existence. It sat on the periphery of their known world and such maps of the country that existed were highly inaccurate. The ocean voyage from Europe to Singapore took between fifteen and eighteen weeks, after which travellers faced a further journey of at least a week by Chinese junk to Kampot, followed by a one-week journey overland to the Khmer capital, Udong. The country they found was war-ravaged, economically backward and unstable. Indeed, the first six decades of the century were, with the exception of the later dystopian years of Pol Pot's 'Democratic Kampuchea', the darkest period of Cambodia's long history.[1] The kingdom was at the mercy of its predatory neighbours, Siam and Vietnam: Emperor Gia Long boasted that they were Cambodia's mother and father; but if so they were abusive parents. In 1863, desperate to maintain the very existence of his kingdom, 29-year-old King Norodom signed a treaty of protection with France. It was a Faustian bargain: while the treaty guaranteed the territorial integrity of the kingdom and promised to respect its customs and institutions, it proved to be a legal fiction.

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Incrementally, the kingdom's sovereignty was eroded as European ideas of governance collided with traditional Khmer customs and beliefs. The French *mission civilisatrice* was met with persistent passive and at times violent resistance. Norodom was a master of deception, agreeing to accept French demands only to quietly sabotage reform. In 1887, following a violent anti-colonial uprising, Cambodia was absorbed into the Indochinese Union and ten years later the King lost control of the Royal Council of Ministers. In the twilight of his life he was a spent force. The French waited impatiently for him to die in order that they could place his malleable half-brother Prince Sisowath on the throne and accelerate the reform process. By 1900, Cambodia was probably the French people's favourite colony, but whether the Khmers reciprocated the affection is a moot point. Be that as it may, the century had seen Cambodia wrenched from antique semi-isolation into the orbit of a globalising world.

A Deplorable State and Menacing Future

Cambodia was a desperately poor and chaotic place. The celebrated French traveller Henri Mouhot wrote in 1858 that 'the present state of Cambodia is deplorable, and its future menacing'.[2] Although only the size of Belgium, it contained vast, under-populated tracts of land; the result of a century of foreign invasions, civil wars, poor governance, famine, natural disasters and epidemics.[3] In 1795, the Siamese annexed the western provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap—the site of the ruins of Angkor that were so important for Khmer pride and identity. In 1814, the northern province of Melouprey went the same way and in 1834 the Siamese burned Phnom Penh to the ground. The Vietnamese invaded from the east in the 1830s and '40s and imposed harsh rule and assimilationist policies. In 1857–1858 the Muslim Cham people revolted against their Khmer overlords. In 1859, Prince Si Votha rebelled against his father, the ailing King Duong, and afterwards rose up against Norodom.

The dynastic and foreign wars were fought with ruthless cruelty. The Cambodian Royal Chronicles, for instance, detail the 'public executions, ambushes, torture, village-burnings and forced emigration' with which the Vietnamese suppressed the Khmer revolt of 1820. In 1834, retreating Siamese soldiers looted the country so thoroughly that Catholic missionaries observed that 'even the dogs were loaded onto wagons'.[4] The population was in decline. In 1862, one Western observer guessed that it was no more than one million,[5] while the British consul at Bangkok considered

400,000 a more accurate figure.[6] The economy also languished from the 1620s after Cambodia's natural trading outlet to the world was cut off by the seizure of the Mekong delta by Vietnam. By the nineteenth century, almost all of Cambodia's exports and imports were transported via the Gulf port of Kampot in Chinese vessels registered in Singapore. During King Duong's reign (1841–1860), Cambodia imported clothing and textiles, gambier, iron and steel, agricultural implements and opium. Its exports included rice, sugar, pepper, dried peas, pepper, hides, horns and tobacco, silk, dried meat and fish, salt, gutta-percha, gamboge, ivory, cardamom, beeswax, rosin, aromatic woods and livestock.[7]

Land travel between Kampot and the interior was arduous. Pirates infested the Gulf littoral and bandits and tigers prowled the roads. A British army officer reported that the only stretch of properly-made road was just before the royal capital at Udong. Even in good weather it took at least four days by elephant and eight by ox-cart to reach the capital. The officer tells us two French missionaries who had trekked overland from Laos to Kampot 'looked the very picture of death' after their ordeal.[8] Nor could travellers expect much help from existing maps of the kingdom. Philippe Vandermaelen's celebrated *Atlas Universel* of 1827 omits all mention of Cambodia and shows Annam stretching from the South China Sea to the Siamese border.[9] Likewise, his map of 'Camboge et Anam' [sic] does not show Angkor or the Great Lake and much of the interior is left blank.[10] Ambroise Tardieu's 1830s map of Cambodia and Cochinchina is more detailed, but still contains many errors.[11]

The Khmers themselves had little use for maps. Boundaries with neighbouring states were imprecise and estimates of distances between towns were vague, as were times in a country almost bereft of clocks. King Duong had half a dozen vintage clocks and watches but they served more as ornaments than timepieces.[12] The Khmers thought of their country as a city with walls and gates; the 'walls' being the mountains around the rim of the fluvial plains of the interior, and the 'gates' being the Mekong delta and the plains west of Battambang.[13]

Gathering European Interest

By the 1850s, the educated European public was more aware of Cambodia's existence, and the British and French governments were showing some interest in the trade and strategic possibilities of the kingdom. This was due to a large degree to the publication of a number of exciting travellers'

accounts of the kingdom. These included Father Bouillevaux's *Voyages dans l'Indochine, 1848–1856*[14] and the British officer's account previously cited. The book which made the single greatest impression on the European public mind was the naturalist Henri Mouhot's *Travels*, which was serialised in the mass circulation magazine *Le Tour du Monde* in 1860. Mouhot's book whetted the public's appetite for the exotic with an account of his visit to the fabulous ruins of Angkor.[15]

Mouhot was an unabashed advocate of imperialism who believed that the French acquisition of Cambodia would be in the best interests of both countries. He argued that 'European conquest, abolition of slavery, wise and protecting laws, and experience, fidelity, and scrupulous rectitude in those who administer them, would alone effect the regeneration of the state [of Cambodia]…'[16] The supposed degeneracy and/or childishness of the Khmers was a trope of the colonial period and beyond. Mouhot refused to believe that the ancestors of the modern Khmers could have built Angkor and later writers concocted fanciful hypotheses to explain its origins. One insisted that it was built by immigrants from India and another believed the discovery of an ancient coin suggested an ancient Roman presence. Mouhot himself thought it significant that local peasants told him it had been built by giants. Myth was piled upon myth until it became an accretion of reified 'fact'. Although Mouhot never claimed to have 'discovered' Angkor (and the Khmers had never forgotten it), the belief took root that he had blundered upon the 'forgotten' city by accident while chasing butterflies in the jungle.

The myth bolstered the *mission civilisatrice*, which held that 'enlightened' Europeans had a duty to lift up the Khmers from sloth and backwardness. In a sense, when its archaeologists began restoration of the ruins, France usurped Angkor as its own achievement and trumpeted this view to the world. Thus, while Cambodia was small and relatively unimportant economically to France, it featured prominently in the nineteenth and twentieth century *expositions universelles* visited by tens of millions of European citizens. At the 1900 Paris Exhibition for example, the replica of Angkor Wat was dwarfed only by the Algerian pavilion, which showcased France's achievements in an older, larger and richer colony.[17] This 'usurpation' led to the plunder of the ruins for French self-glorification. Huge quantities of Angkorean stonework were removed to France during the 1890s, in particular by Louis Delaporte, whose enormous trophies were housed in the Musée Guimet in Paris.[18] On the other hand, many French officials and experts were genuinely concerned to preserve Angkor from decay and had great sympathy for the Cambodians.

Mammon jostled with Glory in French designs on Cambodia. According to Mouhot, annexation of the kingdom would prove lucrative, as it was rich in 'gold, argentiferous lead, zinc, copper, and iron', and blessed with abundant fertile land. Influential figures back in Europe shared his opinion. In 1853, an anonymous British writer claimed that 'France has her eyes on Anam and Siam' and noted that the 'fertile champaign country' of Cambodia was a prize ripe for the taking. Anticipating a wave of imperialist expansion, the author insisted that the 'very instinct' of the West for 'room and trade or domination' would be given free play because 'none of the Oriental races are capable of either governing themselves or of resisting Europeans…'[19]

The Spur of Inter-imperialist Rivalry

In 1858, France began the invasion of Cochinchina, which lies close to the eastern 'gate' of Cambodia. This placed the question of the kingdom's annexation on the colonial agenda. Mouhot had hinted that France's great rival, 'Perfidious Albion', was interested. 'England, that great nation for colonies, could soon make of Lower Cochin China and Cambodia a vast cotton plantation,' he warned, and asked 'why should we not be our own purveyors?' His hopes and fears were shared by powerful figures back in France who were aware of growing British interests in Southeast Asia. In 1822, the Siamese recognised British sovereignty over the southern parts of the Malay Peninsula and four years later they signed the Burney Treaty of trade and friendship. The tie was further cemented by the Bowring treaty of 1855. Given that Cambodia was a tributary state of Siam, the implications of the 1855 treaty must have worried the newly-established French naval authorities in Cochinchina. Saigon lies less than 80 kilometres from today's Cambodian border and most of Cambodia's foreign trade was in the hands of Chinese traders and carried from Kampot in British-registered vessels. On the other hand, if France annexed the kingdom, it would form a buffer against the British sphere of influence.

The British most certainly *were* interested in Cambodia. In 1850, the high-ranking diplomat Sir James Brooke told Lord Palmerston that Cambodia was the 'Keystone' [sic] of British policy in Indochina and stressed the possibility of establishing a 'profitable trade' with the kingdom.[20] The following year, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Colonel William Butterworth, suggested that the port of Kampot might be a 'wedge' through which British trade could penetrate the interior of Indochina.[21] Brooke and Butterworth agreed that King Duong was 'ready

to throw himself under the protection of *any* European nation, who will save him from his implacable enemies, the Siamese and the Cochin Chinese'. [Emphasis added.] But whereas Brooke advised his superiors to sign a treaty guaranteeing Cambodia's independence, Butterworth cautioned that Siam and Vietnam might use British meddling as a pretext to grab large chunks of Cambodian territory. In any case, Siam was perceived as more important than Cambodia for British commercial and strategic interests. After 1863, the British accepted the existence of the French Protectorate provided it did not threaten the independence of Siam.[22]

Meanwhile, the French showed desultory interest in Cambodia (and Indochina as a whole) throughout the 1850s. As James Brooke had observed, King Duong was ready to accept any European offer of protection, but France, like Britain, was hesitant. In 1853—probably on the advice of Monsignor Jean-Claude Miche, the vicar-apostolic of the Catholic mission in Cambodia and Laos—King Duong sent gifts to Napoleon III and requested the negotiation of a treaty of friendship. Three years later, he reiterated his plea and this time the Emperor charged Charles de Montigny, French plenipotentiary to Siam and China, with negotiating an agreement. The mission was unsuccessful. The Siamese insisted that Cambodia should remain under their suzerainty and as France had concluded a treaty of friendship and trade with them, Montigny was reluctant to pursue the matter. Although he landed at Kampot and conferred with high ranking Cambodian mandarins, Montigny refused to make the gruelling 160 kilometre trek to Udong to meet with Duong.[23] There the matter rested, despite a further approach by King Duong in which he vainly requested French help to regain the lower Mekong territories annexed by Vietnam.[24]

Growing French Interest

France's piecemeal annexation of Vietnam from the late 1850s gave fresh impetus to the idea of a Cambodian treaty. After King Duong's death in 1860, his kingdom relapsed into chaos.[25] Ang Vodey, his eldest son, who was in line for the throne, faced rebellions led by his younger half-brothers, Si Votha and Sisowath. (After his coronation, Ang Vodey was to reign as King Norodom.) During the disturbances, mobs attacked Catholic missionaries and their flocks and the following year the French dispatched a steam gunboat up the Mekong to Udong to protect them.[26] The appearance of a foreign gunboat on the waters of an ostensibly sovereign state was a harbinger of things to come. In the same year, the French consul at

Bangkok, Count François de Castelnau, pressured the Siamese to accept a French treaty with Cambodia. As in 1856, the Siamese demurred, but this time, the French were reluctant to let the matter drop.

By 1862, France was fortifying Saigon and planning a huge dry dock for the repair of its battle fleet. From this fortress, Vice-Admiral Louis Adolphe Bonard, the Governor of Cochinchina, began the annexation of the remaining southern Vietnamese provinces.[27] The Saigon admirals had gained a dynamic ally with the appointment of Justin Prosper Chasseloup-Laubat as Minister for the Navy. The Minister was an ardent imperialist committed to a global empire guarded by a powerful navy. Although much of the French public was indifferent to colonial expansion, France was in a race, willy-nilly, to obtain them before their competitors did.

The Minister and the admirals were not blind to the economic potential of new colonies. As an anonymous British enthusiast had predicted back in 1853, Europe was on the brink of an economically-based imperialist wave:

> in the present state of the world—with the want of room or of new emporiums and markets felt in Europe … no country on the globe will be allowed to segregate itself from the rest of mankind, to close its ports and deny trade to all foreign ships … or to hermetically seal the interior of the land, and prohibit the exportation of all its produce, and even of commodities which are at present utterly useless to the natives.[28]

In the case of Indochina, 'naval imperialism' came first; conquest would precede capital investment. French capitalists were lukewarm about investing in Asia; they could bank on a greater return on their investments in their North African possessions and in Europe itself. French investment in the Far East was dwarfed by that of Britain. In 1840, total French Far Eastern trade amounted to 40.5 million francs, compared with British investment in China alone of 310 million francs.[29] With Cochinchina secured, the Minister and his admirals could turn their attention to neighbouring Cambodia. While opposition from Siam and Britain was possible, they did not expect any from Cambodia itself. King Duong had practically begged for French protection and militarily the kingdom was of no consequence.

The Naval Missions to Cambodia

In 1862, Governor Bonard cruised by gunboat up to Udong and over the Great Lake to Siem Reap and Angkor. This was the first time, he crowed, that the French tricolour had been seen on that remarkable inland sea.[30]

Impressed by what he saw, he commissioned Andrew Spooner, a precocious 21-year-old French-American businessman, to report on the commercial possibilities of the kingdom. Spooner was part of a 40-man naval expedition, which visited Phnom Penh, Udong, Stung Treng and Kompong Chhnang. Spooner presented Governor Bonard with a sober account of Cambodia's economic potential along with accurate demographic, political, and topographical detail.[31] Spooner has left an invaluable picture of Cambodia on the eve of colonisation. It was an unkempt place, he reported. The Khmers lived in palm houses on stilts in villages along the watercourses, shunning the wild interior, which was full of elephants and tigers. The rivers and lakes teemed with fish, and crops such as cotton, tobacco, pepper, rice and cardamom were grown, along with mulberries for the silk industry. Spooner's conclusion was restrained, yet encouraging: 'It is more or less obvious that France, by a protectorate desired by the Cambodians themselves, could at no cost double the importance and wealth of Lower Cochinchina'.[32] His findings were confirmed shortly afterwards by Ernest Brière d'Isle, a 20-year-old naval lieutenant.[33] The stage had been set for annexation.

The 1863 Treaty: A Conquest of Hearts?

In 1863, Admiral Pierre de Lagrandière sailed up to Udong to press Ang Vodey to conclude a treaty. His mission was successful. The resulting treaty comprised nineteen articles, plus one additional clause. Napoleon III would grant protection to Ang Vodey; the French would appoint a *Résident* or Consul to regulate the affairs of France in the kingdom; and the Khmers would accord him the rank and privileges of a high mandarin. French citizens could travel and settle anywhere within the kingdom and Cambodians were entitled to reciprocal rights within the French Empire. French scholars were free to conduct research anywhere within the kingdom. There would be no customs duties on imports or exports carried on French ships. The Catholic Church was given the right to proselytise and to erect schools, churches, and other religious buildings. The French were authorised to station a garrison and coaling station at Phnom Penh, and to cut forest timbers for building and repairing vessels. Finally, Lagrandière agreed to provide Ang Vodey with a steam vessel, which would be skippered, crewed, and maintained by European sailors and mechanics at French expense. The Admiral returned on 11 August 1863, and the treaty was signed to await ratification by Napoleon III, which was done in April of the following year.[34]

The agreement seemed innocuous and apparently guaranteed Cambodian sovereignty and the rights of the King. Pierre Pasquier, the Governor-General of French Indochina, later claimed that:

> The ruler of Cambodia himself placed his kingdom under the French Protectorate without any pressure being put on him … and the Upper Mekong became French without the firing of a single shot, according to the expression that today is famous, this was a 'conquest of hearts'…[35]

This was less than honest. Vodey claimed that he was *forced* into signing after he had been given insufficient time to read Miche's Khmer translation of the French text. While he had desired a treaty, the Prince was really manoeuvring desperately to play off France and Siam in order to save his own throne and what independence his kingdom retained.

His trials were not over. The Siamese were furious, and fearful of their wrath, the hapless king continued his pathetic double game. In mitigation, it should be remembered that Napoleon III had not yet ratified the treaty with France and if he failed to do so, Vodey would have been left in an extremely vulnerable position. He had spent much of his early life in Bangkok as a hostage and retained a healthy respect for Siamese power. In March 1864, the French caught him sneaking off for Bangkok, where he planned to stage his coronation. In response, marines occupied his palace and a gunboat opened fire (probably with blanks) as a demonstration of French power. *Résident* Doudart de Lagrée also threatened him with exile if he again disobeyed orders. In the event, Vodey was crowned as King Norodom at Udong on 3 June, with Siamese dignitaries jointly overseeing the ceremony with the French. The King's intrigues were not yet finished, however. A little over two months later, the Singapore *Straits Times* disclosed that back in December 1863, he had secretly signed another treaty with King Mongkut of Siam! This affirmed his status as a Siamese vassal and ceded two additional provinces to Siam, thus violating the terms of the pending treaty with France.[36]

Norodom's duplicity gave the French the pretext they needed to impose their rule over the kingdom. The British advised Mongkut to accept the French Protectorate over his former vassal and in 1867 Siam formally recognised France's suzerainty. In return, the French agreed to accept Siamese sovereignty over Cambodia's western provinces (a promise they did not keep). Like a naughty schoolboy, Norodom was forced to apologise to Governor de Lagrandière for his disobedience. Shortly

afterwards, French gunboats and marines were dispatched to quell the still-smouldering rebellions that had plagued his first years as king. While this saved his throne, it underlined his vassal status.

River Road to China

For all intents and purposes, Cambodia was now a French colony (albeit an undigested one). The Saigon admirals had created a buffer state against the British sphere of influence in Siam and if Andrew Spooner was right, Cambodia might prove to be a valuable economic asset. The stakes, however, promised to be even higher. The French believed that the Mekong might prove to be a 'River Road to China' which, if secured, would open up the interior of that vast country to French trade and influence. In 1866, the admirals commissioned a scientific and geographical expedition to explore the feasibility of the Mekong route. The mission was to prove a gruelling odyssey across terrain hitherto little known to Europeans. The splendidly-monikered Ernest Marc Louis de Gonzague Doudart de Lagrée, France's first *Résident* in Cambodia, was put in command. Lagrée was an intelligent and resourceful man, but he was cursed with a sickly constitution. He died in Yunnan and left his deputy, Francis Garnier, to lead the expedition overland to Shanghai. He died knowing that the dream of a 'great game' in Central Asia was a mirage. Just inside the Laotian border, navigation was blocked by the spectacular Khône Falls, a ten-kilometre reach of cataracts and islands. Curiously, the French seem to have forgotten that the falls were clearly marked on existing maps, including Vandermaelen's. Although the French later built a light railway around the falls, their grandiose geopolitical dreams had been dashed forever.[37]

The Pou Kombo Revolt

It was also clear that France had taken an unstable country under its wing. While Cambodia's external threats had been neutralised, the country was still racked with internal instability and it threatened to become a drain on the French public purse. In 1866, a serious anti-dynastic revolt broke out in the country's multi-ethnic eastern districts. A 48-year-old ex-monk called Pou Kombo raised a motley force of Khmer peasants and *Montagnard* tribesmen, leavened with Vietnamese discontents, and routed the royal Cambodian army. To the disgust of the French, Norodom revealed himself

as an ineffectual commander. Although command passed to his more competent half-brother Sisowath, Pou Kombo proved to be a resourceful foe. At the height of the rebellion, he commanded 10,000 irregulars who laid siege to Phnom Penh, the new capital. The French were forced to send a 1000-strong force, equipped with gunboats and artillery, to crush them. Eventually, Pou Kombo was captured and his severed head delivered to Phnom Penh in a bag of salt, but had not the French intervened, Norodom would probably have been overthrown.[38]

The sheer scale and ferocity of the revolt shocked the French; *Résident* Jean Moura described it as an 'immense revolution'.[39] Ominously for the French, it had distinct anti-colonialist overtones. It had begun when the rebels killed a French administrator in Vietnam's Tayninh province and was only crushed by French troops under the ruthless Captain Duclos. While Pou Kombo's claims to royal blood were bogus, he was a forceful and charismatic leader and it is unlikely that he would have meekly accepted the French presence had he defeated Norodom's army and taken the crown. After his death in 1867, his followers melted into the jungles and kept up a sporadic resistance.[40]

In the aftermath of the Pou Kombo uprising, the French kept an unobtrusive profile. There were only a handful of French officials and military personnel in the country, along with a few traders and missionaries, most of whom were based in Phnom Penh. The admirals' attention was in any case focused on expansion and consolidation in neighbouring Vietnam. Later, many Frenchmen would look back with nostalgia to what appeared to have been a 'heroic age', in which officials such as Jean Moura, Etienne Aymonier, Francis Garnier and Doudart de Lagrée learned the Khmer language, explored the country, and began to research its customs and history.[41] They were to grow increasingly exasperated, however, with the corruption and wastefulness of the King and his corps of mandarins, who seemed to regard public office only as an opportunity for personal plunder. The French were also puzzled by what they saw as the child-like fecklessness of the peasants who made up the majority of the population. Many would have agreed with Henri Mouhot's disparagement of them as lazy, vain, cowardly, and miserable people who contrasted starkly with their distant ancestors who had created the wonders of Angkor.[42] In time, such views were reified: the French saw what they wanted to see with little understanding of Khmer culture. Nevertheless, prudence dictated ruling with a light hand. This was to change after 1870, when events in distant France precipitated a sharp change in colonial policy.

Colonialism and the Third Republic

The Second Empire collapsed after the rout of the French armies by the Prussians at Sedan in September 1870. Napoleon III went into exile and the Third Republic was declared. Dedicated imperialist politicians such as Jules Ferry entered government, and were supported by public intellectuals such as Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, an economist who candidly advocated systematic colonial conquest and economic exploitation.[43] The new political climate gave the French administrators in Cambodia fresh resolve to smash what philologist Gustave Janneau later described as the 'worm-eaten debris'[44] of the Cambodian state.

From the French point of view Norodom was a parasitical wastrel who, together with his huge entourage, gobbled up 800,000 piastres per annum[45] or most of Cambodia's public finances.[46] (The piastre, issued by the Banque de l'Indochine in Hanoi, was worth five francs.) The King delegated day-to-day governance to his ministers and spent much of his time drinking colossal amounts of wine and spirits, smoking cigars and opium, gambling, and dallying in his enormous and ever-expanding harem, which consisted of 400–500 wives and concubines. When his children and other family members and retainers were included, as many as 1500 people lived in the royal compound, all sponging off the public purse.[47] He contributed nothing to the administrative costs of the kingdom.[48] The administration of the kingdom was ramshackle and inefficient. The country was divided into 57 provinces, each controlled by a member of the royal family or a high mandarin. Again, there was little differentiation between public and private revenues and the greed of the mandarins was modified only by the inefficiency of the bureaucracy. In the 1870s, Governor Jules Krantz estimated that the total yearly Cambodian tax revenues ought to have been two million piastres greater than the three million actually collected.[49] Many times the French contemplated sending Norodom into exile and considered incorporating Cambodia into Cochinchina.[50] Their impatience was tempered by the hope that his dissolute ways would send him to an early grave, after which, they decided, they would bypass his sons and crown his half-brother, Prince Sisowath.

The Authority of the 'Eternal Yesterday'

The simmering clash between Norodom and the French reflected profound differences in views of government and society; indeed in 'meaning-of-life' matters of metaphysics and ontology. For the French, history was linear,

with the idea of Progress implicit. For the Khmers, history was circular, just as human existence was a cycle of life, death, and reincarnation with fatalism tempered by belief in karma.[51] It was a conflict between a European, legal-rational social and political system and a deeply traditional society based on webs of patronage and custom. The acquiescence of the Khmer people to the monarchical status quo exemplified submission to what Max Weber called 'the authority of the 'eternal yesterday', i.e. … the mores sanctified through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform.'[52] The ancient Khmer ways were remarkably resilient. The peasants lived much as their remote ancestors had done and saw no reason why they should change. It had been the same earlier with the Vietnamese invaders, who had tried to enforce their version of 'civilisation' on the recalcitrant Khmers. The Khmer view of kingship baffled the French. As the present author has written, 'Regardless of his personal failings … he [Norodom] was the King, a traditional Asian monarch, and he expected, and *received*, the customary devotion of the people'.[53] [Emphasis added.] Moreover, he was a 'god-king, sacred and inviolable',[54] which added a dimension of sanctity to traditional patrimonial rule. While it is true that there were a number of revolts against his rule in the 1860s and '70s, rebel leaders had to either have or to invent royal blood to gain a following.

Slavery and the Mission Civilisatrice

Slavery was another problem that vexed the French. France had only abolished slavery in 1848 but it remained a raw issue of conscience and was an important justification for the *mission civilisatrice* in the French colonies. Estimates of the number of slaves in Cambodia varied from as low as 40,000 to as many as 150,000 out of a total population of less than a million. Broadly, there were two types of slavery in Cambodia: *khnhom*, or debt bondage and *neahk ngear* or hereditary slavery, although the distinction could be blurred. In addition, the Khmer peasants as a whole were subject to *corvée*—compulsory free labour for the nobles and mandarins on private and public works. They were in effect part-time forced labourers upon whom the traditional Khmer economy depended.[55]

To many Khmers, slavery and *corvée* were an integral part of the ancient natural order of things. This collided with the French view as expressed in Francis Garnier's account of the *Montagnard* slave market in Stung Treng:

> I could not help being deeply affected by the spectacle. If the men appear to be generally indifferent to their fate, the women convulsively pressed their

> young children around them, hid them in their arms, and their eyes gave away their agonising fear each time a bystander approached to examine them.

The French were determined to stamp out slavery, but it proved difficult because of the obstructive tactics of the King and his ministers and the indifference of the general population. In 1872 and again in 1877, Norodom promised to outlaw the practice but nothing changed. A showdown was fast approaching.

The Treaty of 1884

In 1880, Jules Ferry took over as Prime Minister of France and appointed Georges Charles Cloué, a high-ranking naval officer, as Minister of the Navy and the Colonies. Cloué, who had served as Governor of Martinique in the West Indies, was unimpressed by the slow pace of reform in Cambodia. He instructed the French officials at Phnom Penh to take control of the Protectorate's public finances.[56] An outraged Norodom wrote a letter of protest to the French President, Jules Grévy.[57] Grévy was an opponent of colonial expansion, but Norodom's complaints only stiffened Minister Cloué's resolve. His man on the ground in Indochina was the forceful Algerian-born Governor, Charles Thomson. Most likely Thomson saw Algeria, which was administratively part of France, as a model for colonial rule elsewhere. Thomson did not take kindly to Norodom's obstruction of reform. In 1883, he proposed a new reform package. As was his habit, Norodom agreed, but then quietly sabotaged the plans after the Governor returned to Saigon. In March 1884, Thomson stormed back up to Phnom Penh and demanded the immediate implementation of the reforms. Norodom tried to butter Thomson up by staging a great fête in his honour, and continued his prevarication.[58] Exasperated, Thomson returned on Bastille Day in the corvette *Alouette* with a small army of French marines and Vietnamese *tirailleurs*. He presented the startled King with the text of a new treaty and gave him three days to sign. Thomson had decided to compel him to sign at bayonet point or force him to abdicate. True to form, Norodom procrastinated, hoping that the crisis would blow over. This time, it would not. Three days later Thomson burst into the palace before dawn, dragged Norodom from his bed, and forced him to sign.[59]

The new Treaty granted the French absolute power in the kingdom. All pretence of Cambodian sovereignty was abandoned, despite French claims

that the treaty was an amicable agreement. This is clear from Article I, which reads: 'His Majesty the King of Cambodia accepts all the administrative, judicial, financial and commercial reforms that the government of the French Republic deems useful in future to facilitate the work of the protectorate'. Cambodian officials would be closely supervised by an expanded corps of French administrators who would control taxes, customs duties and infrastructure. A civil list would be created and the salaries of all Cambodian government officials would be fixed. Norodom would be compelled to contribute to the administrative costs of running the kingdom and the number of provinces would be reduced from 57 to 8. Finally, slavery would be abolished and the crown land system would be replaced with one based on private property.[60]

Reform of the land system was central to French plans. In Cambodia, all land was owned by the King, with large portions portioned out as apanages to princes, mandarins and other important personages. The peasants were entitled to settle on any land left vacant for seven years provided that they farmed it and paid taxes. The system discouraged the production of large surpluses as these incurred taxation: in practice, the peasants would grow enough for their own basic needs with the minimum possible left over for taxation or tithe. The French saw the system as an enormous barrier to development of the countryside, to capitalist property relations, which they believed would create prosperity and profits. The land tenure system formed the material basis for what the French regarded as the ossified superstructure of Cambodian society. They foreshadowed a vast cadastral survey,[61] although this did not begin in earnest until 1903.[62] The country would be surveyed, measured, weighed, and quantified, along with its inhabitants and their possessions. The privatisation of land, the French reasoned, would underpin the creation of rational government funded by regular taxes levied on industrious peasants producing an agricultural surplus for profit. With the zeal of ideologues, the French imagined that the old traditional land system based on patronage and subsistence farming on small family plots would be swept aside.

Immediately after the new treaty was signed, the French built administrative posts throughout the kingdom with a view to implementing the reform programme. Norodom and his ministers, although grievously insulted, appeared to accept the new situation. The countryside seemed quiet, with the peasants going about their business as usual. The quiet was, however, the metaphorical calm before the storm; under the apparent acquiescence of the nobles and the commoners a great rage was brewing.

The French did not seek the peasants' consent for the changes and they were about to learn the truth of Norodom's adage that the Khmer peasant is like a buffalo: placid, yet terrible in his rage.[63]

The Great Rebellion

On 9 January 1885, the storm broke.[64] Insurgents attacked the remote French military post at Sambor, some 40 kilometres up the Mekong from Kratie. The garrison withstood the attack, but not before the European commander and a number of his Vietnamese soldiers were killed.[65] Two days after the Sambor attack, rebels on elephants besieged French posts in Pursat province. Other revolts exploded in Takeo and Kompong Thom and a ferocious uprising erupted at Kampot on the Gulf coast almost 400 kilometres from Kratie. According to press reports at the time, a number of posts were captured. Ominously, the rebels' ranks included fighters from all of the country's ethnic groups. Local Chinese were prominent in the Kampot insurgency and up to 9000 rebels rampaged through the multi-ethnic eastern regions on the Vietnamese border. In May, Phnom Penh was besieged and the irregulars were only repelled by cannon fire from the corvette *Alouette* and the arrival of heavily-armed reinforcements from Saigon.[66] Five hundred irregulars drove the French from Kampot and the port was only retaken after warships shelled the town and set it alight.[67]

Although the French downplayed the seriousness of the situation, they eventually had to deploy some 4000 troops armed with artillery and Gatling guns, backed up by gunboats. Hopes of a quick victory were dashed; the French were rapidly bogged down in an interminable colonial war against tens of thousands of rebel fighters. Although outgunned by the French, the guerrillas had the advantage of familiarity with the often trackless terrain of swamps, jungles and mountains. They crept out of the forests to attack French posts and faded back into the wilderness. Long before Mao Zedong coined his famous aphorism of guerrillas being the fish and the people the water that sustained them, the insurgents enjoyed the tacit or active support of the peasants.

An Intractable Conflict

The guerrillas' hit-and-run tactics enraged the French soldiers. Trained to fight wars of position against regular opponents, they were bewildered by an elusive foe who seemed to be everywhere and nowhere. Every thicket

and bend in the river might harbour a band of rebels and it was difficult to differentiate between insurgents and peasants in the villages and fields. The conflict quickly degenerated into an ugly war of pacification. The French built blockhouses and patrolled the waterways in gunboats but despite their efforts most of the countryside remained hostile territory. In fact, by mid-1886, eighteen months after the start of hostilities, apart from Phnom Penh and other big towns, the French had succeeded only in pacifying Banam and Kratie.[68] Their combat casualties steadily mounted and to the toll of dead and wounded were added the victims of climate, disease and terrain.

The soldiers succumbed in their droves to endemic waterborne diseases such as dysentery and cholera. Malarial mosquitoes swarmed in the swamps and waterways and leeches, snakes and other loathsome pests abounded in the jungles. The climate, too, was harsh and unforgiving. From May until October, monsoon rains fell with astonishing force, turning the roads to quagmires and flooding the lakes, waterways and low-lying land. The eternal rain dampened gunpowder, rotted leather, clothing and tents, rusted gun barrels and brought with it huge tropical ulcers that refused to heal. Military operations were often impossible in such conditions, but waist-deep floodwaters appeared to be no impediment to the guerrillas, who kept up a constant harrying of the French. Between November and April, the sun shone pitilessly. For the colonial infantrymen floundering in a hostile and alien land, victory was chimerical.

The war was fought with great callousness on each side. The brutalised infantrymen carried out rapes, thefts and murders against the peasants whom they suspected of being in league with the rebels.[69] This extramural brutality was matched by officially sanctioned atrocities such as collective punishments and summary executions, including beheadings. The French commander, Lieutenant Colonel Badens, was notorious for cruelty.[70] The atrocities either goaded the victims into active support for the rebels, or caused them to emigrate in their droves to safety in Siamese-controlled Battambang. According to an article in the *Revue Indochinoise Illustrée* published some years after the end of the revolt, the entire population had turned against the French.[71] Back home in France, government ministers and the public began to question the wisdom of too harsh an application of the 1884 treaty that had sparked the uprising. This prompted the replacement of Charles Thomson and his immediate successor, General Bégin, with the more subtle Ange Michel Filippini, who was horrified by the atrocities.[72] His dismay was shared by Jean de Lanessan, the later Governor-General of French Indochina.[73]

The Extent of the Revolt

The titular head of the revolt was the 43-year-old Prince Si Votha. Half-brother to Norodom, he was an inveterate rebel who had been involved in intra-dynastic warfare for decades. He had long been based in a forest redoubt in the remote northeast jungles, where he had forged strong bonds with the local *Montagnard* peoples and appears to have been recognised as the legitimate authority by much of the population. His motivation for leading the 1885 revolt seems to have been mixed. While he coveted Norodom's crown, this forceful man also detested the French and wished to drive them out of the kingdom. Despite his pre-eminence, however, the revolt appears to have been a united front of dissidents in which Si Votha cooperated with independent local chieftains with their own agendas.[74] Some of the participants were partisans of Pou Kombo, who had retreated to the forests after the death of the Pretender two decades earlier. Importantly, the revolt seems to have been *consciously planned* with the involvement of high mandarins from the Phnom Penh court and with the tacit blessing of Norodom and the Queen Mother.[75] The plotters had gone about their business unseen by the French, as Governor Filippini later admitted.[76] It is likely that had the revolt succeeded, the temporary truce between the different factions would have broken down and the country reverted to the kind of internecine warfare that had existed before the Protectorate. Be that as it may, it is clear from the near synchronicity of attacks across the kingdom that the insurrection was not spontaneous and was organised along channels of communication that were invisible to the French.

On one level, the revolt was one of a kind that would later be described as a war of national liberation. However, it also shared many of the characteristics of the traditionalist conflicts of Cambodia's past. As Perry Anderson and other writers have argued, modern nationalism is a recent historical phenomenon. Cambodian nationalism did not emerge until the 1930s. In contrast, national liberation struggles such as those in Vietnam and Algeria—and even Cambodia—in the twentieth century were consciously nationalistic and 'forward-looking' and led for the most part by western-educated intellectuals such as Ho Chi Minh, Sukarno, Julius Nyerere and Cambodia's own Son Ngoc Thanh. They were also, to one degree or another, social revolutions that aimed to abolish the old feudal social relations and build democratic and/or socialist societies. Moreover, while it is possible to detect elements of proto-nationalism in late-nineteenth century revolts in neighbouring Vietnam, these did not exist in

Cambodia until the emergence of the Nagaravatta group in the 1930s. The Great Rebellion of 1885–1886 did not seek to both drive out the French and reform Cambodia's social, political and economic system: rather it sought to maintain a traditional society that was under threat from the modernising project of the French.

A Negotiated Solution

Eighteen months after the attack on the post at Sambor, the war seemed intractable. If the rebels were not strong enough to defeat the French, neither could the French snuff out the revolt. Simultaneously, the French were faced with the serious Cần Vúóng revolt, which had erupted in neighbouring Vietnam. These colonial wars were proving a drain on the French public purse, the death toll of troops was rising, and the Cambodian countryside was devastated. Governor Filippini, with his superiors' agreement, realised that he would have to seek a negotiated settlement. Despite strong suspicions that Norodom secretly supported the rebels, they would have to solicit his aid as he was the incarnation of traditional authority in the country. The King's agreement came at a price: the French promised to modify some of the more draconian aspects of the new treaty, to respect the autonomy of the Khmer administration, and to reduce the number of French officials in the kingdom.

With such assurances, Norodom agreed to help. He issued a proclamation calling for a ceasefire and dispatched his emissaries throughout the kingdom to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms in return for a general amnesty.[77] Within weeks, the rebellion had abated, with Norodom personally touring the countryside to urge surrender. By the end of the year, the principal rebel commanders had laid down their arms, leaving Si Votha alone in the forests, where he was to die in 1891.[78] Cambodia, with local exceptions, was to be free of armed insurrection until the Issarak campaigns following the Second World War. The French did not fully trust Norodom, but he had proven true to his word. The same could not be said for the French. Governor Filippini made it explicit in correspondence with the Minister back in Paris that the reform programme would be re-imposed gradually.[79]

Meanwhile, the Cambodian people were left with a country devastated by war. Huge areas of farmland were either destroyed or abandoned. The rice crops rotted in the paddies and many of the country's export crops were ruined, sometimes deliberately as in the case of the Kampot pepper

industry. Tens of thousands of families had fled to Siamese territory to escape the war, and the spectre of famine haunted those left behind. The *Quinzaine Coloniale*, the mouthpiece of influential colonial merchants, estimated that between 1879 and 1888 the country's population declined from some 945,000 to under 750,000. At least 10,000 people died as a direct result of the war and many thousands perished from famine and disease.[80] The insurrection was a demographic catastrophe and this melancholy fact perhaps partly explains why Norodom agreed to end the insurrection even though he was aware that the provisions of the 1884 Treaty remained in force.

'The King Is a Mere Puppet'

On the French side, they had every reason to believe that Norodom would not live long. Morbidly obese, his body ravaged by a prodigious consumption of alcohol, tobacco and opium, his days seemed numbered. Once he died, the *Obbareach*, Sisowath, could be placed on the throne and he could be relied on to cooperate with the reform programme. Meanwhile, the French would move more subtly to introduce the reforms agreed to in the 1885 Treaty. They agreed, for instance, to restrict the number of provincial *Résidents* to four. In 1887, however, Norodom agreed to the introduction of a land tax (as opposed to a production tax) and the French also took charge of public works projects, with the rebuilding in Phnom Penh commencing at the time. The French had done little in the field of education to this point, but in 1893 the Collège du Protectorate (later Lycée Sisowath) was opened, with a modest number of Khmer pupils studying a French curriculum. Ten years earlier there had been only eight Khmer pupils in French primary schools. In 1887, Cambodia was incorporated into the French Indochinese Union, which was overseen by a Governor-General in distant Hanoi. The number of French officials steadily increased and by 1892, the French had taken control of virtual all tax collection and disbursement, with encouraging results.[81] Two years later, the number of *Résidents* was increased from four to ten.[82] The long-planned civil list was introduced, regularising payments to the huge body of royals and pruning it at the same time.[83] Norodom was now in a position analogous to the frog immersed in a saucepan of gradually heating water, not realising the peril until it was too late.

The figurative water came to the boil in 1897 when Norodom fell seriously ill. The eccentric *Résident Supérieur*, Albert Huyn de Vernéville, a

blustering type, seized the opportunity to undermine the King's already depleted power. Protocol dictated that the King was present at all meetings of the Royal Council of Ministers, but Vernéville insisted that pressing matters of state had to be dealt with immediately. The Ministers agreed that the *Résident Supérieur* would serve as permanent president of the Council, which would be reduced to five Ministers. The *Résident Supérieur* would have to counter-sign all royal decrees to make them legitimate and in addition, all royal and pagoda slaves were freed.[84] Norodom protested, but it was too late and Vernéville threatened him with exile if tried to obstruct the reforms. The mandarins increasingly sided with the French on all matters of substance and Norodom was too weakened physically and psychologically to stop them. Just how far the balance of power had shifted was shown in the dying days of the century when Norodom denounced his son, the heir-apparent Yukanthor, for anti-French activity and the young man was exiled to the Algerian desert.[85] In 1891, Norodom had also disowned his favourite son, Duong Chakr, for his alleged anti-French intrigues.[86] These betrayals highlighted Norodom's broken power and it must have broken the old man's heart to disown his own sons. By this time, he was sick and emaciated, his body racked from substance abuse on a colossal scale. He had no will to resist the French. The Scottish traveller John MacGregor summed up the King's situation thus: [He] 'reigns, but does not govern. He is a mere puppet…'[87]

Conclusion

The nineteenth century had brought momentous and contradictory changes to Cambodia. The French had eroded the power of the King and destroyed the country's sovereignty but on the other hand the Protectorate had preserved Cambodia's territorial integrity. But for the French embrace, Cambodia would have been incorporated into Siam, with Vietnam perhaps occupying chunks of the eastern marches. The old Khmer proverb *Srok Khmer mün de soun*—'Cambodia will never die'—had been borne out, but the country had jumped out of the Siamese frying pan into the French fire. Norodom and the mandarins had stubbornly but unsuccessfully resisted change and the huge revolt of 1885–1886 had slowed but not halted the progress of the *mission civilisatrice*. Within a century, Cambodia had been dragged from the remote fringes of the known world into the imperial, globalised system. We have to ask, however, what impact the 'mechanical changes' of the Protectorate had had on the institutions

of the ordinary Cambodian people. Certainly, the war with the French had caused great suffering, yet peasant life was extraordinarily resilient, grounded as it was in the enduring institutions of family life, subsistence farming, Buddhism, and Kingship.[88] Since antiquity, the peasants had lived largely 'outside of history' as subsistence rice farmers on small, family-run plots. Yet to borrow a phrase, while they might not have been interested in the outside world, it was interested in them. The coming of colonialism in the nineteenth century was to set the scene for more tumultuous times in the twentieth.

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CHAPTER 4

Cambodia in French Indochina, 1900–1945

Trude Jacobsen

The turn of the twentieth century ushered in great changes for Cambodia. Hardly had the new century begun when King Norodom (r. 1863–1904) died and a successor had to be found from amongst multitudes of royal princes. Duong Chakr, once viewed as a strong contender for the throne, had been exiled to Algeria. Yukanthor, Norodom's own preferred heir, was in disgrace in Singapore. The French had seen Norodom as increasingly recalcitrant in any case, and his sons were regarded with suspicion by association. Instead, Norodom's half-brother Sisowath, who had hoped to be named king upon the death of their father Ang Duong in 1859, and who had lived under French protection in Saigon for a period of time, was crowned in 1906. This set a precedent for French meddling in the dynastic succession of Cambodia, as the next two kings—Sisowath Monivong (r. 1927–1941), and Norodom Sihanouk (r. 1941–1955, 1993–2004)—were chosen by the colonial administration and had their rights as sovereigns of Cambodia reduced.[1]

Cambodia's relationship with the West between 1900 and 1945 was mediated by its position within French Indochina. Engagement with the rest of the world was proctored by France, and, for a short period, by the Japanese-installed 'independent' government between March and September 1945.[2] Using their increased power, the French were able to

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decide what aspects of Cambodia to show and what to conceal. They carried out their agenda using the twin legitimating concepts of *mission civilisatrice* and *mise en valeur*.

The Civilising Mission

Colonialism had to have an altruistic side lest the West be seen to be simply plundering the resources of those with less efficient technology. In *mission civilisatrice*, the French had their explanation for why they could reap the economic benefits of the peoples whose lands they took; they were providing modern education, knowledge of the rights of man, eliminating despotism, and 'discovering' past glories that had been forgotten by the descendants of those who had built them.[3] Paul Doumer, Governor-General of Indochina between 1897 and 1902, wrote that one of the key policies of the French in Indochina was 'to give [them] an economic infrastructure, railways, roads, canals, and ports, *nécessaire à sa mise en valeur*'.[4] Yet it was simultaneously important not to allow the colonised peoples to develop to the point that they could rival the metropole in terms of ability.[5]

French colonial policy in Cambodia focused on the three Es—namely, education, emancipation, and exhibition. The *mission civilisatrice* ensured that the first two would occur; *mise en valeur* required the conspicuous display of all the good the colonial project was achieving. No comprehensive plan of reform was devised for the Cambodian education system until quite late in the colonial period,[6] although it constituted a cornerstone of French modernisation efforts.[7] The lack of educational initiatives and reforms during the early phase of the Protectorate stunted Cambodia's development for decades and reflected the insouciance with which the French viewed Cambodia as a colony.[8]

Following the death of King Norodom in 1904, however, educational reform took on a new impetus. King Norodom had made provision in his will that funds from his personal fortune be allocated for the establishment of a school for royal children.[9] Upon his accession, King Sisowath donated what has been his princely quarters to the *Instruction Publique en Indochine* for use as schools in 1906. The following year 750 pupils were recorded as attending schools in Phnom Penh, of which fifty-four were children of the royal family, while 400 attended state schools in rural areas.[10] These *Écoles primaires franco-cambodgiennes* were split into two categories in 1908—*résidentielles*, primary schools in each provincial capital and Phnom Penh, and *khet*, district schools that provided a preparation for *résidentielles*.[11]

Girls in Phnom Penh could access education at the private schools and at the *École du Protectorat*; although the 'education' received seemed to primarily involve embroidery and other feminine arts for the 1906 Marseilles *Exhibition*,[12] discussed below. In 1907, an administrative division of the *Instruction Publique en Indochine* called the *Direction de l'École des Filles du Protectorat* was established,[13] but the first French-administered school for girls was not established until 1911. On 16 September 1911 Ernest Outrey, *Résident Supérieur au Cambodge* issued a circular to his administrators asking them to identify non-French officials employed by the government who had daughters and direct them to send the girls to the proposed *École des filles*, due to open on less than a month later. The possible benefits of education for girls were not mentioned in the circular, although Outrey commented that 'the dissemination of instruction to girls is a question of very capital importance'. The *École des filles* opened under the name *École Norodom*.[14] Two months later, another two private schools for girls were opened by royal princesses Malika and Phanganam.[15]

Cambodians interested in progressing to secondary education had no choice but to relocate to Hanoi or Saigon.[16] Gaining admission to one of these schools was an overly complicated process, made more difficult by the necessity of sitting entrance exams in Tonkin or Cochinchina before admission was granted and finding means of financial support once there. It is hardly surprising that the Cambodians, already disinclined to send their children to French-administered schools in their own country, were even more reluctant to send them abroad. In this way, Cambodians were always afforded fewer opportunities to engage with the West through education compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Indochina. This inability and unwillingness to access the same quality of education impacted upon Cambodians' ability to participate in their own civil service—instead, the Vietnamese were preferred as their qualifications were always higher, having more opportunities.

Vocational schools were opened in 1902 and 1903 in Phnom Penh, for carpentry and administration respectively. Both of these—the *École pratique d'industrie* and the *Collège du Protectorat*—were reserved for men.[17] These seem to have been popular with the sons of Europeans; Daniel de Coulgeans, son of a French father, relocated to Phnom Penh from Kampot in 1919 in order to attend the *École pratique d'industrie*, living in a hut in the palace district with his Cambodian mother.[18] One vocational school did allow women; the *Manufacture Royale au Palais*. It opened in Phnom Penh in 1907 and was responsible for manufacturing replicas of Cambodian

art and antiques. The French established similar *manufactures* elsewhere in their colonies, ostensibly to ensure that indigenous artistic traditions were retained.[19] An *École des Beaux-Arts* was added to the *Manufacture Royale au Palais* in 1912 and the entire complex renamed *École des arts Cambodgiens*, with George Groslier as its director, in 1918.[20] A visitor to the *École des arts* in 1929 was full of praise for Groslier:

> a Cambodian-born French artist, archaeologist and novelist … freed it at the outset from political and commercial pressure, kept its ideals pure and true to native tradition and even provided for the midday meal and the living of the accepted pupils, so that any and every promising boy or girl, whatever his or her economic status, may take advantage of the instruction.

He warned, however, that the success of the enterprise 'is a question depending upon the capacity of the Cambodian themselves…. It is too early to say what the modern Cambodians will make of their French-given opportunity.'[21]

The education offered by the *écoles franco-cambodgiennes* was designed to prepare indigenous adolescents for lives in industry or domestic service, not for higher education.[22] The *Université Indochinoise* in Hanoi was too far away for most Cambodians to reach and in most cases their secondary education was not of a high enough standard to merit entrance. The schools of Buddhism, opened in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap in 1909, and the *École de Pali*, established in Phnom Penh in 1915, were also off-limits for women, for obvious reasons.[23] Women were encouraged to train as teachers as a result of reforms implemented in the 1920s, although they had to relocate to neighbouring Cochinchina or Annam in order to do so.[24] Publications for indigenous teachers were produced in order to provide teaching materials, update pedagogical methodology, and standardise curricula across the country.[25] Although the post-1918 reforms of Albert Sarrault recognised that it was necessary 'in each colony to adapt to particular characteristics, to local needs as to the mentalities of very different races',[26] teachers were expected to uphold and disseminate French ideals.[27] *Collège Sisowath*, given full *lycée* status in 1935, became a production line for bright Cambodians of both sexes who rose through the education system, departing from there to further training (usually as teachers) in Saigon, Hanoi or Paris.[28] Several future political leaders, including Khieu Ponnary (later married to Saloth Sar, better known as Pol Pot), her sister Khieu Thirith, Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, Son Sen, and Keng Vannsak, received their upper secondary education at the *Lycée Sisowath.*

After the promulgation of Albert Sarrault's 1918 educational reforms, the administration set about reforming the pagoda schools in Cambodia. Although the official rationale for the campaign was that the pagoda schools lacked practical curricula, formal examinations, and trained teachers,[29] the reality was that the pagoda schools were far more popular with Cambodians themselves. In 1925 there were 2402 schools in Cambodia, 105 of them *écoles franco-cambodgiennes*, the remainder pagoda or private schools. 8367 of the estimated 38,000 pupils in Cambodia at the time attended the *écoles franco-cambodgiennes*. 78% of children, therefore, were beyond the reach of the *Service de l'Instruction publique*. This was unsettling for the French. As an inspector of education resources wrote in 1925, 'The intellectual and moral formation of young male Cambodians … is, almost entirely, in the hands of the monks.'[30]

The lack of standardisation, in terms of materials and other resources, also caused concern. Course materials varied according to the wealth of the district. Most pagoda schools used the traditional codes of conduct, the *cbpab*, in order to instruct pupils in correct behaviour.[31] In one sense, acceptance of one's destiny correlated with the superiority assumed by coloniser over the colonised; in another, it was necessary to replace a reliance on local forms of education with 'modern', French-authorised ones. Cambodian exposure to Western political and social ideas was mediated by this tension felt both in the metropole and in the colonial administration.

Emancipation

The abolition of slavery was another key platform of the *mission civilisatrice*. Indeed, emancipation of slaves was specifically referenced in the 1884 treaty that tightened French control over Cambodia.[32] Historically, there were three categories of slaves: one serving the state, one the *wats*, and one the category of that served individuals.[33] Those who were obligated to perform service for the Cambodian king (known as *neak n'gear*[34]) were called *pol*; a special sub-category of this group were the *komlas*, 'the most handsome and healthy' of the *pol*, who were required to provide service at royal *wats* and in ceremonial activities from the age of puberty until they married or turned 25, after which they were considered free persons, *neak jee-a*. Just prior to the establishment of the protectorate, the 'state' slaves could be assigned by the king and the *obbareach* (the heir apparent, not necessarily a son of the reigning king) to officials,[35] such as judicial investigators, to carry out s tasks on behalf of the court. Non-royal slaves, *khnhum*, could be either

involuntary or voluntary labour.[36] Bought slaves were usually ethnic minorities who had been given to local chiefs as tribute and then sold on through existing slave networks between upland and lowland areas. Their children then inherited their slave status. In his examination of slavery in Cambodia, Adhemard Leclere distinguished between slaves who were purchased and those who were born to existing slaves in the nineteenth century.[37] After a period of time, formerly 'foreign' slaves became part of families and societies, and their children were seen as local.[38] Aside from ethnic minorities, many slaves were acquired as captives following wars and then gifted to soldiers and other elites in compensation for their war efforts.[39]

Eventually, a set of complicated rules was promulgated by the colonial administration: French citizens ('Annamese' living in Cochinchina and Tonkinese from the French-administered areas around Hanoi) could not be slaves, as no French citizen could be enslaved anywhere in the world. Therefore, any Annamese who were slaves in Cambodia were automatically no longer slaves from the moment Cochinchina was declared a colony. Khmer, Lao, Chinese, and other ethnic groups in the protectorates and the colonies, however, were French subjects, not citizens. There was no blanket prohibition on their enslavement. Nor was there anything preventing Annamese in Cambodia from owning slaves.

Ethnic minorities from the upland areas were often enslaved by their lowland counterparts and sold from Kratie and Phnom Penh. These slaves were what Adhemard Leclere called *perpetual*; they were often 'generally of savage origin; they are sometimes Cambodians from the Cambodian provinces that Siam annexed; other times, one has slaves of this category who were prisoners of war'.[40] The sheer bureaucratic effort required to eradicate slavery was overwhelming to French administrators. Yet there was a temporary form of slavery that was less distasteful and promised an opportunity for freedom for all slaves without unduly depriving cultivated land of its workers. Moreover, it was already practiced. Thus a decree of 15 January 1877 caused the assimilation of perpetual and temporary slaves. *All* slaves in Cambodia would forthwith be temporary, pledging their labour to masters in return for a fixed wage per month, until their debt was repaid.[41]

Either the majority of slave owners in Cambodia complied with this directive, or their slaves did not know that this was the case, as few indications exist in the French records of masters unwilling to let their slaves go or slaves wishing to remain with their masters after their debt had been repaid. Probably the latter is a true reflection. Yet one band of slaves, owned by the same master, did take advantage of the new legislation. On

7 March 1898 Lân-văn-Yêt, Principal Secretary of the Secretariat of Cochinchina, Tâyninh, sent a letter to the district administrator, informing him that a group of former slaves had left Mak, son of the former governor of Thbong Khmũm, living in the village of Phum Trea in Cambodia, and had come to Tâyninh seeking to settle there as free persons, having repaid their debts. One, Chuch, aged 27, was ethnically Khmer and had fled with his wife. His mother had also been a slave of Mak. On her death, his elder sister received three bars of silver and five piasters from Mak, for which Chuch was pledged. He remained in the service of Mak for 30 years, being continually mistreated. Pres and Les were another Khmer couple who were slaves of Mak. Les, the wife, had received five bars of silver and served for eleven years, whereas her husband had received nothing for his labour—in fact, he had been told by Mak that he had to come and work off his parents' debt upon their death in 1896. They also claimed to have been beaten.[42]

French *colons* sometimes beat those who did not comply with their demands. In 1934 a complaint was filed against the (French) director of the *Banque Agricole de Battambang*, Monsieur le Flem. The latter had travelled to Muong Russey district in order to collect monies owed to the bank and had beaten two of the Cambodians who were unable to pay the full amount. The testimonies of Sok Mien and Nhek Sek were included in the complaint from the assistant territorial administrator, G. Recoing. Sok Mien stated that as he 'cannot pay back all the Director hit me on my leg but did not hurt me. I have nothing else to say'. A shaky signature in Khmer script was affixed at the bottom of the page. The *Résident* in Battambang wryly responded that 'it is useless to take the statement of M. le Flem on the subject'.[43]

It was the women dwelling within the royal palace, however, who became the focal point for emancipation efforts. *Gouverneur Général* Jean Le Myre de Vilers wrote at the end of his posting that Norodom had, 'to crown everything, a harem, made up of four hundred women, which becomes larger each year through the recruitment of young girls carried on in Siam'.[44] European observers found the 'Oriental despotism' of the Cambodian court frivolous and undignified.[45]

> No matter how feeble or absurd he may personally be, the king is the object of a cult which makes his person sacred, his palace inviolable, and his word law…. His harem is composed of three or four hundred ladies hierarchically ranked according to birth and to favour. The king may give away to courtiers those whose services he does not care to retain.[46]

The French objected to the largesse that the king would distribute amongst his favourites. King Norodom entrusted his finances to his favourite consorts in the latter part of his life.[47] The most threatening aspect of the women of the palace, however, was the influence that they wielded over the king.[48] King Norodom, having grown up in the Thai court, had a large number of Thai or half-Thai women in his retinue,[49] including one of his father's consorts, *khun* Sancheat Bopha. She was a strong supporter of Thai interests. Her son, Duong Chakr, was a strong contender for the throne, but the French forced Norodom to exile him to Algeria.[50]

The French saw the women of the palace as an exotic luxury. Paul Doumer described them as wearing 'silk clothing … [and] masses of jewels on their persons … His dancers possessed costumes, golden, peaked crowns, each covered in stones of an incalculable value.'[51] The dancers formed an important part of ceremonial and ritual duties associated with the king.[52] They were sought-after marriage partners once they left the palace, contrary to popular European opinion, which envisioned a life of sexual slavery punctuated only by enforced dance practice and performance.[53]

Entering the palace was an opportunity for women to be near the king and thus acquire a portion of royal authority. Women acted as intermediaries between the king and male retainers and dealt with the day-to-day running of much of the palace. In addition to a yearly stipend and allowances for clothes, perfumes and food, favourites of the king could expect personal gifts of jewels and cash.[54] These women were entitled *kanh chao*,[55] probably derived from the Thai term *chao khun*.[56] Joining the women of the palace was one of the few avenues of social mobility open to Cambodian women. One of King Sisowath's dancers, Long Meak, daughter of Chhim Long,[57] private secretary of the *Résident Supérieur*, became a consort of the then Prince Monivong, bearing his son, Prince Sisowath Monivong Kossarak.[58] She was appointed *khun preah moneang*, 'lady in charge of the ladies' until the death of King Monivong in 1941, when she became a senior instructor attached to the royal ballet corps.[59] Her cousin, Saloth Sareoun, was also a palace dancer during the reign of Monivong, becoming a consort of the king for a short time, even attending him on his deathbed.[60] Sou Seth (1881–1963), the daughter of a palace official, began her palace career as a chanter in the palace chorus. During the reigns of King Norodom Sisowath and King Sisowath Monivong, she was appointed the secretary of the royal ballet (at which time she held literacy classes for the dancers), the head of the women's chorus, and the manager of the orchestra. Sou Seth was an accomplished writer of both prose and poetry.[61]

The death of Norodom in April 1904 allowed the French to implement a host of reforms to the running of the palace. All members of the court, including princes and princesses, were reviewed and their salaries brought into line with French civil service salaries. Control of the royal treasuries passed into the hands of the French.[62] Roland Meyer, in his novel *Saramani*, gave a very vivid account of how the reorganisation must have appeared to the inhabitants of the palace: 'The mayor of the palace, accompanied by a bald Frenchman with big fish-eyes, went into the throne hall, opened the royal treasure-coffers, and for several days appeared to be the true masters of the house.'[63] The number of women that the king could support was thereby reduced and many left the palace for marriages beyond its walls.[64] King Sisowath, although less prolific than his father, had been an adult during the heydey of Norodom's excesses, and following this example had established his own household of women. No *kanh chao* were added during his reign.[65] After the death of King Monivong in 1941, the palace was reformed once again. The *kanh chao* were removed from the list of palace employees and their meagre civil servants' salaries reduced to nothing.[66] In 1943 only eleven *kanh chao* remained at the court.

Cambodia on Display

One of the greatest ironies in Cambodian history is that the French, in seeking to liberate the women of the palace, succeeded in creating another avenue in which to exploit them, and on a far larger scale than anything a Cambodian king could devise. During Norodom's reign, it had become customary for visiting dignitaries to attend a dance performance at the palace 'in accordance with the custom of past entertainments at the court of the great king'.[67] Descriptions of the exotic splendour of such exhibitions stirred the imaginations of metropolitan readers. In 1902, it was suggested that a troupe of Cambodian dancers be sent to Hanoi in order to showcase the culture of Cambodia and the role of the French in preserving it.[68] Shortly thereafter, the idea was mooted that an exhibition of Cambodian dance would make an admirable addition to the *Exposition coloniale* in Marseilles in 1906. Such was the success of the tour, in terms of representing the accomplishments of the colonial project in protecting and exalting the local cultures of its subjugated peoples, that the tradition of Cambodian dance was turned into an industry almost overnight. Whereas once girls had been brought to the palace in the hope that they would rise to become favourites of the king, now they were brought to

train as dancers and be exhibited in the *Expositions* along with embroidery and notebooks filled with children's essays.

George Bois, a French representative at the Cambodian court in the early twentieth century, determined that the Cambodian royal ballet would make an admirable addition to the *Exposition coloniale* in Marseilles in 1906.[69] The French had been exposed to the spectacle of the royal ballet from the beginning of their involvement with Cambodia. It was the custom for guests to the court to be honoured with a banquet and entertainment provide by the palace dancers. Francis Garnier wrote of a visit to the royal palace in 1866 that

> we were presented by M. de Lagrée to His Cambodian Majesty who organized for us the most splendid reception and who wanted us, in accordance with the custom of past entertainments at the court of the great king, to attend a ballet given by the entire corps of his dancers. I myself admired the originality and the elegance of their costumes and the richness of the embroidered silk cloth of which they were composed more than the graciousness of the dance movements or the pantomime expressions of the actors, although from the viewpoint of local colour, there was something characteristic there for me.[70]

Although Paul Doumer said that the Cambodian king was 'happy to offer them to Europeans as an entertainment',[71] Sisowath refused to allow the royal ballet dancers to travel to France without him, setting forth with a sizeable entourage that included cooks, valets, doctors, monks, a number of princes and princesses, forty-two dancers, eight rhythm-keepers, eight dressers, twelve musicians, eight narrators, and two jewellers.[72] It is possible that the dancers themselves thought that they were accompanying their king on a period of house arrest in France. Warfare in mainland Southeast Asia had, for centuries, resulted in entire households, numbering several hundred people, being relocated into the victor's territory, there to be held hostage against any reprisals by whomsoever remained in the conquered land.[73]

Allowing a large number of women of the palace to leave the royal palace was unthinkable as it meant that their fidelity could not be policed to the king's satisfaction; thus the potential existed for them to break faith with Sisowath and compromise his status. At the same time, a modern and progressive king had to move with the times, and above all placate his administrators. Sisowath had no alternative but to agree to the tour and to

accompany it in the manner befitting a king. The legend of the Cambodian 'ballet' had begun.

The French modified the choreography of the Cambodian ballet in keeping with metropolitan tastes.[74] It was feared that too accurate a representation of indigenous artistry would not enthral onlookers as they were longer than European theatre-goers where used to, and extremely slow-moving. This was a sentiment that had been voiced by Paul Doumer in 1903:

> The events, borrowed from scenes of the *Ramayana*, seductions, battles, battles between men and monkeys, are for us a little more incomprehensible. The Cambodians find such mimicry an extreme pleasure, and the king more so than his subjects.[75]

The versions of Cambodian dance served at the 1906 and 1922 *Expositions* were intended as popular nourishment for metropolitan consumption.[76] Some were critical of the *Expositions*; Roland Meyer has his heroine Saramani, a Cambodian dancer who accompanied the troupe to Marseilles, comment upon the superficiality of Europeans, that they can conceive only of the present world, through visual means; they know nothing of spirituality.[77] Later, two dancers discuss leaving the royal ballet, as their position has been devalued from attendants to the power of sovereignty to performing animals. When one girl worries that the art of dance will degenerate without skilled dancers, another says that 'new dancers recruited from amongst clumsy peasants will suffice to amuse the French'.[78]

Nicola Cooper has suggested that the purpose of the *Expositions coloniales* was to provide legitimation for French imperialism through recognition of successful efforts at modernisation whilst ensuring that the 'backwardness' of the colonies was emphasised, in order to necessitate a continued presence.[79] 'Celebrating' the arts of the indigenous peoples of the colonies was a means of including the colonised within the greater French collective. Auguste Pavie, who was posted to Kampot in 1871 and later carried out numerous explorations for the colonial administration, remarked that the 'silk cloth woven by the women of Cambodia, using a method preserved from the oldest civilisations, are particularly rich and remarkable'.[80] Handicrafts made by girls enrolled at the *École du Protectorat* were included in the 1906 *Exposition*.[81] Girls at the *Écoles Yukanthor*, *Norodom* and *Sutharot* were required to send their work to the *Exposition coloniale* in 1922. Items ranged from ladies bags to plates to head-dresses.[82]

Significantly, the exhibition organisers 'eliminated all ordinary garments … obviously inspired by French fashion magazines.'[83] Cambodians were to be kept 'traditional', not move into modern, Western fashion.[84] Even exams and notebooks were included in the 1922 *Exhibition*. These exhibitions of people and culture served to reinforce the attitude of the metropole towards the colonies, propagated through adventurers' accounts, popular novels, and schoolbooks legitimising French imperialism.[85]

When King Sisowath died in April 1927, the French took control of the royal ballet corps. A royal ordinance promulgated on 14 June 1927 placed the royal ballet corps under the direct control of the *Directeur des Arts cambodgiens*.[86] The French wanted to re-create the royal ballet corps according to their own aesthetic principles, which they believed would be more pleasing to Western audiences. This meant that older women who had once been dancers could form no part of the new troupe. 'All dancers decommissioned or excluded from Our personnel troupe in the past cannot, under any circumstances, form part of that presently undergoing reorganisation', wrote King Monivong in 1927.[87] The French takeover seemed to have basis; one observer commented: 'When I saw the Cambodian dancers at the Colonial Exhibition in Paris, I was very impressed with them; I still think their "lifting" movement on one bent leg so that the whole body seems to be raised into the air very impressive; but their whole performance, with their white makeup, their expensive and peculiar costumes, and their stylised movements, is far pleasanter when seen in a European theatre. And they gain nothing by repetition'.[88]

Another, less portable *objet* that the French were keen to show off to the world was the collection of temples and other structures left by Cambodian sovereigns. Although most of the temples at the site of Yaśodharapura, the capital of the Khmer Empire for some four hundred years, had never really fallen into disuse (see [earlier chapter]), nevertheless the 'rediscovery' of the temple complex by Henri Mouhot captured the European imagination when his travel diaries were published in 1863.[89] Ironically, Mouhot's expedition was funded by the British, not the French; he had repeatedly appealed to the government of Napoleon III for authorisation and monies in order to carry out an exploration of the interior of mainland Southeast Asia to no avail. He then appealed to the Royal Zoological and Geographical Societies in England, where he had lived since 1856 upon his marriage. They agreed to provide him with funding with a view to adding to their collections of specimens. Mouhot died of malaria near Luang Prabang (Laos) on November 10, 1861; yet

his accounts of the overgrown temple sites in Siem Reap, and his accompanying sketches, intrigued an emergent generation of explorers, archaeologists, and epigraphists.

Partly in response to British efforts to find a passage into China through Burma and Thailand, and partly in response to the popularity of Mouhot's posthumous publication, the Ministry of the Navy and the Colonies in the metropole approved the creation of the Mekong Exploration Commission in 1866. The configuration of the Commission reads like a 'who's who' of French Indochina: Ernest Doudart de Lagrée, Francis Garnier, Louis Delaporte, and Émile Gsell are the best-known now for their contributions to epigraphy, photography, archaeology, and anthropology, but at the time their other team members—Louis de Carné, Clovis Thorel, and Eugene Joubert—were respected men in the fledgling colony of Saigon. Accompanying them were translators for Vietnamese, Thai, Lao, and Khmer, sailors from the Philippines, and bearers. The first stop on the Commission's route was, naturally, the site of 'Angkor', where copies photographs and sketches were made of the so-called 'decayed' seat of empire. These too were later published and devoured by a metropolitan audience.

The last full-scale expedition for 'rediscovering' the temples of the Khmer was launched in 1879. Headed by Auguste Pavie, who had been posted to Kampot in 1871, five missions spent 16 years mapping the interior of Laos, Cambodia, Siam, Annam, Tonkin, and Cochinchina. These journeys were faithfully recorded and illustrated for public consumption as in seven volumes.[90] These three quasi-official expeditions—Mouhot's travels, the Mekong Exploration Commission, and the Pavie Mission—ensured that the *mission civilisatrice* was well legitimized in the metropole, providing ample fodder for a population curious about French citizens and subjects in other lands.

The exhibiting of Cambodia, and therefore of the merits of *mission civilizatrice*, reached its zenith after World War I. Traveling for leisure purposes resumed for the upper midde classes and elite and the exoticism of the colonies lured many on 'tours' that included, *de rigeur*, a visit to at least the largest temples of Angkor, a performance of the Cambodian ballet, and a trip to a beach or hill station for the invigorating environment. Large hotels and tourist ventures sprang up, including the famous Le Royal Hotel in Phnom Penh, and the Grand Hotel d'Angkor in Siem Reap. Restaurants and *pensions* catering to tourists with less grand aspirations also emerged. Sidewalk cafes, theatres, bookstores, and souvenir

shops abounded. Dancers, souvenirs, and temples were showcased as examples of the glory of a *past* Cambodia—one that had been allowed to dissipate due to lax monarchs and a morally lazy populace. It served the colonial project to emphasize a past greatness, juxtaposed against a present mediocrity; otherwise, how could a 'protection' be entertained? Thus the vocational schools allowed for no innovation, only replication, and then only those artefacts pleasing to European tastes. So pleasing, in fact, that some tourists attempted to appropriate originals; André Malraux visited Cambodia in 1923 in search of a 'lost' temple to discover, yet had to content himself with removing four devata statues from the temple of Banteay Srei, for which he was promptly arrested—much to his outrage. Malraux was no doubt attempting to acquire a commodity that was now en vogue on the international art and antiquities market; yet another type of market was also gaining popularity. Charles Ruen wrote in 1953 that Phnom Penh had a thriving sex sector, located in the warren of backstreets near the Central Market: 'At their windows, the pretty girls see you and smile…. A dozen young women are there, sprawled on the mats, naked and bronzed, firm breasts, gleaming teeth, thick and greedy lips'.[91]

Ruen was one of many Frenchmen who came to Cambodia in search of an alternative to the *ennui* of the metropole. Some, like Malraux, came to discover lost treasures, but had to settle for short-lived business ventures.[92] Thomas Caraman proposed a brick and tile factory, signing a contract with the Cambodian government for a five-year term in 1873.[93] Others, like George Groslier, was born in Phnom Penh to a French administrator and lived his entire life in Cambodia. Many wrote quasi-autobiographical novels of their experiences; Groslier published *La route du plus forte* [The way of the strongest] in 1926 and *La retour de l'argile* [The return from the clay] in 1930. Malraux published *La voie royale* [The royal way], loosely based upon his own theft of Cambodian temple artifacts in 1923, the same year. Roland Meyer, another Frenchman who spent his youth in Cambodia, wrote *Saramani, danseuse Khmer* in 1919. All of these novels contributed to the construction of Cambodia as a place far from the responsibilities and morality of the metropole.

This was perhaps one of the reasons a serious attempt was made in the 1930s to lure tourists to the less famous parts of Cambodia. A shrewd marketing executive attempted to combine the exoticism for which Cambodian culture was becoming renowned with the zeal for health resorts. Thus the southwestern provinces with access to the Gulf of Siam were dubbed the 'Opal Coast', and glossy brochures were produced that

promised an invigorating stay in fresh air amongst the 'natural' temples of Cambodia—namely, limestone outcroppings named after famous explorers and administrators such as Albert Sarraut.[94] Eventually, a hotel, a casino, and a church would be built atop Bokor mountain, but the popularity of any venture paled in comparison to the grandeur of the Angkoran temples in Siem Reap, where several hotels—including the famous Grand Hôtel d'Angkor—had waiting lists for their rooms. Exhibiting Cambodia on its own soil not only legitimized the *mission civilisatrice*, but turned out to be lucrative for the French as well.

Afterthought of Empire

Neither Cambodia nor Laos was ever as important to the French as the three 'Vietnamese' polities of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina (although the latter was actually a cacophony of Chinese, Khmer, and Cham communities until the French began large-scale resettlement in the twentieth century). All French policy in Cambodia was tempered by the perceived superiority of the Vietnamese. They saw the Cambodians as lazy and unorganised, although good-natured, and the Vietnamese as energetic and rational.[95] This resulted in Vietnamese, rather than Cambodians, taking the majority of the 'native' civil service positions available. Cambodians, who had chafed at Vietnamese 'meddling' in the affairs of the Cambodian court in the nineteenth century, resented this.

Worse, the French encouraged Vietnamese settlers into Cambodia, thereby allowing these 'historical enemies' access to Cambodian territory. Vietnamese from around Saigon and Hanoi were French *citizens*, and could own Cambodians, who were in some cases French *nationals*, as slaves, whereas the Vietnamese themselves could not be enslaved. This created a social imbalance within Cambodia that many found unfair. Similarly, large-scale printing was introduced in Vietnam in 1862, but did not arrive in Cambodian until 1908.[96] This meant that the Vietnamese had greater access to news, promulgation of edicts and laws, and literature than their Cambodian counterparts for a considerable length of time.

The lack of ease with which information could be distributed may have held up the development of a nationalist consciousness in Cambodia, but by the 1930s, a small but critical group of Cambodians educated under the French system had begun to question the legitimacy of the colonial presence. Partly in response to this, partly in reaction to a burgeoning anti-colonial sentiment in their other protectorates and colonies, the

French attempted to channel nationalist sentiment into avenues that they could control. Patriotic youth organisations were one of these. The *Jeunesse de l'Empire Française*, the French scouting organisation, and the *Yuvan Kampuchearath* [Youth of Cambodia] were established by Vichy authorities in 1941.[97] These were both under the umbrella organisation *Commissariat à la jeunesse et aux sports*, sponsored by the newly acceded King Norodom Sihanouk, himself a 'youth' at age 19. Older adolescents, university and vocational school students, teachers, and civil servants joined the *Mouvement de rassemblement*, in which members were trained in paramilitary activities.[98] By June 1943, there were an estimated 15,500 members of youth organisations in Cambodia, participating in marches, civic engagement, and 'morality' manoeuvers.[99]

Similarly, the French attempted to divert the nationalist impetus toward a re-discovery of a pre-colonial cultural identity into a forum that they could control. Thus the Buddhist Institute was established in 1930 by King Monivong and George Cœdès of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient with a view to providing Cambodians with a place from which this investigation of their literary and cultural past could emerge. Teams of Cambodians were dispatched to rural areas in order to collect folktales transmitted in oral form, manuscripts from pagodas, and Buddhist texts. These were painstakingly transferred into book form and published by the Institute, at first in the journal *Kambujasuriya* from 1932,[100] and then in stand-alone book format. Manuscripts that had reposed forgotten in pagodas and storerooms for decades were rediscovered and rewritten with introductions commemorating their place in Cambodian literature.[101]

Ironically, the Buddhist Institute provided anti-imperialist nationalists with a space in which they could meet and plan for a future free from French rule. In 1936 the Deputy Director of the Buddhist Institute, Son Ngoc Thanh, himself established the first newspaper to be circulated in Khmer only, without French translation, with Pach Chhoeun. The name of the newspaper, *Nagaravatta*, referenced Cambodia's past hegemony during the Khmer Empire by invoking the Khmer name for Angkor Wat, while its content urged Cambodians to recreate this past glory by refusing to be economically dependent upon Chinese, Vietnamese and French networks. The Japanese presence in Indochina in the early 1940s furthered nationalistic stirrings in Cambodia, leading to a series of protests and demonstrations in 1942. Son Ngoc Thanh was justifiably blamed by the French for inciting the unrest and he promptly sought asylum in Japan.

The French tried to counteract the presence of the Japanese by attempting to show how important the colonial power considered local peoples, publishing, amongst other items, a 'who's who' of French Indochina in 1943. Unfortunately, the majority of 'natives' included in the publication were Vietnamese, which did little to sway Cambodian independence seekers, and reaffirmed the belief that the Vietnamese were of more importance than Cambodia.[102] When, on 13 March 1945, the Japanese declared Cambodia independent from France, hundreds of Cambodians boycotted French businesses, schools, and domestic work.[103] Son Ngoc Thanh returned from exile in Japan to join the Japanese-sponsored Cambodian government as Foreign Minister.

The five months that Cambodians governed themselves while under Japanese 'protection' did little to change their relationship with the West. The France from whom they had been granted independence was under the Vichy regime, and therefore the French colonies it controlled were seen as being necessarily part of the Axis alliance. The transition to Japanese stewardship did not change the perspective of the rest of the world: Japan and Germany were the enemy. A Cambodia occupied by Vichy France or Japan was by association an enemy as well. The legacy of these six months of Cambodian self-rule, however, was to resonate throughout the post-war period, culminating in the 1955 abdication of King Norodom Sihanouk in favour of a transition to democratic governance.

This does not mean that the French period had no positive effects in Cambodia. Arguably the greatest achievement of the French was to restore and preserve Cambodia's past for its future generations. Rural and urban areas were connected for the first time by land routes—rail and road—and communications brought to remote places through the telegraph. Water purification, sewer works, hospitals, clinics, and schools were implemented outside the provincial capitals. Public health initiatives, including vaccinations and the registration of sex workers and brothels with the attendant mandatory checks for sexually transmitted diseases, were also implemented on a large scale. The law codes, unchanged since the eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, were updated to reflect more modern demographic needs. It may be argued, however, that these improvements were ones that benefitted the French, and ensured that Cambodia's educated elite regarded France as a major player in its political future for the next two generations.

Notes

1. Norodom Sihanouk abdicated in 1955, nominating his father, King Suramarit, and mother, Queen Kossamak, as his successors (see following chapter).
2. See for example Louis Allen, 'Studies in the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, 1944–1945', *Durham University Journal* 64 (1972), 120–132; André Angladeete, 'La vie quotidienne en Indochine de 1939 à 1946', *Mondes et cultures* 30 (March 1979), 467–498; David P. Chandler, 'The kingdom of Kampuchea, March–October 1945', in David P. Chandler, *Facing the Cambodian past* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 165–188.
3. Mathew Burrows, "'Mission civilisatrice": French cultural policy in the Middle East, 1860–1914', *The Historical Journal* 29, 1 (1986), 109.
4. Paul Doumer, *L'Indo-Chine française*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Vuibert & Nony, 1903), 313.
5. Nicola Cooper, *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2001), 36.
6. Pascale Bezançon, 'L'impact de la colonisation Française sur l'emérgence d'un système éducatif modern au Cambodge (1863–1945)', in *Proceedings of International Conference on Khmer Studies*, ed. Sorn Samnang (Phnom Penh: Sorn Samnang, 1998), vol. 2, 895.
7. David M. Ayres, *Anatomy of a crisis: Education, development, and the state in Cambodia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 25; Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 36.
8. Ayres, *Anatomy of a crisis*, 23; Bezançon, 'L'impact de la colonisation française', 897.
9. Milton Osborne, *The French presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and response, 1859–1905* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 253.
10. Osborne, *Rule and response*, 255–156.
11. Bezançon, 'L'impact de la colonisation française', 899.
12. *École du Protectorat* letter No. 43, 22 November 1905, National Archives of Cambodia, collection Résidence Supérieur du Cambodge [hereafter RSC] 1211.
13. *Administration des Services Civils* letter No. 608, 4 June 1907, RSC 1581.
14. *Résidence Supérieur du Cambodge*, circular No. 100, 16 September 1911, RSC 1214.
15. Justin J. Corfield, *The royal family of Cambodia* (Melbourne: Khmer Language & Culture Centre, 1993), 36–37.
16. Ayres, *Anatomy of a crisis*, p. 25.

17. Benzaçon, 'L'impact de la colonisation française', 898.
18. Report of the Surêté No. 121-C, 1917, 1920, Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France [hereafter ANOM] 17467.
19. Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 83.
20. Benzançon, 'L'impact de la colonisation française', 901; Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1937), 354.
21. Willowdean C. Handy, 'Renaissance in Indo-China: A French experiment in reviving Cambodian art', *Pacific Affairs* 2, 2 (February 1929), 72.
22. Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 39.
23. Benzançon, 'L'impact de la colonisation française', 900. The *Institute Bouddhique* in Siem Reap was forced to close in 1911 due to lack of local interest.
24. Trude Jacobsen, *Lost goddesses: The denial of female power in Cambodian history* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008), 168.
25. Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 39.
26. Albert Sarraut, *Grandeur et servitude colonials* (Paris: Sagittaire, 1931), 97.
27. Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 39.
28. Ayres, *Anatomy of a crisis*, 25.
29. Ayres, *Anatomy of a crisis*, 24.
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49. Corfield, *Royal family of Cambodia*, 47.
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CHAPTER 5

A British Interlude: Allied Peace Enforcement, 1945–1947

T. O. Smith

The Allied leadership, at the Potsdam Conference of July 1945, placed southern Vietnam, the tip of southern Laos and all of the Kingdom of Cambodia within the sphere of British military operations for the continuing conflict against the Japanese. Allied military planners logically expected the Second World War in the Far East to continue well into 1946. Military preparations and expectation were thus developed with this in mind. At this stage, there was no hint of a possible Japanese surrender. Furthermore, few in the Allied military establishment knew of the existence of an atomic weapon of mass destruction.

All military strategy within South East Asia Command (SEAC) dramatically changed in August. The two atomic bombs dropped upon Japan relegated existing plans for the continuation of the war to the wards of history. The sudden Japanese capitulation caught London, Washington and SEAC completely unawares. SEAC had for a long time expected to have to fight

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its way into Indo-China rather than enact the long-range management of an immediate Japanese surrender. Its liberation plans were incomplete and it lacked any accurate knowledge of the local situation on the ground.[1]

In addition, SEAC and the British War Office had been forced out of necessity to administer Japanese surrender duties, but they were ill equipped to deal with the political realities. The British Government initially attached Foreign Office representatives to SEAC until a separate Foreign Office infrastructure could be developed to represent Britain's geo-political and regional interests. In the meantime, the Foreign Office identified Thailand and Vietnam for urgent political analysis and deployed immediate but inadequate diplomatic missions to these areas. The Cambodian political situation was considered more of a diplomatic backwater to these main Foreign Office activities. It therefore remained solely within the purview of SEAC and military administrators; consequently, it became part of British Major-General Douglas Gracey's area of responsibility.

Cambodia During the Second World War

Circumstances in Cambodia during the Second World War were similar to those in Vietnam. France had taken an initial interest in Cambodia with the establishment of a French protectorate in 1863, and it had gradually acquired a stronghold within the kingdom.[2] With the fall of France in 1940, the French authorities in Cambodia, as in the rest of French Indo-China, sided with the newly established regime of Vichy France. The Vichy Government had been established following the French armistice with Nazi Germany. Unoccupied France and its colonies, under the leadership of Field Marshal Henri Petain, henceforth became controversial collaborators with fascism.

During the autumn of 1940, Japanese armed forces entered northern Indo-China unopposed by the French military. By May 1941 two Japanese divisions had subjugated Cambodia.[3] Approximately 40,000 Japanese troops had taken over French Indo-Chinese airfields and naval bases. This occupation acquired vital rubber and tin supplies for the Japanese war effort. It also secured the region as a strategic staging location for further Japanese assaults upon China, as well as the Japanese expansion into the rest of Southeast Asia.[4] France was still the colonial power responsible for the day-to-day government of Indo-China. In the short term, the Japanese military establishment was prepared to coexist in an uneasy alliance

alongside French colonialism and to conduct its work through the existing French colonial infrastructure. In the longer term (March 1945) Japan sought to remove its feeble European vassal and thus replace the French colonial management with Japanese imperial control.

In the meantime, Thailand fully exploited the frailty of the French Empire by requesting the return of Cambodia's western provinces to Thailand. The irony of this potential new conflict between Thailand and Vichy France was that both of the combatants had already entered into separate alliances with the only true imperial overlord in the region—the Japanese.[5] Thai opportunism concerning the Cambodian provinces was firmly rooted in the logic of Southeast Asian history. For almost six centuries, the Cambodians and the Thai had been engaged in constant warfare west of the river Mekong.[6] The powerlessness of the French colonial administration in Cambodia now provided Thailand, with a little Japanese assistance, with a prime opportunity for the re-establishment of its regional authority.

In January 1941, Thai armed forces entered western Cambodia and comprehensively overwhelmed the French military. A French naval counter-attack proved to be more promising for Vichy France with about half of the Thai fleet destroyed without a single French loss. However, before any sustained escalation of the conflict, the Japanese became involved in the dispute in order to protect their wider war efforts against the Allies. Japan could ill afford for a Southeast Asian conflict located behind its frontlines. This would disrupt its military logistics and resource management. Thus, the Japanese imposed a settlement whereby Thailand annexed the western Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap and Stung Treng. Cambodian and French pride had been severely damaged by the incident. The Japanese intervention had directly benefited the Thai vis-à-vis its traditional Cambodian adversary. As a consequence, Cambodia had to forfeit its western rice-producing provinces, and it also lost a sacred religious icon, the Emerald Buddha, to Thailand.[7]

In reality, the Thai-Cambodian conflict was not the only episode of Thai opportunism concerning European discomfort in the region. Thailand, emboldened by the disquiet of the European colonial powers, benefited in its collaboration with the Japanese. The Thai Government permitted the Japanese armed forces to use the nation as a military and logistical supply base for the invasion of Burma and Malaya. Coexistence with Japan for Thailand proved highly profitable. By doing so, when the chance arose, Thailand was able to take possession of the four most northerly of the British Malay States as a payment for their wartime assistance to the Japanese.[8]

In the short term, however, a seriously undermined and damaged Cambodian nation simply had to accept Japanese supervision. After all, Japan controlled the region, and the Franco-Cambodian relationship remained intact despite the Allied liberation of metropolitan France in 1944. In this far-flung outpost of empire, Vichy-French authority had peculiarly survived the fall of Vichy France. Nevertheless, by early 1945 the Japanese had decided to resolve this anomaly. On 9 March the Japanese armed forces in Indo-China enacted a coup against the Vichy administration. It was a blatant attempt to solidify Japanese imperial control in Southeast Asia and to prepare French Indo-China for a possible Allied invasion. The coup did not lead to the Japanese directly controlling Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia but rather to the establishment of three indigenous regimes sponsored by the Japanese.

In Cambodia four days later, encouraged by the limitations of the French to resist the Japanese challenge to French colonial control and under the direct tutelage of the Japanese, the Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk declared Cambodian 'independence'. All previous Franco-Cambodian treaties were revoked and replaced with an agreement to co-operate with Japan. Cambodia's newly established freedom was purely relative and largely symbolic. Japan had merely superseded France as the colonial power. At this stage in the Second World War, it was more pragmatic for Japan to exert its imperial ambitions than to use a weakened vassal such as the Vichy France colonial administration.

With the French removed from the political equation, Japan now had the opportunity to develop Cambodian nationalism along more favourable lines.[9] These circumstances made it possible for the Japanese to expedite the return to Cambodia of the nationalist leader Son Ngoc Thanh. Since 1943 Thanh, the former advisor to the Cambodian newspaper *Nagaravatta*, had been in political exile in Tokyo. Thanh now returned to Cambodia, with the blessing of his former hosts, where he was appointed as the Foreign Minister for Sihanouk's fledgling regime, and he also acted as an important conduit for continued Japanese control.[10]

Thanh was desperate to preserve Cambodian independence. He hurriedly organised the formation of a Cambodian militia, known as the Green Shirts, to defend the nation against the return of French colonial control. The Japanese, however, remained wary of concentrating too much power in the hands of one Cambodian. Thanh was ideal as a useful foil to Sihanouk. But demonstrating where the true power lay, the Japanese selected their own Cambodian candidate, Thioum Muong, to command the Green Shirts.[11]

In the meantime, the overly ambitious Thanh became rapidly disillusioned with Sihanouk's leadership. Sihanouk appeared reluctant to take the necessary steps to save Cambodian independence and prevent the return of French colonial control. Preparations needed to be made. The King's inactivity and Thanh's fervent desire to preserve Cambodia's immature independence led Thanh to take a drastic measure. On 9–10 August, he orchestrated an attempted coup against Sihanouk. The monarchy survived the coup attempt but Thanh also benefited. The episode elevated Thanh from the position of foreign minister to the central post of prime minister in order that he should provide more dynamic leadership for the state.[12]

At the same time, on 10 August, Japan indicated its willingness to surrender to the Allies. Just as Thanh ascended to the premiership, his main sponsors teetered on the brink of capitulation. Seven days later the Japanese southern armies surrendered in full.[13] As the Cambodian Prime Minister, Son Ngoc Thanh was now best placed to take full advantage of the post-surrender power vacuum. The Japanese had already sidelined the French. Thanh controlled the government and the King appeared inactive. Nevertheless, in reality too much of Thanh's power depended on the Japanese. Sihanouk remained highly popular and the Cambodian elite distrusted Thanh. Even members of the Cambodian Cabinet failed to support many of the new Prime Minister's policies.

Despite the fundamental instability of his own situation, Thanh embarked upon a dynamic attempt to shore up Cambodian independence and preserve his young administration. On 2 September, Thanh's government recognised Ho Chi Minh's regime in Vietnam. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam hastily established a diplomatic mission in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh.[14] Regular contact between the two governments was maintained throughout September. This led to the Cambodian Prime Minister accepting a Vietnamese request for formal talks to begin to co-ordinate a pan-Indo-Chinese effort to resist the return of the French colonial state. The proposed consultation appeared promising. A Cambodian delegation was dispatched to negotiate with Vietnam. But the Cambodian pre-condition for the return of the historic provinces of Travinh and Soc Trang, now part of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and previously held by French Cochinchina, prevented any meaningful progress.[15] The Democratic Republic of Vietnam had no desire to cede the provinces to Cambodia.

Thanh, however, was not prepared to put all of his faith for Cambodian independence into the hands of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. He

also sent out delegations to seek both diplomatic recognition and assistance from Thailand and Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalist China.[16] Considering that previous Thai involvement in Cambodian affairs had resulted in the liberation of three Cambodian provinces and caused an extremely offensive affront to Cambodian national pride, the request for Thai assistance was highly ironic.

On the home front, Thanh attempted to boost his political credentials and legitimacy. A nationalist demonstration in Phnom Penh in support of the Prime Minister attracted a crowd of 30,000 supporters. A swiftly arranged referendum on Cambodian independence resulted in 541,470 votes in favour with only two against.[17] Thanh naturally hoped to solidify the nation around his government and to demonstrate to the Allies that he commanded a popular mandate. At the same time, Green Shirt recruitment persisted.[18] Either by paramilitary force or by diplomacy, Thanh aimed to preserve Cambodian sovereignty.

In the meantime, in southern Vietnam, a small British-Indian deployment had arrived to administer the Japanese surrender. However, the British-Indian forces quickly found themselves in the middle of a tense cauldron of political violence between various different Vietnamese nationalist groups and the local French population. In such circumstances, it was difficult to maintain law and order. In the midst of a rapidly deteriorating state of affairs in southern Vietnam, and with no first hand political knowledge of the situation on the ground in Cambodia, the British liberation force commander Major-General Gracey naively stated that: 'Cambodia has no strong militant anti-French element at the moment and appears passive'.[19]

Gracey's Intervention in Cambodia

Gracey had indeed taken a calculated risk that the situation in Cambodia was much quieter than what he was experiencing in southern Vietnam. But compared to the sporadic outbursts of intense urban violence in Saigon, the prospect of a markedly different scenario in the traditionally more tranquil climes of Cambodia must have been quite appealing. That said, he had not taken leave of his senses. Instead Gracey was quite prepared to learn from the chaotic situation in southern Vietnam and attempt a radically different approach towards his liberation duties in Cambodia.

On 28 September Gracey met with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander for Southeast Asia, for an urgent confer-

ence concerning British liberation duties in French Indo-China. Against the backdrop of further political violence in southern Vietnam, Gracey outlined his plans for administering the Japanese surrender in Cambodia. At the forefront of his mind must have been the growing apprehension that any British intervention in Cambodia would reap similar consequences to the British involvement in Vietnam. He therefore proposed a radically different solution for Cambodia. This demonstrated both Gracey's ability to learn from the mistakes of his Vietnam deployment and his deep-seated anxiety at the prospect of further political violence in Indo-China. Gracey proposed to Mountbatten that the most effective way to handle Allied duties in Cambodia and preserve law and order was 'to condone the past actions of the PM [Thanh] and to enlist his support; in fact to treat him in the same manner that we had dealt with Aung San in Burma'.[20]

Gracey's far-reaching proposal was for Britain to endorse Thanh's Cambodian nationalist movement. It was a watershed statement that actually went symbolically much further than the British accommodation of Aung San. In Burma, Aung San had established a national army under Japanese tutelage, but he had then crucially switched sides in 1943.[21] Thanh however had always collaborated with the Japanese, and he had then worked with the Vietminh to prevent the return of the French colonial administration. These were the very same Vietminh that Gracey was being forced to deal with in a concurrent and particularly savage outbreak of political violence in southern Vietnam.

Yet, surprisingly, Gracey regarded Thanh as the natural solution to the Cambodian question. Gracey was even prepared to base British policy upon the legitimacy of Thanh's government. Gracey's sentiments were remarkable and were certainly not in harmony with the highly negative comments made by numerous critical historians concerning British-Indian operations in southern Vietnam.[22] The dichotomy between Gracey's approaches to Cambodia and Vietnam demonstrated how flexible his approach to peace enforcement had become by developing differing diplomatic, military and political solutions to crisis situations. But it also showed how far-sighted he was in anticipating that it was possible for the European powers to cultivate co-operative nationalist politicians whilst at the same time enforcing more draconian measures against the extremists. This strategy eventually became the mainstay of British imperial policy.

Hence the key to Gracey's pitch was that Britain should give its support to Thanh and work alongside the Cambodian nationalist movement rather than against it. It was an attractive proposition. Gracey's limited resources

were already overstretched through attempting to maintain law and order in southern Vietnam. Britain had neither the means nor the appetite for a second enforcement campaign in Cambodia. Mountbatten accepted the resolution and therefore consented to Gracey's diplomatic outcome for Cambodia. Together they concluded that the French should impose the proposed settlement. They envisaged a scenario whereby Colonel Jean Cedile, the French Commissioner in southern Indo-China, would be sent to Phnom Penh to work out the necessary details with Thanh. French troops would then take over from the Japanese armed forces and Britain's limited resources would be spared from any involvement in Cambodian affairs.[23]

The plan was not without its faults. It heavily relied upon Cedile imposing a British political solution upon Cambodia, a French colony, rather than reimposing full French colonial control in whatever fashion France deemed appropriate. It also assumed that Thanh would accept negotiations with Cedile, that a compromise could be reached and that the Green Shirt militia would permit the return of the French armed forces. Above all, Gracey's plan was to be achieved with little British oversight. The chief architect willingly supposed that co-ordination could be maintained at arms' length from Saigon.

In the end Gracey's plan to work alongside Thanh and Cambodian nationalism was not tested on the ground. Mountbatten and Gracey, pleased with their Cambodian solution, immediately took the plan into a meeting with John Lawson, the British Secretary of State for War. Lawson fully comprehended the difficult situation that the British-Indian forces currently faced in French Indo-China. But he emphasised that it was not the place of the British military establishment to impose a political settlement on an allied sovereign power. London understood the risks that it was asking Gracey to take but 'it was fundamental of His Majesty's Government not to interfere in the internal affairs of non-British territories'.[24] Georges Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, had already visited Washington and achieved American support for a return of France's Indo-Chinese colonies. The British Embassy in Washington confirmed that the American State Department policy did 'not recognise any territorial changes which have been made under duress during war'.[25] Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos were the sole responsibility of the French.

Lawson naturally attempted to reassure Gracey and Mountbatten that the British Government had taken into account the tough circumstances in which British-Indian forces had been deployed in French Indo-China. Furthermore he 'appreciated that the instructions from London made this

extremely difficult in Indo-China; a single slip might well have grave repercussions'.[26] But in reality, Lawson consigned Gracey's plan to work alongside Cambodian nationalism to the annals of history. The French were now responsible for Thanh and British-Indian forces would have to go to Phnom Penh to disarm the Japanese. Gracey was in effect being asked to maintain a position of neutrality, neither to endorse Thanh nor to turn him over to the French, but at the same time to enforce the Allied peace settlement and liberation duties.

Nonetheless, whilst Gracey and Mountbatten deliberated with Lawson, the situation in Cambodia changed once more. This reflected Britain's impotence and its inability to dictate events rather than to react to them. Thanh's own relationship with the Cambodian elite and members of his cabinet had deteriorated even further. In seeking to ally an independent Cambodia with Vietnam to the east and Thailand to the west, Thanh had ignored the logic of Cambodian history. In his ardent nationalist fervour to prevent a French return, he had allied Cambodia with its traditional regional foes. In doing so, the Prime Minister had inadvertently undermined his political powerbase and estranged himself from the bulk of the Cambodian population. These foreign enemies had previously used Cambodia's weaknesses to seize Cambodian provinces or install their own puppet regimes to exploit Cambodia's natural resources.

The Cambodian elite had long feared full colonisation by one or more of its powerful Southeast Asian neighbours. Before the advent of French colonial control, their lands had suffered at the hands of Thai and Vietnamese incursions. By connecting Cambodian independence to Thailand and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Thanh had invoked powerful images of a weak Cambodia being controlled by its larger and more authoritative neighbours. The Cambodian elite could not ignore these warnings from history. Thanh's naive overtures to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam caused particular anxiety and hostility from within his own cabinet. Three senior government ministers: Khim Tit, the Minister for Defence; Nhek Tioulong, the Minister for Education; Sum Hieng, the Minister for the Interior; all crucially withdrew their support for the Prime Minister.

This political disagreement isolated Thanh from the rest of the Cambodian elite. Annoyed at the diplomacy with Thailand and Vietnam, fears emerged within elite circles about the growing power of Thanh. Cambodia was traditionally a very conservative society based around the monarchy. An alliance with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam evoked

fears of republican proselytism. Similarly, the cabinet dissenters believed that in the short term a return to French colonialism was better for Cambodia's long term national interests. First, France, a victorious Allied power, would be better placed to advocate for the return of the provinces lost to Thailand during the Second World War. Second, Cambodia suffered from a dearth of indigenous professional and technically skilled workers. Thus, any potential exodus of the current resident French population could critically weaken the embryonic nation internally and also externally vis-à-vis its stronger regional neighbours.[27] But above all, Thanh's dynamic governance and national zeal simply did not have the same attraction as Sihanouk's divine status. In a deeply conservative and religious society, only the king could enact the spiritual appeal needed to create the homogenous political momentum required for sustainable independence.

Mountbatten, as Supreme Allied Commander for Southeast Asia, was responsible for multiple British liberation operations within the region. One of these, the removal of Japanese forces from Thailand, naturally raised further problems for British duties in Cambodia because of the dubious status of the three provinces seized by Thailand during the Second World War.[28] It therefore appeared prudent for the Foreign Office official Maberly Esler Dening, who was serving as the Chief Political Officer to Mountbatten, to counsel the Thai Government that Britain did not acknowledge any territorial changes obtained under duress during the Second World War. In addition, Dening informed the Thai authorities that the border changes remained solely a bilateral issue between France and Thailand.[29]

The emphasis upon bilateral negotiations was a shrewd political manoeuvre. British Malaya had also lost territory to Thailand during the war and Britain hoped to establish the bilateral precedent as the appropriate avenue for its safe return. London thereby reiterated the importance of this position with a direct communiqué to Mountbatten. The British War Cabinet instructed Mountbatten that the three Cambodian provinces held by the Thai could only be returned to Cambodia after an appropriate settlement between France and Thailand. The British War Cabinet also warned Mountbatten that if the French tried to retake the lost territory by a military endeavour then he should immediately contact London for further direction. Mountbatten did not have the authority to act unilaterally on this matter. If fighting broke out, he was specifically ordered that he could not assume that SEAC should intervene and establish Allied military control over the provinces.[30]

London had every right to be both suspicious and jittery. Mountbatten's planning staff had already drawn up a procedure to 'institute martial law in Siam [Thailand] and French Indo-China with or without reference to the Siamese [the Thai] or French authorities'.[31] In this context, Gracey's subsequent declaration of martial law in Saigon on 21 September should not be taken in isolation from the prevailing mood within the planning staff at SEAC headquarters which was to execute emergency measures where needed.[32]

On 26 September Dening had talks with Pierre Clarac, the French negotiator for the return of the lost Cambodian provinces, and Prince Viwat, the Thai counterpart. Dening hoped to be able to play the role of an honest broker. But in a classic scenario of the occupier holding the trump card, the Thai Government showed little inclination to begin any meaningful negotiations with France.[33] London, however, wanted the clash to be concluded as soon as possible. Thailand had been identified by Whitehall as the strategic lynchpin for post-war co-operation in the defence of Burma, India, Indo-China, Malaya and the southwest Pacific.[34] The British Government had learned the vital lesson of the Second World War. British interests became vulnerable when Thailand was occupied by a hostile foreign power.

As it was, the internal situation in Cambodian politics returned to the forefront of Allied liberation activities. Thanh's regional diplomacy had already lost the support of his cabinet. Now Khim Tit, the Minister of Defence, took affairs into his own hands. Khim Tit flew to Saigon for urgent talks with the British and the French. During the course of the discussions, Khim Tit formally requested the return of French colonial control.[35] The stage was therefore set for an uncertain reception for British-Indian forces when they actually arrived in Phnom Penh.

On 9 October, the headquarters staff of the British liberation force for Cambodia began to arrive in Phnom Penh. Gracey placed all of his operations in Cambodia under the command of Lt.-Colonel E.D. Murray. Senior Japanese officers were immediately arrested by the British and flown out of the city to Saigon.[36]

The situation was tense. Murray operated under similarly vague instructions and with similarly restricted resources to his commanding officer in Saigon. Murray was therefore ordered to enforce liberation duties by: maintaining law and order; protecting Allied nationals; disarming Vietnamese agents; and preventing Vietnamese weapons from being secretively brought into Phnom Penh. In addition, he was also asked to 'ensure

the stability of the Cambodian Government'. This was an interesting stricture. How should Murray define 'government'? The King had left the day-to-day affairs of the Cambodian state in the hands of a prime minister—Thanh. But Thanh's own cabinet had rebelled against him. The paramilitary Green Shirts naturally supported Thanh. Yet Khim Tit had already visited Saigon on behalf of the unhappy Cambodian elite and invited the French colonial regime to return to power. From the British Government perspective, Lawson had specifically squashed Gracey's suggestion that the British could operate alongside Thanh.

It therefore appeared that Murray was being ordered to work with the Cambodian Cabinet for the day-to-day administration of the nation. This would ensure the effective operation of the government, but not under the leadership of a pro-Japanese Cambodian-nationalist prime minister.[37] Indeed, two companies of French commandos under the command of Lt.-Colonel Huard accompanied Murray to Phnom Penh with the specific purpose of arresting Thanh. But, curiously, upon arrival Huard merely added to the confusion in the city by failing to apprehend the Prime Minister.[38]

At this stage, Murray possessed an eclectic array of military personnel with whom to uphold the peace. Allied military forces at his disposal were limited to one platoon of the 1st Battalion of Gurkha Rifles (30 men), two companies of French commandos under the command of Huard and released Allied prisoners of war. Attached to these Allied personnel were the 55th Japanese Division, Japanese Air Force personnel and the Japanese Police Force. As in southern Vietnam, components of the defeated Japanese armed forces were re-equipped and expected to enforce Allied liberation duties (against the Japanese and other groups). In addition, Murray also used the indigenous Cambodian police service.[39]

The French failure to arrest Thanh certainly made Murray's position more problematic. For a week Murray was now forced to work with Thanh alongside Cambodian nationalism. Huard would not take the Prime Minister into custody and later General Philippe Leclerc, the Commander-in-Chief of French forces in Indo-China, had to fly to Phnom Penh and arrest Thanh himself. Murray's failure to arrest Thanh aligned with Mountbatten's perspective. Mountbatten believed that only the French should adequately resolve such unsavoury tasks.[40] In the meantime Murray needed to carry out his Cambodian duties. Fortunately, Khim Tit decided to return to Phnom Penh. His arrival demonstrated where the true power in the Cambodian Government lay. On 10 October Murray visited Khim

Tit and brokered all the necessary logistical arrangements for the effective co-operation between the Allied liberation forces and the Cambodian Government.[41]

Two days later Khim Tit attended Murray's headquarters in Phnom Penh for further discussions. In trilateral talks between Khim Tit, Murray and Huard it was decided that it would be prudent to remove Vietnamese workers from the Cambodian railways.[42] These workers along with a large Vietnamese civilian population could offer support to the communist Vietminh or the Cambodian nationalist group, the Khmer Issarak, and thereby destabilise an already delicate situation.[43]

Upon securing the railway infrastructure, Murray next turned his attention towards the police service. An hour after meeting Huard and Khim Tit, Murray called upon Thanh to discuss the disarmament of Vietnamese members of the Cambodian police force.[44] This demonstrated that the Prime Minister still held considerable power. If Thanh was merely a lame duck then Murray could have achieved all of the necessary arrangements an hour earlier from Khim Tit.

Murray's conference with Thanh went well. The Prime Minister readily confirmed to Murray that all of the Vietnamese elements within the Cambodian police service had already been disarmed. With Murray's request dealt with and with his fears allayed, Thanh then used the meeting as an opportunity to explain to Murray his popular mandate for Cambodian self-government.[45] A rapprochement appeared to have been made. The next day Thanh reciprocated Murray's calling of the previous day and visited British headquarters in Phnom Penh. He was invited to confer with Murray and his staff.

Once the social delicacies had been dealt with, Thanh used the conference to put Murray on the spot. The Prime Minister questioned Murray about the most dubious section in his instructions from Gracey. Thanh announced to the British staff that a clearer definition was required concerning Murray's order to 'ensure the stability of the Cambodian Government'. Murray deftly responded to the Prime Minister that he possessed no civilian authority. This was purely a British military mission with very specific Allied liberation duties to accomplish. Therefore, Murray ambiguously stated that the order should be taken to mean that he (Murray) ought to make certain 'that the lawful government of Cambodia was not [to be] interfered with by subversive influences or force'.

Murray had conveniently sidestepped the problem. He had chosen not to define 'lawful', nor did anyone present ask him for further clarification.

Above all, Thanh appeared content with the response. The bluff had worked. Thanh no doubt believed that he was the head of the lawful government that Murray had been instructed to protect. This was definitely aided by the subtext for the rest of the meeting, which continued to infer that the full civilian government within Cambodia rested with Thanh and his ministerial cabinet. Thanh therefore concluded the conference with temperate assurances to Murray about the British military mission receiving the complete co-operation of the Cambodian Government. In addition, Thanh dutifully arranged for an audience to take place between Murray and the King on 18 October. This could not have taken place any earlier because Sihanouk had wisely decided to absent himself from Phnom Penh on a four-day pilgrimage whilst the political settlement between the British, the French, Thanh and the Cambodian elite was worked out. Without a doubt, the Prime Minister left the British headquarters pleased with his negotiations.

Khim Tit, however, now resolved to move decisively against the Prime Minister. On the same evening as Thanh's visit to the British military headquarters, Khim Tit dined with Murray to fortify his position with the Allied commander. The uneasy truce between all of the political constituents in Phnom Penh was shattered the following day. Officially the Japanese armed forces had been placed under the command of Murray and the British military mission. But reflecting that a deal may have been struck during dinner the previous evening, Khim Tit now gave the orders for a number of rearmed Japanese military units to seize control of the Cambodian rail network. The pretence for this decisive action was to prevent Vietnamese workers from pilfering railway implements or destroying rail equipment. Murray immediately flew from Phnom Penh to Saigon to confer with Gracey. To begin with, his briefing in Saigon presented Gracey with the latest state of affairs in Cambodia but then it transitioned into a more specific parley concerning the delicate details pertaining to the arrest of Son Ngoc Thanh.[46]

Murray had been compelled to work with Thanh due to the spectacular failure of Huard and his French commandos to arrest the Prime Minister. French incompetence had clouded an already difficult scenario. The French still wanted to get rid of Thanh, whilst the British Government remained adamant that all domestic affairs should be left to the French to deal with. If Murray continued to work alongside Thanh, then the Prime Minister's position as the *de facto* head of a Cambodian nationalist government would be solidified. However, the re-establishment of French colonialism was

connected to the resurrection of France as a great power.[47] It eradicated the stain of defeat and the guilt of Vichy France. The French therefore naturally preferred to regard Thanh as an opportunist and a Japanese collaborator.

At the same time, although Thanh commanded the support of the Green Shirts, his mutual collaboration with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the open rebellion of his cabinet colleagues hardly painted the scene of a stable situation for the Allied liberation forces to operate in. Murray had observed at first hand the difficult state of affairs and operating circumstances that the British-Indian forces faced in Saigon. Neither he nor Gracey had the resources to deal with the outbreak of simultaneous power vacuums in Saigon and Phnom Penh. In such conditions Murray possibly feared the Vietnamese population in Phnom Penh above the Cambodian nationalists. Yes, Thanh's supporters—especially the Green Shirts—were dangerous. But the large Vietnamese populace in Phnom Penh could easily turn against Murray's limited British-Indian forces and enact violent acts of revenge as compensation for British military actions in southern Vietnam.

The deliberations between Gracey and Murray were complex. But the Cambodian instability could not be permitted to persist indefinitely. It had to be rectified. Murray believed that the most logical solution was for Thanh to be detained as soon as possible in order to prevent any further slide towards a more serious breakdown in Cambodian law and order.[48]

As the commanding officer on the ground, Murray's convictions prevailed. The following day General Leclerc, the French Commander-in-Chief in French Indo-China, flew from Saigon to Phnom Penh. Thanh was cordially invited to attend a meeting at British military headquarters where, without a word being uttered, Leclerc promptly arrested the Prime Minister and accompanied him back to Saigon.[49] Murray instantly acted to prevent a nationalist backlash in Phnom Penh. He already had jurisdiction over the Cambodian police service, and it was now deployed to arrest anti-French subversives. A new government was hastily formed in Phnom Penh under the auspices of a new prime minister.[50] Prince Monireth, the Prime Minister, was King Sihanouk's older brother. The counter offensive to Thanh's premiership continued. Later the same day, three more Cambodian nationalist leaders were arrested. Two officers of the Green Shirt militia were also detained.[51]

Nevertheless, the position in the Cambodian capital was still not completely secure. The day following Thanh's confinement in Saigon numerous disturbances broke out in Cambodia. The railway workers reacted to

the news of Thanh's arrest by promptly going on strike. Elements of the Japanese armed forces were once again rapidly drafted into the railway yards. This time it was to operate the rail network. The Green Shirts were still openly carrying weapons and freely roamed Phnom Penh. An intense standoff persisted. Cambodia stood on the edge of the precipice. But at this crucial juncture Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh. Large crowds jubilantly came out to welcome the King home from his pilgrimage. This prevented any more action by Thanh's supporters. Mountbatten would later inform the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff that it had been necessary to preserve the King's neutrality whilst Thanh was arrested. Therefore, Sihanouk had undertaken a four-day pilgrimage away from the capital city and he had been conveniently absent from Phnom Penh when Leclerc had enacted the unsavoury deed.[52] The day following Sihanouk's rapturous return the Green Shirts had their weapons successfully removed by the Japanese. A conference was held to co-ordinate the actions of the British, the Cambodian police and the leaders of the Cambodian National Guard. The momentum at this point had turned against Thanh's supporters. A further 10 Vietnamese agitators were detained.

On 18 October Murray attended upon Sihanouk. The irony was evident. Thanh, who was now imprisoned in Saigon, had originally brokered this audience with the King. At the same time as Murray's meeting, Khim Tit effectively convened with the disgruntled railway workers to negotiate for a return to work. Within three days the opposition to Thanh's arrest had petered out. Stability had been restored, and by 22 October the French armed forces were successfully carrying out security duties in their colony. The next day Sihanouk satisfactorily reinstated all Franco-Cambodian agreements. France had effectively resumed its status as colonial master. Limited opposition to the return of the French administration did persist. But in the main, the remnant of Thanh's nationalist supporters had fled to either Thailand or southern Vietnam. There they joined a number of disparate anti-French groups such as the Khmer Issarak, the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, and the Vietminh.[53]

The political situation in Phnom Penh had at first been erratic. But in the end, it was more effectively resolved than the crisis in Saigon. Life in the Cambodian capital now returned to normal. Murray was rewarded for his part in enforcing the peace settlement and preventing a descent into greater political violence. Britain promoted Murray to the rank of brigadier.[54] In addition, Sihanouk later rewarded Murray with investiture into the Royal Order of Cambodia.[55]

Murray now deemed the circumstances in Phnom Penh stable enough for the British military mission to begin to co-ordinate food convoys for the relief of Saigon. Cambodia, a relative sideshow to the political violence in southern Vietnam, was now a crucial Allied element in a strategy to relieve the Vietminh embargo around Saigon.[56] At the same time, Cambodia's constancy compared to southern Vietnam was corroborated by Allied reconnaissance into other parts of the kingdom. For the most part, the country appeared tranquil and the people affable towards the French.[57] There remained certain regions susceptible to violence and conflict, but these tended to be predominantly along the Cambodian border with southern Vietnam. For example, on 20 November Lt.-Colonel Wenham, a British officer, and 300 Japanese troops successfully pushed Vietnamese forces out of Ha Tien on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border.

Stability in Cambodia continued to improve. As a result, Murray was now able to enact his main Allied liberation duties. On 25 November Murray implemented the official Allied surrender measures towards the Japanese. General Sakumay and the Japanese 55th Divisional Headquarters in Phnom Penh were directed to lay down their armaments.[58] Britain no longer needed Japanese assistance for peace enforcement in Cambodia. British investigators subsequently arrived in Phnom Penh to look into Japanese war crimes committed during the Second World War. Normal Allied occupation duties were now underway. By 19 December 8372 Japanese troops had been demilitarised and removed from Cambodia.[59]

Nonetheless, despite the winding down of Allied surrender duties, British (and Gracey's) involvement in Cambodian affairs had not yet ceased. The Cambodian-Thai border dispute remained unresolved. Admiral Thierry D'Argenlieu, the French High Commissioner for Indo-China and a former Carmelite monk, unsurprisingly wished for the provinces to be returned to French control as soon as possible. He therefore dispatched French observers into Thai controlled Battambang (one of the disputed provinces) without prior discussion with either the British or the Thai authorities. Mountbatten logically feared a new international dispute. As a result, D'Argenlieu was ordered to attach his observers to Lt.-General Geoffrey Evans' Allied liberation force that was operating in Thailand. The ever-impatient D'Argenlieu then petitioned to have Battambang removed from Evans' zone for liberation activities and placed within Gracey's jurisdiction, thereby metaphorically reuniting the province with the rest of Cambodia.[60]

The deployment of French observers should have been handled in a more diplomatic fashion. Yet the French instructions to their observers were issued in the most inflammatory of terms. The officers were expected: to uphold the 'spirit of France' and counter any Thai misinformation; to demonstrate that France maintained its claim to the provinces on behalf of Cambodia; to appraise D'Argenlieu of all Thai activities in the provinces; and to develop liaisons with the Allied liberation forces.[61] As soon as Evans became aware of the orders, he hurriedly arranged to confer with Gracey and Hugh Bird, the British Consul-General in the Thai capital—Bangkok. Evans wanted the first two clauses in the French instructions removed from their orders. Any French actions to preserve the spirit of France, to oppose Thai propaganda and to sustain French rights to the provinces could have grave repercussions. The orders were simply too broad. The situation was not auspicious and it was made even worse because Evans, like Gracey, had exceedingly limited resources to police the disputed territories. He could only spare two officers to act as Allied observers in Battambang.

Evans therefore cabled Major-General Harold Pyman, the Chief of Staff to the Allied liberation forces in SEAC, with the stark warning that any British troops left in the disputed provinces would inevitably become drawn into the Franco-Thai conflict. Evans wanted SEAC to give him an entitlement to withdraw any French observers from the area that he deemed to have exceeded their orders. He also sought specific permission to remove one French officer who had already made himself deeply unpopular.[62]

The French appreciated the weakness of Britain's position in the region. They therefore agreed with Evans' request to reduce the terms of reference for their observers in the provinces and to the removal of their most ostracised officer. But at the same time, they also informed the British that Evans had already approved plans for French observers to remain in Battambang to prevent the Thai from achieving a moral victory.[63] The French were unhelpfully pushing their luck. Gracey urgently cabled Evans and ominously warned him that the French would now advocate for more observers to be sent into the disputed provinces.[64] The mood within Thai Government circles could not have been positive. Evans responded to Gracey with an austere note of caution that unless Mountbatten specifically supported this latest stroke by the French that Gracey should intervene to avert any such French actions. The Thai Government would surely detain any French aircraft or personnel who foolishly embarked upon such endeavours.[65]

Not to be prevented from taking further action, the French now resorted to a propaganda offensive against Thailand through radio broadcasts made from Saigon.[66] Britain was unable to prevent the transmissions but the transcripts were shown to British personnel before each broadcast was made. The local British Foreign Office and Publicity Office staff deemed such transmissions useful propaganda in order to preserve British authority in the region. However, this turned out to be a serious mistake. The broadcasts naturally provoked a hostile reaction towards France from the Thai media. Pierre Clarac, the French negotiator with Thailand, consequently arranged that no further broadcasts would be made that referred to the contentious provinces.[67]

In the meantime, Thailand remained content to drag its feet concerning any form of negotiated settlement.[68] After all Thailand already possessed the three disputed provinces. It was not in its national interest to implement an urgent transfer. France, as expected, found this unacceptable. Gallic pride had to be restored in the region. But in reality, both Thailand and France were guilty of displaying an ardent reluctance to negotiate positively for a diplomatic resolution to the quarrel. Thus, the omens did not appear positive. Dening, the Chief Political Officer to SEAC, observed the stalemate with some trepidation. He particularly feared that D'Argenlieu would attempt to undertake further direct action against Thailand rather than any form of diplomatic settlement. Dening unpromisingly warned the Foreign Office in London that 'I am afraid that I can think of nothing that I could say or do to improve the situation'.[69]

Clarac readily confirmed Dening's suspicions about D'Argenlieu. The highly reactionary High Commissioner was capable of provoking the ire of both the British and the French within the region. Clarac believed that D'Argenlieu wanted to develop a more antagonistic policy of propaganda towards the Thai. Clarac understood that D'Argenlieu was working towards, in due course, the goal of grabbing hold of the provinces by the deployment of French troops. In order to prevent this reckless scenario from developing any further Clarac requested that British pressure be applied to Thailand for the resumption of diplomacy.[70] This time, however, Clarac was not hampered by a Thai unwillingness to attend the talks but rather by his political superior, the French High Commissioner. D'Argenlieu had evolved a suspicious opinion towards Clarac's more proactive stance in connection with the deliberations. This reflected the different divisions within the French establishment in Indo-China with reference to how best to settle the confrontation with Thailand.[71]

As SEAC Allied liberation duties diminished during early 1946, the British Foreign Office began to assume a greater responsibility for the negotiated agreement between the French and the Thai.[72] London hoped that France and Thailand could be persuaded to resolve bilaterally the border argument and thus untangle Britain from the fate of the three disputed provinces.[73] But the situation was complex and ultimately, because of a failure to rectify this issue, France remained technically at war with Thailand.[74]

The internal situation in Thailand following the Second World War certainly did not help Franco-Thai negotiations. The Thai governments were weak and any damage to their national pride in the negotiations with the French could hinder internal political stability.[75] The Thai parleying position thereby proved intractable. The Thai strategy in the negotiations centred upon three hard-line solutions. First, they advocated referring the argument to the United Nations. Second, they suggested that a referendum should be undertaken in the disputed provinces concerning succession to either Cambodia or Thailand. Third, the Thai offered to purchase the three provinces from Cambodia. Unsurprisingly all of these remedies were unacceptable to the French.[76] Both sides in the discord were gambling for high stakes. The three disputed provinces were possibly the most profitable rice-producing areas within French Indo-China.[77] The ultimate prize of either continued Thai occupation or French reacquisition was evident to all of the players involved in the conflict.

In the meantime, with vastly reduced SEAC forces in the region, raids across the border between Cambodia and Thailand hindered any serious political resolution. On 24 May and again on 26 May large numbers of French military personnel crossed the river Mekong and attacked the Thai Army. The French also sporadically bombarded Thai territory.[78] The French attempted to justify the incursions to Lord Killearn, the British Special Commissioner in Singapore, as little more than 'a small police matter'.[79] Thus Dening's fears pertaining to a French escalation at this point looked as if they had been fully justified. Faults had clearly existed on both sides of the debate. But now, in order to prevent an escalation of the conflict, British and American observers were sent to the French side of the Cambodian border.[80] To add injury to insult, France also increased its diplomatic pressure upon Thailand by threatening to block Thai membership of the United Nations.[81]

The Thai counter-attack to the French raids arrived on 9 and 10 August. Despite the presence of the international observers, 500 Cambodian and

Vietnamese rebels accompanied by a small detachment of the Thai military attacked Siem Reap. The rebels occupied the ancient Cambodian temple complex of Angkor Wat. The premier symbol of Cambodian national pride, sovereignty and civilisation had been attacked. French paratroopers were hastily deployed to the temple complex and a ferocious battle developed.[82]

As a direct result of the offensive, the French Government immediately suspended all talks with Thailand.[83] Again Thailand and France stood on the edge of the precipice. It looked like direct confrontation was at this point unavoidable. British intelligence informed London that France now appeared to be on the verge of using its full military might to take back the three disputed areas.[84] As if to confirm the preparations for a large French assault, D'Argenlieu asked for the removal of all of the international observers.[85] Britain assumed that a French attack would swiftly occur as soon as the rainy season was over. The intense bitterness on both sides of the debate had led the British to conclude that France would not be content merely to regain the three Cambodian provinces and that additional Thai territory would now be seized by the French in righteous indignation as compensation for the territorial clash.[86]

In November, however, France backed down from a direct military confrontation, and it proposed that Britain should leave all of its observers along the Thai-Cambodian border even after the remaining Allied liberation troops had been withdrawn from the rest of Thailand (Gracey's Allied liberation force had left Indo-China earlier in 1946).[87] The British Chiefs of Staff held no objections to the French request but the Foreign Office was more reticent.[88] The Franco-Thai border had not proved to be a safe arena in which to deploy international observers. In addition, the resolution of the disputed provinces looked unlikely to be resolved in the near future. SEAC therefore decided to withdraw all of their observers, as their safety could not be guaranteed.[89] The observers however were not removed. In an extreme volte-face, a Franco-Thai treaty was successfully concluded on 17 November. SEAC and the United States now urgently agreed to send additional officers to act as witnesses to the territorial transfers despite there being no Allied troops on hand to provide the required additional security protection. In one of the last acts of SEAC liberation duties, British officers successfully monitored the territorial transfers.[90]

Despite the successful conclusion of the Franco-Thai treaty, elements within Thailand continued to meddle in Cambodian affairs. At the same time, as British officers were supervising the return of Battambang, Siem

Reap and Stung Treng, in December 1946 the Vietminh commenced a general insurrection against the French colonial control of Indo-China. Guided by the devout communist leader Ho Chi Minh, the Vietminh embraced the Maoist tactic of initially occupying and maintaining rural areas before moving into the towns and the more difficult conundrums of urban warfare.[91] Thailand was best placed to take full advantage of this latest Indo-Chinese development. The Vietminh needed to be able to fund their military undertakings against the French.

In these circumstances, Thailand became the natural receiver of Vietminh agricultural products. The Vietminh exported animal pelts, coffee, rice, salt and sugar to Thailand to finance their war effort. A sophisticated trading network was established across Indo-China (including Cambodia) centred upon Bangkok.[92] The quantity of goods involved was not insignificant. By 1947 the Vietminh had achieved supply parity with French Indo-Chinese rice exports.[93] Thus as a new regional geo-political fracas erupted, Thailand became an important financier and profiteer in Indo-Chinese affairs. Britain though was absolved of handling this new outbreak of political violence. By this time Britain had completed its Allied liberation duties and ended all British obligations concerning the administration of the Japanese surrender within Cambodia.[94]

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CHAPTER 6

Independence to Disaster, 1945–1975

Trude Jacobsen

The three decades following World War II saw Cambodia interact with the West in very different ways. Not all were overt. The French attempted to assuage the nascent independence movement in Indochina by a series of political reforms. King Sihanouk abdicated in order to establish a political umbrella organisation, the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum*, or 'Popular Socialist Community', shifting power away from the monarchy but ultimately retaining it himself. The Cold War shaped Cambodia's interaction with the West; the polarisation of the world meant that neutrality, or 'non-alignment', was regarded with suspicion. Yet this is precisely the route Sihanouk chose to take, playing the Communist bloc and the West against each other in return for 'development', much of which benefitted only the elite. High levels of corruption caused many Cambodians to turn away from mainstream political participation and join the communist resistance in the northeast of the country. These thirty years are often overlooked in histories of Cambodia, sandwiched between the more well-sourced colonial and Khmer Rouge periods, but they set the stage for the next three generations of political leadership, and therefore for subsequent Cambodian engagement with the West.

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The Aftermath of World War II

Much of what we know about the period immediately following World War II in Cambodia is limited to when treaties were signed and who attended the ceremonies. There is a novel, however, authored by a Cambodian who was alive during the time, that brings a more local perspective. *Mealea duong citt* (translated as *Ma guirlande, mon amour* [My wreath, my love] in French)—a better English translation would be *Wreath of hearts*)—was written by Nou Hach, now revered as one of the great literary figures of Cambodia. Published for the first time in 1972, the novel details the realities of the arrangement made between Thailand and the Japanese to annex some 70,000 square kilometres of Laos and Cambodia. The Thai sent their own administrators to govern their territory. After the Treaty of Tokyo in April 1946, however, the Thais living in Battambang had to return to Thailand and the French took administrative control again. Reference is made to 'five or six hundred Khmers Issaraks who brought them all sorts of harassment' including blowing up bridges.[1] Although the Khmer Issarak ('Independent Khmer') was not established until 1951, this is illustrative of how, from the very moment the French returned, they encountered resistance from their once-docile subjects, and how this resistance was remembered.

When the French returned in October 1945, they immediately arrested Son Ngoc Thanh, who was exiled to France.[2] Cambodia was no longer designated a Protectorate, but a state within the French Union. In practical terms, this meant that the French retained control of economic production and the highest level of political decision making, but relaxed the prohibition on Cambodian political participation in the face of opposition from Cambodians who had, for a brief six months, run their own country (albeit with Japanese coercion). Consequently, laws prohibiting Cambodian political participation were relaxed, and a range of lesser princes and other educated Cambodians rushed to form their own parties. The most popular of these was the Democratic Party, led by Prince Sisowath Yuthevong, who had been a member of the Worker's International in France. The Liberal Party was headed by Prince Norodom Norindeth; the Progressive Democratic Party by Prince Norodom Montana. Then-King Sihanouk reportedly disapproved of the involvement of the princes in politics; his eldest son, Ranariddh, claimed that his father 'felt threatened' by their participation.

The salient difference between these three parties was that the Democrats wanted outright independence from France. The first election,

held in 1946, resulted in a landslide victory for the Democratic Party, which garnered 73 per cent of the vote and 50 seats in the 67-seat assembly. The Liberal Party followed with 14 seats, and three seats went to Independent candidates. Prince Yuthevong died unexpectedly in July 1947, but his death did not prevent the Democratic Party from winning 55 out of 75 seats in this election. Some of this success no doubt came as a result of the enthusiastic participation of Saloth Sar (later Pol Pot), Ieng Sary, and Hu Nim—all of whom became key architects of Democratic Kampuchea.[3]

Cambodia was not the only former French territory to be undergoing experiments in fledgling democracy at this time, of course; Ho Chi Minh was insisting upon a French departure from Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina. As a concession, the French renamed Cochinchina the Provisional Government of Southern Vietnam, and Annam the Provisional Government of Central Vietnam, in 1948. The following year the two were merged. Ranariddh explained that this occurred because 'South Vietnam was French territory', a reference to Cochinchina's status as a colony rather than a protectorate.[4] Under international pressure, France acquiesced to Cambodia's partial independence on 8 November 1949. Cambodia was now known as the Associated States of Cambodia. A number of further concessions followed, including the release of political exiles such as Son Ngoc Thanh. The latter immediately began recruiting members for his Khmer Issarak army, returning to the Thai-Cambodian border in 1951. Seen as insurgents by the French, the Khmer Issarak were tacitly allowed to live on the Thai side of the border to Cambodia's north-east, from whence they launched the missions that disrupted French administrative and economic control. The Issarak, backed by the popular Democratic Party, enjoyed heroic status amongst a large number of Cambodians for their anti-French activities. This began to chafe at Sihanouk, who believed he, as king, should be the most popular with the people. As Christopher Pym noted during the time he lived in Cambodia in the mid-1950s, 'the young King found that his position on the throne prevented him from personally leading his country's development into a modern state'.[5]

Sihanouk set about encouraging Khmer Issarak members to join his independence government, beginning with Dap Chhuon, a Khmer Issarak who ruled over what amounted to a virtual autonomous area within Siem Reap province. Dap defected to Sihanouk's government at the end of 1949 in return for a position of 'colonel' and administration of his terri-

tory in Siem Reap. His party, the 'Victorious North-East Party', won four seats in the 1951 elections. The Democratic Party, however, gained ten seats.[6] Clearly something more drastic was required if the Democrats were to be deposed.

On 15 June 1952, Sihanouk announced that he would undertake a Royal Crusade for Independence, in which he promised to acquire total autonomy from France within three years. Dismissing the National Assembly, he travelled first to France, where he wrote three letters to then President Vincent Auriol in March and April asking that Cambodia be granted independence under his leadership; having been unsuccessful, he then went to Canada and the United States.[7] He played upon the fear of communism in order to make his case, stating to the *New York Times* that 'there has been growing support among the thinking masses of the people of Cambodia to the theory that the Communist-led Vietminh is fighting for the independence of the country'. The story ran on the front page under the headline 'King, Here, Warns Cambodia May Rise' and warned that 'Indo-China may turn to Reds if French reject Independence Plea'.[8] To a world newly polarising into Communist and Western blocs, this was intriguing to all, and disturbing to some.

Sihanouk received sympathy but no secure promises of assistance in his Royal Crusade. Indeed, he was asked not to press the French on the matter while they were embroiled in their war against the Viet Minh. He returned to Cambodia and began to mobilise support in the provinces to the north, beginning with Battambang and Siem Reap. The rural population received him favourably—so much so that the French capitulated. A treaty was signed on 17 October 1953 paving the way for full independence, and cementing Sihanouk as a nationalist. Sihanouk then continued his policy of convincing able administrators and military leaders from all sides to join the Association of Cambodian States. Prince Norodom Chantharaingey, who had maintained his own territory along the Thai border with Battambang since 1946, was one who agreed in return for continued rule of his own district. In this way Sihanouk hoped to garner enough popular support to topple the dominance of the Democratic Party.

The Rise of Sihanouk

The Geneva Accords of 1954 had stipulated that political parties were to be formed and elections held in all former territories of French Indochina, including, famously, North and South Vietnam. Elections

were scheduled in Cambodia for September 1955. In October 1954, Sihanouk's government joined with Dap Chouen's Victorious North-East Party, Sam Sary's rightist party, and Lon Nol's Khmer Revolution Party. This alliance became known officially as the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum*, 'Popular Socialist Community'. Ostensibly an umbrella party for many smaller parties, it reflected parties whose key characteristic were that they were pro-Sihanouk.

A piece of legislation proposed by Sihanouk in the lead-up to the election sought to bar any Cambodian who had not been resident for the previous three years from contesting a seat. This would effectively have prevented many Cambodians who had been studying in France, or who had been fighting against the French from Thailand or North Vietnam, from participating. This, in addition to doubt over whether Sihanouk could, as king, participate directly himself in the election, raised concerns at the Indochina Armistice Commission, ostensibly the body in charge of overseeing the post-Geneva Conference elections. In a fit of pique, Sihanouk abdicated on 2 March, claiming that Son Ngoc Thanh was trying to prevent his perfectly reasonable electoral reforms.[9]

> After having brought independence and peace to our people, I find that I am betrayed, ill-treated and abused by men who use unjust democracy. I have decided to find the means to correct this situation. These means are laws which I have written to permit our humblest citizens…. But this new law provokes the opposition of the politicians, the rich, and the educated, who are accustomed to using their knowledge to deceive other and to place innumerable obstacles in the path on which I must lead our people toward prosperity and justice…[10]

Prince Ranariddh, then 10 years old, remembered everyone in the family crying at the event.[11] Having reduced himself from a king to a prince, Sihanouk proposed that his parents, Prince Norodom Suramarit and Princess Kossamak, take the throne as symbolic heads of state.

Meanwhile, the Geneva Accords had resulted in Cambodians studying in France concluding their courses at the end of the academic year in 1955 and returning to participate in their newly independent country. Many of these, under the auspices of the Khmer Students' Association, had been exposed to Marxist ideology, and upon their return radicalised the Democratic Party. Son Ngoc Thanh was one of the casualties of this process; he left the party and retreated to the northern border, where he

began communicating with the CIA. It was funding from the CIA that allowed him to form an anti-Sihanouk movement, the Khmer Serei ('Free Khmer'), in 1956. The Democratic Party continued with Prince Norodom Phurissara as nominal leader. A more overtly communist group, the *Krom Pracheachun* ('People's Collective') was established as the political wing of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party to contest the election. Finally, a small group loyal to Son Ngoc Thanh emerged after his ousting from the Democrats.

The Sangkum Reastr Niyum, backed by Sihanouk, won 82.7 per cent of the votes in the 1955 parliamentary election. The Democratic Party was the next largest winner, with 12.3 per cent; this was a devastating blow to the party, however, which had been the most popular party for nearly a decade before Sihanouk's Royal Crusade for Independence and abdication to join the Sangkum. The Pracheachun won 3.9 per cent, with less than 1 per cent going to the Liberal Party, the Royal National Party, the Independence Party, the Labour Party, and independents.[12] This landslide victory secured the Sangkum all 91 seats in the National Assembly. King Norodom Suramarit was made Head of State following Sihanouk's abdication; following the election, Leng Ngeth, who had been the head of the National Assembly from 25 January 1955, was replaced by Sihanouk for a brief period. Then followed a period until 1960 in which Sihanouk then assumed the role a number of times, interspersed with votes appointing San Yun and Sim Var.[13]

The death of King Suramarit on 3 April 1960 caused an unexpected controversy. In abdicating, Sihanouk had sworn that neither he nor his children would take the throne again. Yet it was dangerous to allow another royal prince to ascend, as this posed potential problems for Sihanouk. In true form, he offered himself to fill the role, while remaining a prince. This did not sit well with everyone; in Battambang people protested that Queen Kossamak should take the throne, despite the existence of a constitutional provision that only the *male* descendants of King Ang Duong were eligible. Prince Monireth, brother of the queen, proposed a constitutional amendment to the Royal Council that would allow female descendants to rule, but this was vetoed by Sihanouk, who prevailed and was made Head of State on 20 June 1960.

Sihanouk himself was reported as saying 'Only God understands why I do not want my mother to ascend the throne' after his investiture. He then reorganised the royal palace, in which Queen Kossamak lived, without

consulting her. All government publications stressed that the Queen had no actual power, such as this excerpt from *Nouvelles du Cambodge*:

> Queen Kossamak, ***who neither reigns nor governs*** [emphasis added], exercises considerable moral authority over all Khmers and sits well in the line of past queens, compassionate toward the poor, and busies herself in fulfilling her duties with regard to the Nation and the people.[14]

The popularity of the queen was reflected in her portrait outselling that of Sihanouk throughout the early 1960s. Perhaps one reason for her popularity was, according to Prince Monireth, had Kossamak been permitted to rule, 'a great many disagreements, [and] a great deal of foolishness could have been avoided'.[15]

Sihanounk remained head of state for a decade. During that time, three other parliamentary elections were held in Cambodia; in 1958, the Sangkum—which by now had expanded to include every other party aside from the Pracheachun—swept all 61 seats. The same occurred in 1962 and 1966, by which time the Pracheachun no longer contested what appeared to be insurmountable odds stacked against them.[16] The National Assembly continued to vote for the head of the government, but woe betide any member who did not cast their ballot for Sihanouk's preferred candidate. These short-lived leaders were Pho Proeung, Penn Nouth, Norodom Kanthol, Son Sann, and Lon Nol, who remained a favourite of Sihanouk until 1970.[17] With attention from the west diverted to the increasing hostilities in neighbouring Vietnam, the fact that Cambodia was holding what appeared to be democratic elections attracted little notice. This was bolstered by the appearance of real improvements for the people.

Showcasing Modernity

The decade between 1955 and the late 1960s is truly Cambodia's 'golden age', a time when many Cambodians—many of whom never lived through these years—reflect upon fondly. Reading the official state publications, one is greeted by statistics of how many improvements had been made to roads, how many tonnes of rice exported, how many new schools opened, and the visits of heads of state. These publications—*Cahiers du Sangkum*, *Nouvelles du Cambodge* and *Femmes du Cambodge*, amongst others—were printed in French and English, and sent to foreign governments as evi-

dence of the leaps and bounds in modernisation being made in an independent Cambodia. It was one such publication that caught the attention of a Chilean teenager, Julio Jeldres, and inspired him to write to Prince Sihanouk congratulating him on his country. Prince Sihanouk, ever responsive to praise, wrote back, and the rest, as they say, is history—Jeldres became the Prince's official biographer with the rank of Ambassador.[18] Other foreigners were captivated with the fledgling nation and came to marvel, and ultimately stay, either for their own research purposes or simply to enjoy the perquisites that their *étranger* status gave them. Thus we have two sources, one state-sanctioned, one distinctly foreign, from which to draw conclusions as to the success of the modernisation efforts implemented by the Sangkum, and how these were perceived by the donors that provided the funding for such efforts. What we do not have is how ordinary Cambodians viewed them.

In a speech entitled 'Where are we?' given to the National Assembly in April 1961, Sihanouk lauded the achievements of the past year, particularly in terms of the railway track between Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville and the electrification of rural areas.[19] The Sangkum governments were particularly proud of their achievements in infrastructure, education, and public health.[20] A paved road was constructed between Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville, using American engineers and equipment. Christopher Pym visited a village near the road construction in the late 1950s, where the locals 'could give little information except for the number of prostitutes imported from the city to the American workcamp'. Pym did notice that the Khmer workers were being trained on the use of bulldozers, however.[21] A bridge over the Tonle Sap from Phnom Penh to Chruoy Changvar was mooted as early as 1958, when Pym observed that land in the affected region 'had been changing hands at speculative prices'.[22] The bridge was eventually completed in 1964. Another, crossing the Bassac to the south of Phnom Penh, was completed in 1966. The port of Sihanoukville was completed in 1967, thanks to French support.[23]

Public health was expanded in the capital and extended to rural areas. In 1955, there were 15 hospitals or health centres in the country. By 1966, there were 43. The number of dispensaries and infirmaries rose from 103 in 1955 to 325 in 1963; by 1966 there were 408. Midwifery saw the largest investment by the Sangkum. Remy Prud'homme was so impressed with the training scheme for rural midwives that he wrote:

> The role of rural midwives and health workers merits a special mention. These, outfitted with a medical bag and a bicycle, have as their function to visit pregnant women, in case they are giving birth and to give gynaecological assistance to the mother and paediatric help to the newly born.

This was a mixed blessing. Childbirth had traditionally been a private affair with important ceremonial significance; French attempts to regulate midwives had been largely unsuccessful in the colonial period for this reason. Under the Sangkum, all midwives were required to have a state certificate. This meant that all birth attendants, even those who had been practicing for decades, had to pay for training in order to receive their certification. The fact that they also received free bicycles may have tempered their frustration. In any event, the number of rural birthing centres rose from 60 in 1955 to 644 in 1966.[24]

Education was another area that the Sangkum emphasised in publications showcasing the achievements made since independence. Around 2000 additional primary schools were built and opened between 1955 and 1965.[25] The number of secondary institutions rose from less than ten in 1955 to over 200 in the same decade, with the estimated number of students rising from 5000 to 100,000. The number of girls enrolling in primary education improved from 25.4 per cent in 1957 to 32.8 per cent in 1964; secondary enrolments over the same period rose from 16.1 per cent to 21.7 per cent. The government was particularly concerned with secondary education. In March 1961 a new *lycée*, named after the Sangkum Reastr Niyum, was announced, with plans to open the following year. It was especially geared toward girls, as 'girls are in the minority' in the existing secondary establishments.[26]

These schools taught exclusively in Khmer. Secondary schools for foreign residents—listed as Chinese, French, and Vietnamese—were run privately by their communities.[27] English language classes were also in demand. Sihanouk apparently realised 'the importance of English as a road to higher education [and] had accepted offers of teachers from the British Council, Asia Foundation and Colombo Plan as well as from other sources'. Yet even the establishment of these organisations in Cambodia, and the US Information Service holding free English classes, could not meet the demand for teachers. According to Pym, himself an English teacher in Cambodia, 'French, Thai, Vietnamese, and Chinese teachers of English held their private classes in abundance. There was room for all of us'.[28]

Tertiary and vocational education were more problematic, given that almost all pre-independence instructors had been French. The National School of Commerce, National School of Agriculture, and the National School of Arts and Crafts were established after 1964. The Khmero-Soviet Institute was established to train engineers, with Soviet aid, including faculty. Women benefitted from these training sites; from 1957 to 1964, the number of women enrolled in technical or vocational training rose from 2.4 to 21.1 per cent. The University of Fine Arts continued on from its pre-independence beginnings. The Royal University acquired a Faculty of Medicine in 1957 and a Faculty of Pharmacy in 1961 to add to the existing Faculties of Law and Science and Letters.[29] The faculty in these were either French, French-trained, Americans, or other western nationalities.

Despite the improvements in education, infrastructure, and public health, many rural Cambodians believed that wealth and happiness lay in the provincial capitals—or the national capital, Phnom Penh. In 1958, 81 per cent of agricultural workers were rice farmers; 16 per cent were farmers of other crops; and 3 per cent were fisher folk. Rural peoples did not enjoy the improvements in sanitation that modernisation brought to the larger towns. The US-Khmer Friendship highway, completed in 1959, had been shoddily built and hardly maintained by the Cambodian government since its completion; it was barely useable, especially during the wet season.[30] Pym tells us that

> water was brought out from the city in empty oil-drums. All the townsfolk in this neighbourhood had to buy water, even after the start of the rains. Water, once bought, was stored in jars around the houses. Mosquitos bred on all sides.[31]

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that people would seek to leave. Sihanouk himself admitted in 1961 that there were 'limits and weaknesses' in the achievements of the Sangkum, particularly in the area of agriculture. He also noted that people were leaving the countryside for the cities to their detriment.

> Our rural youth, despite my repeated warnings, continue too often when they finish school to leave their birthplace for the city, in order to find a position in the administration, despising more lucrative activities in the private sector and ending up unemployed or making less than is needed to survive.[32]

One of these was Om, 'a young Khmer peasant who had rapidly assimilated Western culture'. According to Pym, his family lived in a village, but as the eldest son, 'he had come to Phnom Penh to earn his fortune'. At times this included driving and cooking French food.[33] Women, on the other hand, were entering all sorts of jobs from which they had been barred before independence. The pages of *Femmes du Cambodge* ('Cambodian Women'), a 1963 government publication showcasing the progressive policies of the Sangkum, abound with photographs of women participating in all occupations. Some women were successful in pursuing a career in the civil service; towards the end of the Sangkum period an increasing number of women were being entered into or promoted within the government infrastructure and working as local staff in international organisations, radio announcers, writers, photographers, painters, musicians, and members of the police and armed forces.[34]

Were these efforts at modernisation so diligently recorded and exhibited to the West for proof of Cambodia's success factual? Prince Ranariddh states that he did not see a 'great change' from the French and independent governments. The 1965 rice crop was so poor that it could export no rice to its neighbours.[35] Although hospitals were being built, they did not seem to be adequately supplied. Pym tells us that when he went to visit a newly-built hospital for monks he

> found that the hospital lacked water, electricity, and many other things. The doctor was ill with lumbago, and had been abruptly installed in the only spare bed which could be found for him elsewhere—the Phnom Penh Maternity Hospital.[36]

This makes one wonder if women were actually availing themselves of the maternity hospital. Women were also not as equal as the 1955 Constitution stipulated, as the 1959 Civil Code saw women as reliant upon their husbands and family. They had to be represented by their husbands or a male relative in legal concerns. Even signing a contract was ultimately at the discretion of a husband, who could choose whether or not to give permission for his wife to do so. Polygamy continued to be legal, although only the elite could afford to practice it.[37] Sam Sary, Cambodia's ambassador to Great Britain in 1958, brought his principal wife and three secondary wives along with his five children. One the lesser wives, Iv Seng Eng, bore him a child before Sam Sary's regular beatings of her became so egregious that she sought police help.[38]

The emphasis on education had negative consequences for Cambodians as well. When Pym asked what some young Cambodian men were planning on doing after finishing secondary school, they did not know. 'Many said they would become technicians because they often heard the ex-King say that Cambodia lacked technicians, but when pressed they were uncertain which technique they would choose to learn'.[39] This lack of specific career choice, and therefore training, seems to have been widespread. Education was not carried out due to aptitude or inclination, but because education traditionally led to a position in the government. Those who had government positions were in positions of power and enjoyed privileges that others did not. Schools, vocational colleges, and tertiary institutions did not limit placements according to available jobs; anyone could enrol in any course. As Michael Vickery put it, the Sangkum policy toward post-secondary education 'was thus producing an increasingly numerous class of useless people'.[40]

The Politics of Representation

The official publications of the Sangkum were bolstered by the charming vision of Cambodia presented to foreign dignitaries. Sihanouk used the National Theatre 'as an after-dinner diversion for the Heads of State who visited Cambodia after her independence' where they were treated to performances of the royal ballet. Sihanouk's eldest daughter, Princess Bopha Devi, often danced the lead role. The troupe would often incorporate the visiting dignitary or a recent event in which they participated into the act.[41] Queen Kossamak would often be called upon to host visiting delegations headed by women, such as Chen Yi, who led a women's delegation from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in November 1958. More important dignitaries were hosted by Sihanouk as well as his mother. The visit of Charles de Gaulle, then President of France, in 1966, was one such occasion; Jaqueline Kennedy was another the following year. Sihanouk regaled the latter with jazz music, including one song of his own composition in her honour.[42]

Lavish displays of hospitality and the throngs of schoolchildren waving flags along the route taken from the airport to Khemarin Palace were not enough to ensure that Cambodia remained on friendly terms with all foreign powers, particularly in the West. Sihanouk attended the Bandung Conference in April 1955, where he met other regional leaders such as Sukarno and Zhou Enlai. Sihanouk asserted Cambodia's commitment to

the principles of neutrality in two speeches, stating that his country was 'bound to the Western bloc by no commitment, by no treaty. We have accepted French and American aid, because they have been granted us without terms'.[43] The Bandung Conference was worrisome enough to the West; Sihanouk's decision to travel to the PRC in early 1956 was more so. After a brief visit to the Philippines, where President Magsaysay refused to entertain the concept of neutrality and urged Sihanouk to join the US-backed South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the head of state travelled to Beijing, where he was received with every honour, thus relegating his experience in Manila 'to the status of a bad memory'. This trip resulted in a $14 million trade agreement and a $22.4 million aid package for 1957–1958.

Before Sihanouk returned from Beijing, Ngo Dinh Diem had the South Vietnamese border with Cambodia closed, cutting off Cambodian access to the port of Saigon. No official explanation was given, but Sihanouk was convinced that his refusal to join SEATO and his recent visit to Beijing had angered the US, who were using their proxy South Vietnam to send him a message. At the same time, the US were threatening to cut off support for the Cambodian army due to a disagreement over how the funding was to be delivered—in dollars or riels exchanged for Cambodian goods. A wave of anti-American sentiment, stirred by speeches given by Sihanouk comparing Beijing's 'no-strings' aid with the American insistence on capitulation, erupted. It was not until South Vietnam re-opened the border (at US insistence) that things calmed down. But Sihanouk continued to visit the Communist bloc, obtaining promises from the USSR that they would 'build and equip a hospital in Phnom Penh as a gift to the Cambodian people'; the Poles and Czechs assured him of assistance and trade agreements. Yet he seemed increasingly alarmed at his own success. The CIA reported that at a ceremony marking the departure of US Ambassador Robert Mills McClintock on 15 October 1956, Sihanouk appeared to apologise for his courtship of the Communist bloc:

> We could not, however, declare ourselves neutral and continue to conduct only a one-way neutrality which opened a gap between us and the powers which represent more than a third of the inhabitants of the world, when some of those powers are practically at our doorstep.[44]

Yet to the Chinese, Sihanouk remained friendly and welcoming. The state visit of Zhou Enlai to Cambodia in November 1956 was a huge

affair, with a welcoming committee of 100,000 assembled at the airport.[45] Cambodia had an estimated 250,000 ethnic Chinese inhabitants at the time, half of whom lived in Phnom Penh, and who had never assimilated to the extent that they relinquished their identity. Communities maintained their own guilds, meeting-halls, and schools, and their shop signs were written in Chinese, not Khmer script. There had been unrest in the Chinese community since the establishment of the People's Republic of China; yet the imminent visit of Zhou Enlai seemed to decide the matter, with pictures of Mao and Zhou Enlai appearing in Chinese businesses—sometimes alone, at other times shaking hands with Sihanouk. On the occasion of the actual visit, the Chinese 'laid on such a tremendous welcome that the Khmers almost began to wonder whose country Cambodia was'. The following year, Sihanouk sent Princess Bopha Devi to Beijing, where she performed Cambodian dance for Mao Zedong. She and her brother returned 'saying Premier [Zhou Enlai] had treated them just as a father would treat his own children'.[46] On 24 July the following year, Sihanouk announced that Cambodia recognised the PRC and was 'willing to rely on the Chinese people for the strong defense of our freedom, independence, and our own and world peace'.[47]

In September 1958 Sihanouk attended the United Nations General Assembly, where he received little attention. Upon returning to Cambodia, he discovered things had not gone well without him. Vampires were rumoured to be amongst the Chinese population—a bad omen for his relationship with China—and the royal astrologer had forecast a bad rice harvest for 1959, which resulted in Sihanouk refusing to issue export permits to rice brokers and landholders, many of whom were members of the political elite.[48] To compound matters, the Thai press had been critical of Sihanouk's recognition of the PRC and had consolidated the Thai presence along Cambodia's northern border, leading to Cambodia recalling its ambassador to Thailand in protest. Ngo Dinh Diem took advantage of the breakdown in Thai-Cambodian relations to suggest to Prime Minister Sarit sponsoring a coup in which Sihanouk would be overthrown in favour of a pro-US Cambodia. Accordingly, the South Vietnamese enticed Sam Sary to go along with the plot—and in return learned that Dap Chhuon had been attempting to instigate an overthrow of Sihanouk since 1956, communicating directly with the US Ambassador to Cambodia. Now governor of Siem Reap, with three battalions under his command, Dap Chhuon was well-placed to assist.[49] In January 1959 Ngo Trong Hieu, the Phnom Penh representative of the South Vietnamese intelligence forces,

travelled to Bangkok with Sam Sary for discussions with the Thai administration. The troops training under Son Ngoc Thanh on the Thai side of the border were proposed as backup to Dap Chhuon's forces.[50]

Messages between the South Vietnamese intelligence forces and Bangkok, and between Bangkok and Dap Chhuon, were intercepted by Chinese, Soviet, French, and US intelligence agents in Phnom Penh. Sihanouk was warned by all except the US of the plot. Sihanouk responded with a series of public denunciations of Thailand and South Vietnam in collaboration with Sam Sary and Son Ngoc Thanh.[51] In an interview published on 24 January 1959, Sihanouk also implicated the US, whom he said had to have known about Sam Sary's role and their lack of forewarning was suspicious.[52] He did not suspect Dap Chhuon's participation until the latter gave excuses not to attend the wedding of Sihanouk's daughter, and refused to allow the Cambodian standing army access to his own troops in Siem Reap. His suspicions were realised on 20 February, when Dap Chhuon sent a 'declaration of dissidence' to King Suramarit as Head of State. Surprisingly, it was the French who dealt with Dap Chhuon; while the ambassador, Pierre Gorce, travelled in state to Siem Reap, ostensibly to see the temples, on 21 February, the French military contingent drove an armoured column through the night, arriving early the next morning. With what the CIA described facetiously as 'unprecedented efficiency', Dap Chhuon and his men were routed. Dap Chhuon escaped and was shot dead ten days later trying to cross the Thai border.[53]

Another plot to remove Sihanouk—permanently—was revealed on 31 August 1959. Two suitcases were delivered to the royal palace, one addressed to Sihanouk and the other to his chief of palace protocol, Prince Vakrivan.[54] One of the suitcases—the one destined for Sihanouk—exploded, killing Prince Vakrivan and three palace attendants. The delivery had been accompanied by a card bearing the name of a US engineering firm with the message that the sender 'hoped … this humble gift might give the Queen pleasure'. Given that the relationship between Queen Kossamak and her son was known to be less than affectionate, this is intriguing; in any event, Sihanouk was adamant that Sam Sary was responsible, with South Vietnam, and therefore the US was implicated. The CIA believed that there was 'a good case to be made for the bomb having originated with the *Pracheachon*'.[55]

Zhoul Enlai made his second visit to Cambodia in May 1960. Sihanouk asked for, and received, assurances that the Chinese would use their influence with Ho Chi Minh to prevent the Viet Cong from infiltrating

Cambodian territory. Zhou also acknowledged Cambodia's claim to the contested islands of the coasts of southern Cambodia and South Vietnam. These promises emboldened Sihanouk to press the US for further military aid (in the form of jet-fighter training), warning that he would send Cambodians to the USSR if the US did not come through.[56] This is not to say that Sihanouk was well-disposed toward communists in his own country, however. When his policy of expanding French language to Cambodian primary and secondary schools was criticised by the communist-owned press, he had the newspapers closed and the editors arrested. He also gave a speech in which the Khmer Serei and the Khmer Rouge, Sihanouk's name for Cambodian communists, were dilettantes:

> The Khmer Serei are not patriots since they have nothing constructive to propose and just keep on saying that under the Sangkum and Sihanouk the country is not advancing but declining. The Khmer Reds.. hardly differ in their criticism from the Khmer Serei. One of the rare things they approve of is manual labor [sic]. But while our nationalists are working and glowing and getting sunburned at it, our Reds are content with covering reams of paper in their newspaper offices…[57]

The newspapers were closed for two months. They were permitted to reopen just before Sihanouk left for what the CIA termed 'a shopping tour' of the Eastern bloc countries. In this he was even more successful than his 1956 visit; the Czechs promised six x-ray units and a joint shipping arrangement. The Soviets promised a technical school that the US had failed to deliver, a helicopter, and a survey of the feasibility of a hydroelectric dam on the Mekong River, in exchange for Cambodia support at the UN on complete disarmament, the retreat of US troops from Laos, and the reorganisation of the UN proposed by Nikita Kruschev. His last stop was to Beijing, where he and his entourage 'were laden with gifts, including silks, TV sets and ginseng'. A further $28 million was promised in order to build a steel mill, machine plant, and reorganise rural agriculture.[58] These tangible expressions of support were a direct contrast to Sihanouk's experiences at the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960, where his importance was not recognised, and were he complained bitterly that he should at least have been treated on par with the vice-president of Morocco, and that President Sukarno of Indonesia, 'who lived in the same hotel I did, found himself furnished with detectives, bodyguards and uniformed police escorts', whereas he, 'the Chief of State of Cambodia' was provided with only one policeman.

In September 1961, Sihanouk travelled to the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Belgrade, where, in addition to advocating disarmament for all yet realising that some nations had to maintain the means of protecting themselves, he castigated racism (in a country where ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese were routinely attacked), particularly the treatment of Khmer Kraom (ethnic Khmer) in South Vietnam. This may have been a subtle criticism of the civil rights situation in America; Agence-Press Khmer (APK) constantly picked up wire reports of confrontations based on race relations and ran them in the local press.[59] From Belgrade, Sihanouk flew to New York, where he met with President John F. Kennedy, who 'petted and flattered me for an hour and congratulated me for my speech despite the fact that it contained criticisms of the Free World.... This proves that the Free World knows how to pet me though it dislikes neutral countries'. Some of his disgruntlement stemmed from his failure to be taken seriously by the American press, who ignored his political acumen in favour of articles depicting him as 'Sihanouk the Playboy Prince'.[60] These, such as an article in the *New York Times*, referenced his saxophone playing and jazz compositions, that he had 'produced and acted comedy roles in slapstick movies', and that he enjoyed 'swimming, painting, and driving fast cars'. Somewhat inexplicably for someone who was known to have been married to five women, he was also referred to as 'a bachelor'.[61] The lack of gravitas afforded him by the American press was not pleasing to Sihanouk, who returned to Cambodia complaining that 'the American journalists are the most corrupt men'.

On 20 October 1961, Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand accused Cambodia—albeit indirectly—of harbouring communist militants.[62] Sihanouk, already angered by the events at the UN and his treatment by the American press, responded with a two-hour rant at the National Assembly three days later in which he called for the suspension of diplomatic relations with Thailand and censuring the US as the puppet master of Sarit. At the opening of a school on 26 October, he claimed that the US wanted to 'kill' Cambodia, and that he no longer thought of America as a friendly nation.[63] In this climate, the designation of the Preah Vihear temple as belonging not to Thailand but to Cambodia, was perceived as a victory.[64] Emboldened by this good omen, Sihanouk made several disparaging remarks about Sarit's weight and then took the fire to South Vietnam when they accused Cambodia of border incursions involving the rape of several Vietnamese women:

> Our Khmer girls and my own girls are nice. Therefore, it is not necessary to take pains to look for Vietnamese girls, who have narrow hips and no beauty. Though familiar with Vietnamese girls, I do not have a taste for them. Were [*sic*] I to be paid for taking Vietnamese girls, I would refuse.[65]

The antipathy between Cambodia and South Vietnam continued for the next few years, with both sides claiming incursions from the other.

In October 1963 the Khmer Serei, now numbering only a few hundred, resumed broadcasting anti-Sihanouk propaganda from along the Thai-Cambodian border. Sihanouk attributed the masterminds to 'Diem, Sarit, and the CIA' and blaming the US for delivering new transmitters from which they made their 'insults and slanders'. On 10 November Sihanouk spoke for two hours about the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem and the continued broadcasting of the Khmer Serei propaganda, both of which he attributed to the US. He warned that

> US aid is poisoned aid, as the Khmer Reds have said. That is why I cannot remain neutral. If I cannot remain neutral, I must change the economic structure of our country and turn our national and Buddhist socialist regime into … an almost Communist regime—that is, a Communist model or Ben Bella-model socialist regime—so that our country can survive.[66]

He concluded by stating that if the Khmer Serei radio was still broadcasting on 31 December, he would refuse US aid. When a pro-Son Ngoc Thanh agent, Preap In, was apprehended in Phnom Penh (he had sought talks with the governor of Takeo as to the possibility of Son Ngoc Thanh returning to Cambodia), Sihanouk used the event as an opportunity to prove that the Khmer Serei were supported by the US—namely, that the US had provided the radios to the South Vietnamese, and they had given them to the Khmer Serei. He renounced US aid on 24 November 1963.[67]

The deaths of Sarit Thanarath, Ngo Dinh Diem, and John F. Kennedy occurred within weeks of each other. Sihanouk interpreted this as supernatural approval for his actions and made a speech remarking that 'the leaders of the only countries that have caused harm to independent and neutral Cambodia have died'. The Americans protested; Sihanouk ordered the Cambodian ambassador home from Washington, DC, and put the embassy up for rent. Western banks were nationalised. Cambodia was virtually isolated from the West by the end of 1963. Only France remained. When Sihanouk attempted to pull together a conference on Cambodia's

neutrality in 1964, he was thwarted by the refusal of Great Britain to participate. This slight, on top of his resentment toward the United States, resulted in an anti-American and anti-British riot in Phnom Penh on 11 March. Agence-Presse journalists described the rioters as 'well-organized', sacking the British and American embassies, the British Council, the British Information Office, and the US Information Service buildings, and burning English-language books and magazines. The CIA estimated the damage at $250,000; 12 cars at the British Embassy had been set on fire and some 10,000 books destroyed.[68] Although Sihanouk apologised for the 'enthusiasm' of the 40,000 government-instigated rioters, he was nonetheless quick to break off diplomatic ties with the US in May, when a Cambodian village was bombed by the South Vietnamese. Norodom Kanthol, then the Chief of Government, said that if 'the bombardment of Cambodian villages was halted, reparations paid for damage, and guarantees extended that no further violations would occur', diplomatic relations could be resumed.[69] Sihanouk's pivot to the Communist bloc appeared all but assured.

This was underscored by Sihanouk's response to the Royal Lao Government's accusation in 1965 that a trucking route had been established between Cambodia and North Vietnam. Sihanouk protested that trade between frontiers had always taken place on a small scale, the Cambodians providing meat, rice, and palm sugar to the Vietnamese in return for cigarettes, bicycle parts, beer, and textiles. In the same article he explained that Cambodia's relationship with the PRC was one of security in the event that Thailand or Vietnam attempted to annex it: 'If the West one day leaves Asia will stay eternally'.[70] When, in October 1965, Sihanouk was informed (via a note from the Soviet ambassador to North Korea) that the senior leadership was too busy to meet with him during his intended visit the next month, he was furious, and castigated the occurrence as 'absolutely inexcusable and irreparable' and cancelled the entire Eastern European trip.[71] Only France, representing the West, and China, representing the Communist bloc, remained as allies with any power to assist Cambodia should Thailand or Vietnam invade.

Despite this, Sihanouk entered into a potential fissure with China the following year. He was shocked by the brutality of Mao's Cultural Revolution, and dismayed when 're-educated' Chinese officials were sent to staff the PRC embassy in Phnom Penh. Worse, local newspapers were beginning to reflect 'subversive' elements, which Sihanouk suspected were emanating from the PRC embassy. On 15 May Sihanouk accused two

Chinese nationals of illegal currency exchange, smuggling, and subversion, and named the Cambodian-Chinese Friendship Association as a hotbed for communist propaganda-making. This sparked a series of letters from and about Chinese in Cambodia to local presses. Oum Manourine, then Secretary of State for National Security (and Monique Izzi's half-brother) had called in the four leaders of the Chinese community in Phnom Penh and warned them not to collude with Maoist Chinese.[72] The Cambodian-Chinese Friendship Association was dissolved on 1 September. On 11 September, Sihanouk dismissed two ministers, Chau Seng, Minister of State for Economics, and So Nem, Minister of Health, and suspended all non-government newspapers (of which half were Chinese) in a supposed crackdown on communists. The reason for this was that Chau Seng was also the editor of *Depeche du Cambodge* and So Nem the chairman of the Cambodian-Chinese Friendship Association. They had published a telegram from Beijing denouncing the dissolution of the Cambodia-Chinese Friendship Association.[73] And yet Remy Prud'homme was convinced that all Sihanouk wanted was 'to safeguard and improve his country. This principal directs all his policy, and in particular external policy'.[74]

The War at Home

The year 1967 was also a significant one for domestic politics. Since the bombing began in South Vietnam, Khmer Kraom had begun fleeing across the border into Cambodia. The Cambodian government welcomed them, as the Khmer Serei had formerly had great success in recruiting Khmer Kraom. The majority settled in Battambang, displacing local Cambodians, and receiving more government assistance. Thus when the government soldiers came to collect rice from the Samlaut district in Battambang's northwest on 2 April, some 200 rice farmers—already resentful—protested. Lon Nol, who had been elected Prime Minister in the 1966 elections, responded with a brutal crackdown. The rebellion nevertheless spread. Sihanouk, returning from France, named Khieu Samphan, Hu Youn, and Hu Nim as the masterminds behind the rebellion and had them arrested. Oum Manourine reported that 'Khieu Samphan was burned to death with acid, while Hou Youn and Hu Nim were crushed by a bulldozer'.[75]

The Samlaut uprising of 1967 prompted the government to target officials whose sympathies lay with the far left. Those purged joined an increasing number of Cambodians, disillusioned with the limited employment

opportunities and corruption of mainstream society, who took to the maquis. Phouk Chhay was one of these. He was arrested and sentenced to death in 1967 while still a student for his leftist sensibilities. As he had revered Sihanouk before his arrest, this came as a shock.

> 'I loved Prince Sihanouk when I was a student and I admired him because he worked for our independence,' Mr Phouk Chhay said. 'He was extremely intelligent and very cunning. He could be gracious and charming and he could raise you up with one hand while stabbing you with the knife he held in the other hand'.[76]

Many Cambodians had begun to protest against the Sangkum, Sihanouk, and the corruption of both in the 1960s. As early as 1963, students in Siem Reap protested against police and educational officials, tearing down posters of Sihanouk and carrying signs saying 'Sangkum is Rotten!'.[77] Students were allegedly behind the trashing of the *Khmei Ekareach* newspaper, a right-wing publication, in June 1967. Sihanouk had been concerned about the moral fibre of Cambodia's youth for some time. Believing that 'city-life was having a bad effect on the younger generation', he tried to set an example by performing manual labour once a month, and compelling his cabinet ministers to do the same.[78] His efforts to remind the people of the importance of hard work did not permeate to his own children, however; he publicly castigated his own son, Prince Yuthevong, for having 'gone to bed' with the 15-year-old daughter of a bookstore clerk and forced him to marry her. He further warned 'mothers of the realm to keep their daughters locked up if they should hear that one of the Prince's playboy sons was anywhere around'.[79] Sihanouk brought about the marriage between Yuthevong and Tea Kim Yin not only to provide the former with a family and so curb his wandering eye, but also to put other young women on notice that Yuthevong could offer them nothing except status as his mistress.[80]

Extra-marital liaisons were commonplace during the Sangkum era. Although only legal in Sihanoukville, sex work was nonetheless carried out throughout Cambodia and was perceived as an acceptable recreational activity for men. Periodic crackdowns on brothels resulted in the prettiest girls being dispatched to Sihanoukville to await the periodic attentions of the elite on weekends and public holidays.[81] According to Sihanouk, attempts by his Minister of Social Action Tong Siv Eng to convince sex workers to come and work in 'legitimate' places such as factories were

fruitless, adding that he, his consort Monique, and Tong Siv Eng 'had lots of laughs' over the women's refusal to switch careers. One wonders why they would have been tempted to work in a factory when, according to Pym, 'girls from Hong Kong or Saigon would consent to partner you at the smart cabarets for about a shilling a minute'.[82] Although Cambodian women would have commanded less than these 'exotic' imports, they would nevertheless have been able to make more than a factory worker. And they were not short of customers. Jacques Migozzi suggested that one reason for Cambodian women marrying later in the 1960s was that so many of their potential husbands were dissolute, 'alcoholics and smokers of hashish'.[83] Yet Pym's acquaintance Om and his friends 'were the raw material out of which Cambodia forgetting her past was trying to build a Westernised future'.[84]

While trying to stem the tide of 'moral corruption' in Cambodian youth and his own cabinet members, Sihanouk ignored the allegations of corruption levelled against his own wife and her family. By the time he was deposed, Sihanouk was being described in the Western press as 'a semifeudal ruler', his government 'rotten with greed', and the 'family of his beautiful Khmer-Italian wife, Monique, was in the middle of the corruption'.[85] Some did censure Sihanouk for interfering in the process of government to an absurd degree, or allowing himself to be distracted by his hobby as a film-maker. Yet most were reluctant to admit that Sihanouk was responsible for or even aware of the corrupt practices occurring at Chamcar Mon, where he lived with Monique and her mother, Madame Pomme. They, along with Oum Manourine, were accused of selling government positions, such as the Director of Customs, 'priced at a million riels'. Monique was known derogatively as 'Goddess of the South', a title that associated her with Vietnam; her parentage was actually a father who was half-Italian, half-French, and a mother who had been born in Phnom Penh.[86] Her father's position as a banker in Saigon until his death in World War II may have been the source of rumours that she was actually Vietnamese, and therefore out to fleece Cambodia. Her alleged sympathy for Vietnam led to other accusations that she was supplying the Viet Cong and was the reason for the strained relationship between Sihanouk and his mother Queen Kossamak.[87]

By 1969 the civil war in Cambodia had gotten beyond even Sihanouk's ability to disguise from the world as a simple rebellion. He was also concerned at the build-up of Viet Minh and Viet Cong troops along the eastern border, although he had allowed the Chinese to use the port of

Sihanoukville and the Cambodian road network to get supplies to both. Thus on 20 April he sent a message to the US government, via the embassy of the Philippines, that he would be amenable to a rapprochement with the United States.[88] The US returned to Cambodia in July, bringing salaries for soldiers and other material supplies for the beleaguered Royal Cambodian Army. It was too late to save Sihanouk, however. As soon as he left for 'medical treatment' in France in March 1970, anti-Vietnamese protests broke out in Phnom Penh. Lon Nol, then Prime Minister, closed the port of Sihanoukville and demanded the withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces within 72 hours.[89] When this did not occur, Lon Nol and Prince Sirik Matak, the deputy Prime Minister, called for a vote of no confidence in Sihanouk as head of state. It passed. After thirty years, Sihanouk was no longer the ruler of Cambodia.

'Tears and Anarchy'

In the days that followed the coup, Queen Kossamak acted as the intermediary between the National Assembly and her son in an attempt to convince him to adopt a less overtly pro-China stance.[90] This was unlikely, as Sihanouk had fled to China to regroup and consider his options. On 24 March Sihanouk released a document entitled 'Message and Solemn Declaration from Norodom Sihanouk, the Chief of State of Cambodia', in which he 'urged his supporters in Cambodia to go underground' and said that weapons, ammunitions, and training would be provided—presumably from China—in order to fight the 'criminals' who had overthrown him.[91] Lon Nol, meanwhile, wasted no time in eradicating Sihanouk from the public eye. Buildings, airplanes, and street signs that had words relating to the monarchy were chipped off or painted over (although their outlines were still visible).[92] Princess Monique was burned in effigy for her alleged involvement in corrupt practices.[93] Some 468 political prisoners who had been arrested for alleged treasonous activities in 1967 were released.[94] Finally, in a trial held in Phnom Penh in July, Sihanouk was found guilty of treason and corruption, and sentenced to death by firing squad *in absentia*.[95] Even the road built to welcome Sihanouk back—a paved road running from his Chamcar Mon palace to the river—had to be completely eradicated once Lon Nol moved in; he had the kerbstones dug up and the trees uprooted so that nothing remained.[96]

The response of the rest of the world to the coup was predictable. Once Sihanouk had established his government-in-exile, it was recognised by

the PRC, North Vietnam, the Viet Cong Provisional Revolutionary Government, North Korea, and Cuba; Algeria, Iraq, Syria, and South Yemen had established diplomatic relations with the government-in exile. One journalist commented that 'the issue of Cambodia has divided both the Communist and the Arab' worlds.[97] Reaction to the deposing of Sihanouk himself, however, was mixed. Those who hated him considered him 'a clown and a Communist', but those whom he treated well saw him as 'an Asian cross between Henry VIII and Metternicht'. One diplomat stationed in Cambodia commented that the Lon Nol-Sirik Matak government as 'drab' and that Sihanouk was 'a very tough act to follow'.[98]

This is not to suggest that the West did not find Lon Nol interesting; described as 'a short, fleshy man in his mid-40s who has held a variety of ill-defined posts which allow him to range across the entire spectrum of national life', it soon became apparent that the new Prime Minister was superstitious to an absurd degree, consulting hundreds of fortune tellers and taking the precautions they advised. The destruction of Sihanouk's 'welcome back road', described above, came about because fortune tellers told Lon Nol that he would not prosper until the road was 'made to disappear'. He had truckloads of sand dumped on the road to conceal it, but he was advised that this was not enough, and therefore had it removed. Another fortune teller told him that there was a dragon under Wat Phnom; it was unhappy at 'the weight of the hill on top of it' and it had to be removed. This caused some consternation, as Wat Phnom is the literal foundation of Phnom Penh; happily, the dragon's body extended all the way to Udong, so Lon Nol dispatched soldiers who routed the North Vietnamese camped there, thereby killing two birds with one stone. Fortune tellers who did not give positive forecasts were arrested.[99] The first flag-raising ceremony of the Khmer Republic was organised along ceremonial lines more befitting an Angkorian-era coronation than the birth of a modern nation; the manufacture of the flag had to be carried out by virgins only. Once made, the girls had to 'kneel around the flag holding lotus blossoms' then wrapped the flag around a large, ornate candlestick, then unwrap it again while monks threw jasmine petals over them.[100]

By contrast, Prince Sirik Matak was regarded as 'a sound administrator', 'popular with the civil servants and with the disaffected army officers'. Western diplomats in Phnom Penh admired him for his 'sophistication and patrician ways'. Yet even he was connected with corruption; at the same cocktail parties in which he was feted by socialites there was 'much hushed-voice talk of Sirik Matak's dubious business ventures and of his

intimate ties with Chinese millionaires'. Senior military men benefitted from the US agreement to pay the salaries of the troops. The system for payment was based on the French system, in which unit commanders were given a lump sum to disburse to their men. The amount given depended upon how many names the unit commander presented. With no checks in place, commanders could write in the names of 'ghost soldiers'—men who did not exist—and pocket their salaries. The local press reported widely on the issue, wondering 'how army majors could afford to drive around in new Mercedes-Benz cars, which cost $20,000 each'. Under pressure from the US, Lon Nol's chief of staff carried out an examination of the issue, but in 1973 there were still around 80,000 who did not exist but for whom salaries were being paid. Dismayed at how this was being reported in the foreign press, Lon Nol had the newspapers shut down.[101]

This did not prevent western journalists from reporting on the worsening situation. Three years into the regime, the population of Phnom Penh had swollen to 1.5 million from 600,000. Route 5, the main trucking route between the capital and Battambang, was in the hands of the Khmer Rouge, resulting in a chronic rice shortage. As soon as aid shipments arrived, senior Khmer Republic officials sold the medicines, salt, oil, and weapons to the insurgents and pocketed salaries meant for their own soldiers. Mark Gayn reported that troops under Lieutenant Colonel Sok Oul in Battambang had resorted to banditry and menacing Chinese noodle shops in order to live. It was hardly surprising that many Cambodians were 'expressing a nostalgia for the 'good old days' two years ago when this land was a well fed, peaceful kingdom and not a threadbare and war-torn republic'.[102]

Despite having refused to assist him in reclaiming his self-perceived rightful place at the head of government in Cambodia, the west remained wary of and highly alert to any moves made by Prince Sihanouk. In 1970 the communist resistance had formally allied with the Front Uni National du Kampuchea (FUNK), Sihanouk's government in exile. The participation of the one politician whom every Cambodian could identify, and who continued to be perceived as a semi-divine being in the countryside, guaranteed the co-operation of much of the rural population. By 1973 the revolutionaries held most of the country with the exception of Phnom Penh, some provincial capitals, and most of Battambang province, and a 'compromise solution' in which Sihanouk could 'return to his old capital as the frontman' was being bandied about in the western press. Bizarrely, three former Sihanouk enemies believed to have been killed in 1967 were

named as members of Sihanouk's government in exile in 1970. Khieu Samphan was named Minster of Defense, Hu Youn was named Minister of the Interior, and Hu Nim was named Minister for Information. It was not long before the western press was reporting on the possibility of Khieu Samphan superseding Sihanouk, however. A 1974 trip to Eastern Europe and Africa undertaken by Khieu Samphan was characterised as 'drumming up international support for the Khmer Rouge—and for himself'. Sihanouk was not pleased at having to act as translator for Khieu Samphan in Beijing, and reportedly 'flew off—in a huff, some thought—to North Korea, where he was treated, again, as chief of state'. The contrast between Sihanouk's *penchant* for pomp and special treatment and Khieu Samphan's austerity—even refusing his government car—was constantly emphasised, as was the ideological chasm between the 'French-educated generation of Cambodian leftists and Communists who returned home after the 1954 Geneva Accords' and Sihanouk, even going so far as to report that 'the Communists, having initially posed as Sihanouk supporters, now criticise him' and that by early 1975 the Khmer Rouge were 'methodically getting rid of pro-Sihanouk cadres'.[103]

By April 1975, violence was widespread in the countryside, and the Khmer Rouge had earned a reputation for brutality and violence.[104] Confusion as to who was fighting for what reigned; as Wolfgang Saxon reported, 'the term Khmer Rouge embraces a gaggle of insurgent groups, often at odds with each other'. Some were known as 'Sihanoukists' and carried the FUNK banner. Another group was comprised of 'Phnom Penh students and intellectuals' who had initially gone out to fight against the Viet Minh in Cambodia at the behest of Lon Nol 'but who have since, sickened by the corruption of the Lon Government and the rapacious vandalism of Saigon's troops' began their own autonomous faction. Some were simply bandits who called themselves Khmer Rouge in order to obtain arms and food from rural villagers. The 'original' Khmer Rouge was the 'best-led, best-trained, and best-equipped', numbering some 30,000. Somewhat ominously, this group reportedly 'will not forget that Prince Sihanouk used to hunt down and execute its members in the 1960s'. Things were almost as chaotic in the capital. Descriptions of rationing, power cuts, scarce resources, and failing infrastructure abounded. With the Khmer Rouge only a few kilometres from Phnom Penh, the nights were punctuated with the sound of bombing. Wrecked ships littered the riverbanks. Barbed wire festooned the municipal buildings. And yet, 'Phnom Penh seems strangely preoccupied with other things. It is immersed in political intrigue, in deals, plots and counterplots'.[105]

In the three decades between the end of World War II and the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge on 17 April 1975, Cambodia's image shifted from sleepy colony to an idyllic country (in contrast to Vietnam) to war-torn nation overrun with corruption and communists. Although government-issued magazines were quick to point out the benefits that modernisation brought to Cambodia in terms of improved education, health care, and infrastructure, these did not permeate to most Cambodians. Even those who could access opportunities for education were then thwarted in their attempts to translate their knowledge into employment. Rapid rural-urban migration during the 1950s placed the provincial capitals and Phnom Penh under pressure; this was exacerbated by refugees fleeing incursions across the border from neighbouring Vietnam throughout the Indochina Conflicts. Yet to Sihanouk, Cambodia was never a 'sideshow' to events in Vietnam; he was the principal actor in a drama that he scripted. Much of Cambodia's engagement with the west between 1945 and 1975 hinged on Sihanouk's estimation of how he was treated. Thus when rebuffed by France or the United States, he turned to the Soviet bloc and China. When he did not receive the assurances he sought there, he chose to once again allow the US to be a part of his plans. Having established himself as a nationalist on par with Son Ngoc Thanh, Sihanouk could safely abdicate (where he held little real power) and engage as a politician (where true power lay). Bored with the responsibilities of political office, he then indulged his habits—and his peers betrayed him, setting Cambodia on a path to peril. As one expatriate lamented with prescience in 1973, he could 'only see tears and anarchy ahead for this little country'.[106]

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CHAPTER 7

The United States and Cambodia, 1960–1991

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Cambodia, like Burma and Indonesia, posed a major dilemma for the United States policy in Southeast Asia during in the early Cold War: all three were newly independent, determinedly neutral countries at a time when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles famously denounced neutralism as immoral. In practice, Dulles could be much more flexible and nuanced, once commenting that he would rather lose Thailand, a staunch ally, than neutral India, for example. But neutralism nevertheless presented difficulties for the United States. Almost invariably the Americans concluded that neutrals were at best naïve about the dangers that international communism posed; at worst, they were almost communist themselves.

At times this led the United States to take actions, often covert, to destabilize or even overthrow neutral governments. In Indonesia the United States covertly supported regional military rebellions against the central government. In Burma, against the strong wishes of the Burmese

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government (as well as many American diplomats, including all ambassador assigned to Burma), the United States secretly aided Nationalist Chinese (Guomindang) forces who had fled into Burma. And in Cambodia the United States, angered about Norodom Sihanouk's growing relationship with communist countries, his periodic criticisms of the United States, and his decision to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1958, adopted a policy allowing it to support dissidents against the government. It also considered overthrowing Sihanouk, was unquestionably involved in the Dap Chhuon plot in 1959, and may have had some involvement in other plots against Sihanouk in the 'year of troubles' (1959).

But by 1960 the Americans had had come to accept Sihanouk's leadership, if for no other reason that that the prince was immensely popular in his country and was, for the moment, wooing the west. Furthermore, the new President, John F. Kennedy, was more open to neutrality and quickly engaged with Sihanouk in a detailed correspondence about how to deal with the complex situation in neighbouring Laos, as well as in Vietnam. Sihanouk appreciated Kennedy taking him seriously.

But as so often happened just a relations were beginning to improve, they very nearly unravelled. On 23 October 1961, shortly after Thai Prime Minister Sarit Thanarath had compared Sihanouk to a pig, the Prince delivered a 'highly emotional two hour speech' accusing Thailand of planning to invade his country, announced a total break in relations with his neighbour to the west, and complained about the United States. The recent Dap Chhuon incident was much on his mind.[1] American leaders, he stated, were 'the most stupid people in the world.' The United States, he added, was now 'my enemy.' Ambassador William Trimble believed Sihanouk was 'at least temporarily mentally deranged.'[2]

Cambodia's ambassador to the United States, Nong Kimny, tried to calm the waters, telling Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter P. McConaughy that Sihanouk's speech was improvised, and much was lost in the translation. For example, while he did say that the Americans were stupid, he meant it in the French sense of 'someone who is too generous or too indulgent.' McConaughy replied that the Americans did not like to be called stupid even in the French sense but that he was glad to hear that Sihanouk meant no affront. (Privately McConaughy considered Sihanouk 'a psychopath.')[3] Kennedy postponed sending Sihanouk an autographed picture.

Then, just as a slight thaw was beginning, the relationship again went to near freezing when the *New York Times* reported that US and South Vietnamese military and intelligence authorities believed that there were Viet Cong bases in Cambodia. Such allegations were not new. But they infuriated Sihanouk, who tended to believe that American press accounts were officially inspired. Happily, in the end this issue actually improved the relationship. High level American officials discounted the likelihood of Viet Cong bases, and journalist Robert Trumbell, who had broken the story in the *New York Times*, travelled to Cambodia and concluded that no bases existed. Thereafter Sihanouk praised Trumbull and the *Times* and was in much better spirits. Indeed, Trimble found him positively euphoric at a party thrown for the departing Australian ambassador. Sihanouk played the saxophone and the clarinet, danced with the guests, and sang. The party ended so late in fact that it made the drive back to Phnom Penh difficult. The crisis seemed nearly resolved.

But the story of Viet Cong bases indicated that the war in Vietnam, then still in its early phases in terms of American military involvement, would complicate US relations with Cambodia. As the war heated up, it threatened to draw in Cambodia, something that Sihanouk wanted desperately to avoid. What was particularly dangerous in this regard were cross border attacks on Cambodian villages. One very serious attack took place on 21 January 1962 when planes strafed the Cambodian village of Bathu. The attack was almost surely deliberate, since the South Vietnamese suspected the village of harbouring Viet Cong. Of great potential harm to American relations with Cambodia, American advisers and observers were present. If this became public, Trimble warned, it 'could well do us as much damage as alleged US involvement [in the] Dap Chhuon affair [of] February 1959.'[4]

Ultimately the issue of attacks on Cambodian villages would lead to a break in diplomatic relations. But for the moment the rapprochement continued. South Vietnam quickly accepted responsibility for the Bathu attack and paid compensation to the victims. Also, distracting attention from Vietnam border issues was the International Court of Justice case regarding ownership of an ancient temple, Preah Vihear (or Kha Phra Wiharn) located in disputed territory between Thailand and Cambodia. Cambodia had retained former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to present its case to the court, while Thailand retained another famous American diplomat, Philip Jessup. When the court unexpectedly ruled in Cambodia's

favour (and by a substantial 9-3 vote), Phnom Penh erupted in celebration. Sihanouk's speech on this occasion, according to Trimble, 'resembled football rally following upset victory.'[5] The United States helped calm the waters in Thailand, which was bitterly upset at the verdict, and hoped that the emerging rapprochement would be strengthened.[6]

But as was typical in the US-Cambodian relations, positive developments seldom lasted very long. Soon there were new charges of US espionage and support for Sihanouk's bête noire, Son Ngoc Thanh. The United States also resisted Sihanouk's hope to call an international conference to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity. Relations were strained further when in 1963 Sihanouk visited Beijing (where he received what can only be described as spectacular treatment); while there Chinese authorities informed him about another Son Ngoc Thanh plot allegedly supported by an unnamed 'imperialist power.'[7]

Over the next several months the relationship deteriorated, as the war in Vietnam continued to claim Cambodian casualties. The activities of Son Ngoc Thanh's anti-Sihanouk organization, the Khmer Serei, nearly unhinged Sihanouk, and he threatened to end all western aid and turn to China for support if they continued. The tragedy was that Sihanouk had no sympathy with communism and no illusions about the result of a communist victory in Southeast Asia. An independent Cambodia would not long survive such an event, he believed, and he welcomed Western influence as a necessary counterweight to communism. But *his* method of resisting communism, he contended with considerable evidence, was superior to that of the West. He had defeated the threat of internal subversion, and Cambodia constituted a much more certain barrier to communist expansion than, say, South Vietnam, where the United States had made major miscalculations and errors over the years, making the triumph of communism more certain. The West seemed to feel that only 'blind, brutal and heavy-handed' methods would suffice, he stated.[8]

With the American-supported coup against South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963, followed by Diem's assassination, the relationship plummeted to new depths. Sihanouk, perhaps fearing that the United States was planning a similar fate for him, ended all American aid. Two days later Kennedy flew to Dallas, where he was himself assassinated. The next month Sihanouk suggested that the recent deaths of Diem, Kennedy, and Sarit Thanarath had resulted from divine intervention to save Cambodia. 'We had only three enemies, and the leaders of these three countries all died and went to hell, all three, in a period of a month and a

half,' he was reported as saying. 'They are meeting there in a conference of the Free World's SEATO.'[9]

Subsequent efforts to improve the relationship failed. US support for the Khmer Serei, as well as alleged US support for military raids on Cambodian villages near the Vietnam border, made a settlement almost impossible. Instead of a settlement there was a violent demonstration at the US embassy in Phnom Penh in March 1964. A few days later South Vietnamese aircraft, with Vietnamese and American soldiers on the ground, attacked the village of Chantrea. Seventeen Cambodians died. For the rest of the year more border raids on Cambodian soil took place, and over 100 persons reportedly died from chemicals dropped by South Vietnamese planes. Sihanouk unexpectedly accepted an American offer for negotiations. But nothing came from them.

A very basic problem facing those who wanted to improve relations with Cambodia was (as Sihanouk suggested) that at this very moment the United States was in the process of choosing war in Vietnam, and the idea of improving relations with Cambodia was increasingly a very secondary concern. There were, therefore, almost no significant steps in the first months of 1965 to improve the relationship. Sihanouk continued to criticize the United States, often in angry tones, for any number of past lapses: providing aid with strings, for criticizing his non-aligned posture, allowing American journals to publish unflattering stories about him and Cambodia, and the new sustained bombing of North Vietnam. In February Sihanouk told an Indian journalist that the United States 'was today hated more than the French were in the worst phase of the colonial war.'[10]

It was only a matter of time before diplomatic relations were broken. In April 1965 there was another violent demonstration at the US embassy, ostensibly to protest an article by Bernard Krisher in *Newsweek* that was critical of Sihanouk's mother, Queen Sisowath Kossamak. The immediate cause for the break, however, was yet another devastating cross-border air raid three weeks later, this time on the villages of Phum Chantatep (or Cheam Tatep) and Moream Tiek in Kompong Cham province. The villages were about four kilometres from the Vietnamese border. One thirteen-year-old boy was killed, and others were seriously injured. This time the planes were American, not South Vietnamese.

The American bombs and rockets that hit Phum Chantatep and Moream Tiek were the immediate cause for the break in relations. The hundreds of such incidents involving South Vietnamese and/or American personnel were the most important underlying cause as well. American support for

Sihanouk's bitter enemy, the Khmer Serei, also contributed to the break, as did American stalling on Sihanouk's call for a Geneva conference to deal with Cambodia's boundaries. Less tangible factors, such as patronizing American attitudes toward Cambodia and unflattering stories in the American press, helped produce a general anti-American atmosphere in Cambodia. Sihanouk's own assessment of the future of Indochina, as well as his concern with domestic politics, also affected his decision. At the heart of it was the war in Vietnam, which seriously exacerbated pre-existing tensions between Cambodia and its neighbours and consequently with their ally, the United States. Even more fundamental was the Cold War thinking that deeply affected American policy makers. Though not unaware of the regional character of Cambodia's problems, they generally viewed developments through a Cold War lens. Even when regional factors were recognized, the United States almost always subordinated them to Cold War considerations. It was too bad that Sihanouk would be angered, but opposing the spread of international communism took first place.

With the break in relations, the United States persuaded a reluctant Australia to represent its interests in Cambodia. Australian ambassador Noël St. Clair Deschamps represented the United States ably and well. Among other matters, he helped arrange Jacqueline Kennedy's visit to Cambodia in 1967, assisted with the occasional release of American POWs, and helped secure the release of the son of an AID official in Bangkok who had tried to smuggle some Angkor treasures out of the country. (The young man's mother sold smuggled Cambodian antiquities in an antiques store in New York.)

The Americans also relied on Deschamps' advice in sensitive political matters. Often they followed his suggestions. But valuable as Deschamps' advice was, the Americans privately considered the Australian too pro-Sihanouk. As a consequence, there were sometimes tensions between Australia and the United States, as well as between Australia and Cambodia. Yet overall Deschamps' close relationship with Sihanouk was an asset. In the end, as journalist Robert Shaplen wrote in 1966, Deschamps probably did 'a better job for the United States than it could have done for itself.'[11]

However, the issues that had led to the break in the first place remained, and even when there were serious efforts to deal with them (including one in 1966 personally backed by President Lyndon B. Johnson), something always seemed to side-track them. In 1966, for example, the momentum toward improved relations ended when on 31 July and twice on 2 August American planes attacked the adjoining villages of Thlok Trach and Anlong

Trach killing several Cambodians. What was particularly embarrassing about these attacks was that, by chance, the American civil rights leader Floyd McKissick and other members of the 'Americans Want to Know' group, as well as a CBS journalist, arrived at Thlok Trach shortly after the first bombing and saw the casualties and damage. Furthermore, members of the International Control Commission (ICC), military attachés from various embassies in Phnom Penh, and journalists who were on the scene investigating the attack of 31 July, actually witnessed the later incidents. American planes bombed and strafed within two hundred yards of the international visitors, who, as Ambassador Lodge put it, 'fled to the jungle and hid.' The Canadian report was more graphic. The investigators 'spent half [an] hour face down in mud, water and nettles' before beating a hasty retreat. The Indian member, Bindra, 'won 1200 metre dash in field of forty runners by good Aryan nose.'[12]

Sihanouk believed that the Thlok Thach incident was a deliberate effort by the US military and intelligence agencies to sabotage the improving atmosphere. 'American "hawks" did not want better relations with Cambodia,' one Cambodian editorial stated.[13] He may have been right. The military chafed at restrictions imposed on its actions near the border, and any agreement with Cambodian would have led to even more restrictions.

By the end of the year 1967, tempers had cooled enough to permit the first high level negotiations. Sihanouk's growing concern about North Vietnamese and Viet Cong abuse of his country's territory also factored into his decision to meet with Chester Bowles, an important US diplomatic official. Among other things, Sihanouk seemed to accept limited American incursions into Cambodia under certain conditions in uninhabited areas of Cambodia, comments that the Nixon administration later used to justify its bombing of Cambodia. The US in turn pledged to respect Cambodia's 'sovereignty, neutrality and territorial integrity' and to 'do everything possible to avoid acts of aggression against Cambodia.'[14] But for a variety of reasons on both sides, including new cross border raids, no agreement was reached. As Sihanouk himself put it in August, 'the cooling-off period lasted only a short while.'[15] By the time Lyndon Johnson left office in January 1969 the relationship had not been restored.

Ironically it was the new President, Richard Nixon, who took the steps necessary to restore diplomatic relations. Sihanouk insisted on only a US statement recognizing Cambodia's current borders. Over the objections of the Defense Department and without consulting the Thais or the South Vietnamese, whose hostility to a border declaration had not diminished, Nixon agreed. He acted in part because he believed that Sihanouk's desire

to restore relations indicated that the Cambodia leader now thought that the United States would prevail in Vietnam. New cross border raids, conceivably initiated by US military authorities in Vietnam to sabotage the agreement, nearly derailed it. Also a newspaper report on 9 May revealed secret B-52 raids on Cambodian territory, a leak about which the administration was nearly apoplectic. But in the end Sihanouk overlooked these provocations, and relations were formally restored in July 1969.

Even as Sihanouk and Nixon were seeking to improve their bilateral relationship, Nixon had ordered B-52 strategic bombers to hit Cambodia in highly secret raids designed to eliminate communist sanctuaries near the border with Vietnam. The raids, which are among the most criticized of Nixon's actions toward Cambodia, continued for over a year, dropping 108,823 tons of bombs and were not officially acknowledged until 1973.

The bombing had little impact on the war in Vietnam, but it had ominous consequences for Cambodia. Many who fled the bombing joined the Khmer Rouge. As Truong Nhu Tang, a Viet Cong defector, wrote, the bombing drove 'the more militant into the ranks of the Khmer Rouge.' All told, as journalist Arnold Isaacs put it, the bombing, 'was upsetting the delicate balance on which peace in Cambodia rested.'[16]

But there were few protests from Phnom Penh, and the question arises whether Sihanouk acquiesced in, or even approved of, the bombing. Once it became public in 1973 administration officials—including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Nixon—claimed on several occasions that the Prince had approved the bombing, at least tacitly. In 1975 a paper produced by officials in the Gerald Ford administration stated the bombing was kept secret 'at Sihanouk's insistence.' These statements falsely implied that there had been consultation with the Cambodian leader.[17] Sihanouk had told Chester Bowles that he would 'shut my eyes' to instances of hot pursuit in uninhabited areas of Cambodia.[18] But a willingness to look the other way if the Americans ventured temporarily into uninhabited areas of Cambodia while pursuing fleeing Vietnamese forces cannot reasonably be construed to mean that Sihanouk approved of the intensive, ongoing B-52 bombing raids–raids that had nothing to do with 'hot pursuit' and which (despite retrospective administration claims) were not confined to uninhabited areas. In any event Sihanouk remained as committed as ever to demanding that all powers respect his territory, and the question of B-52 attacks was never discussed with him.

Unfortunately, the renewal of diplomatic relations did not result in much closer relations, in good part because US and South Vietnamese

aircraft continued their cross border raids. In October alone there were an astounding eighty-three such attacks, and many Cambodians died. By the end of 1969 the United States and Cambodia still maintained diplomatic relations. But the border incidents persisted; Cambodians continued to die in bombing raids and clandestine operations; the B-52s continued to take their toll, helping to destabilize Cambodia, driving the enemy deeper into Cambodia, and giving aid and comfort to Sihanouk's most bitter enemies, the Khmer Rouge. And Sihanouk appeared to be reverting to his earlier view that the Vietnamese communists would prevail in Vietnam and that China would be the dominant outside power. Relations between the United States and Cambodia had cooled. There was no significant warming of relations until Lon Nol and Sirik Matak ousted Sihanouk in March 1970 when the Prince was out of the country.

There has long been much speculation and disagreement about possible American involvement in the Lon Nol coup. Most scholars have concluded that there was some degree of American involvement or at the very least foreknowledge of the coming coup. If there was an American connection, the most likely suspects are military intelligence, since the military in Vietnam strongly disliked Sihanouk and chafed at restrictions on their operations near the border. Whether the United States was involved or not, the Nixon administration did not regret the change of government. As Nixon aide H. R. Haldeman put it retrospectively, Lon Nol's ouster of Sihanouk 'was all right with us.'[19]

For his part, the exiled Prince never ceased to believe that he had been the victim of an American-sponsored coup. In 1979, Kissinger met Sihanouk in Beijing and assured him that the United States had had nothing to do with it. 'You must believe that we were favorable to your returning to power and that we did not like Lon Nol. We liked you.'

> 'Thank you very much,' Sihanouk responded.
> 'I want you to believe it,' Kissinger pressed on.
> 'Excellency,' Sihanouk replied, 'let bygones be bygones.'
> 'No. No. No. I want you to say that you believe me,' Kissinger insisted.
> 'To which Sihanouk replied, 'I apologize. I cannot say that I believe you.'[20]

With his ouster, Sihanouk urged Cambodian to join the Khmer Rouge resistance. Nixon, on the other hand, took advantage of the new situation in Phnom Penh to mount an invasion of the country in cooperation with

South Vietnam. The target of the invasion was the central command headquarters of the Viet Cong. The invasion failed in that respect, led to worldwide condemnation, and demonstrations across the United States. Six students died during antiwar demonstrations at Kent State and Jackson State universities.

Cambodia soon dissolved into bitter and bloody civil war; despite high levels of American support for Lon Nol's forces, including direct air support, the Khmer Rouge prevailed in April 1975.[21] The great tragedy of this period was that the Nixon administration refused to talk with Sihanouk about a political solution. The Prince wanted to talk. As early as 1971 Sihanouk made this clear. He attempted, without success, to speak with Nixon during the President's remarkable trip to Beijing in 1972, probably because Nixon vetoed it.

It is unfortunate that the United States declined to engage the Prince. To be sure, any agreement with Sihanouk would almost certainly have resulted in the end of the Lon Nol government. But perhaps an arrangement could have been made that would have kept the Khmer Rouge at arms' length; the results for Cambodia would have been better. Even though there was a sense by then, as Ambassador Emory Swank recalled in 1987, that 'the Cambodians were doomed,'[22] no one in the administration was willing to say so out loud. Despite the public advice of those like Senator Mike Mansfield (D-MT), who urged that Sihanouk be restored, there was no political will in the administration to forge a solution short of retaining the Lon Nol government. When rumours surfaced in the summer of 1972 that preparations were underway to return Sihanouk to Cambodia, Nixon personally informed Lon Nol that the United States had nothing of the sort in mind.

During the Paris peace negotiations in 1972 and 1973 to end the war in Vietnam, Sihanouk dropped numerous hints that he wanted to meet with American officials. During the latter stages of the negotiations, the Chinese indicated to Kissinger that they would be willing to arrange a meeting with Sihanouk. Kissinger acknowledged it was possible to arrive at a solution that would take Sihanouk's concerns into consideration. However, he did not envisage negotiations directly between Sihanouk and the United States but rather among the Khmer parties themselves. Only after a ceasefire in Cambodia might the Americans talk with Sihanouk. In February 1973 China's Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai personally urged Henry Kissinger to speak with Sihanouk. 'Why can't you accept to have negotiations with Norodom Sihanouk as head of state?' he asked directly.

But Kissinger would not agree. 'This is out of the question,' he responded. Zhou kept arguing, but he did not persuade Kissinger to change course.[23]

Only as Cambodia was on the brink of collapse in 1975, and after bitter cables from Ambassador John Gunther Dean, did Kissinger agree to conversations with Sihanouk. But by then it was much too late. The lack of American diplomatic imagination was unfortunate. As William Shawcross put it eloquently in 1978, 'but for the contempt with which Henry Kissinger always dismissed him, Sihanouk—who understood the nature of the Khmer Rouge—might have been able to avert the dark savagery which has been visited upon his people since April 1975.'[24]

The Americans pulled out shortly before the victorious Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, and the killing fields were about to begin. The American presence in Cambodia was now gone—except for one final drama. On 12 May at about 2:15 p.m. (local time–3:15 a.m. in Washington) a Khmer Rouge gunboat approached an American merchant ship, the SS *Mayaguez*, which was steaming from Hong Kong en route to Thailand. It was approximately seven miles from the Cambodian island of Poulo Wai when Khmer Rouge sailors took command of the ship, and Cambodian gunboats began escorting the captured vessel toward the Cambodian island of Koh Tang. President Gerald Ford ordered a military response to try and rescue the crew. Ultimately the Americans were successful, though more Americans died in the rescue attempt than crew members who were freed.[25]

Meanwhile Cambodia was subjected to Khmer Rouge rule. The Cambodian national anthem in Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge's name for Cambodia—DK) illustrates their fanaticism:

> The red, red blood splatters the cities and plans of the Cambodian fatherland,
> The sublime blood of the workers and peasant,
> The blood of revolutionary combatants of both sexes.
> That blood spills out into great indignation and a resolute urge to fight.
> 17 April, that day under the revolutionary flag
> The blood certain liberates us from slavery.

When the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh, they executed many people, including officials in the previous government. A French priest, François Ponchaud, who travelled around Phnom Penh on 19 April 'saw many dead bodies along the road' and 'many bodies floating in the

Mekong River in front of the palace.'[26] The new rulers also emptied the city, driving the people into the countryside. Even those in hospitals had to leave, regardless of their condition.

The administration in Washington rightly feared a bloodbath. In February 1974 foreign service officer Kenneth M. Quinn (who later served as ambassador to Cambodia from 1995 to 1999) had completed a thorough analysis of Khmer Rouge rule in areas of southern Cambodia which they controlled.[27] Quinn identified a number of characteristics of Khmer Rouge rule. Among other things they tried to eliminate completely any vestiges of Cambodian royal society. To do this they destroyed most government schools and offices, eliminated any references to 'royal' in their governmental arrangements, and even changed the names of provinces and districts, substituting numbers for names. They then began a program of land reform, set up cooperative stores, and outlawed colourful dress. Once they had secured their territory in the spring of 1973 they accelerated efforts to communize the society and began a vitriolic anti-Sihanouk campaign.

The Khmer Rouge took steps to control the population. They required passes to travel outside of the villages; to go outside of the local district required higher level approval. Patrolling was constant, and repeat offenders were executed. A secret police apparatus was also pervasive. Local residents were 're-educated' through intimidation and terror and were required to attend propaganda sessions at night. Young men and women were removed from their homes for intensive political training, from which they returned condemning religion, traditional ways, and parental authority. To obliterate class lines, educated or wealthy individuals were forced into agricultural labour. For those who refused to conform, terror was employed. Harsh punishment was 'widespread' and the death sentence was 'relatively common' for those who attempted to flee, questioned Khmer Rouge policies, or were accused of espionage. Those arrested usually just disappeared. Because the jail was in malarial infested mountains, those sent there for any length of time were likely to die.

In addition to suppressing dissent, Khmer Rouge terror was intended to break 'down traditional social and communal bonds' and to leave individuals 'alone to face the state.' They changed traditional approaches to religion, marriage, and certain customs. Marriage was actually forbidden for the time being so that all energies could be devoted to the war. When it was allowed again, the minimum age was to be raised to twenty-five and elaborate marriage ceremonies were to be prohibited. Traditional dancing

was totally forbidden, as was 'the singing of religious and folk songs.' All ethnic festivals were outlawed, and religious activity, Theravada Buddhism in particular, came under attack, with faith in the revolution being the substitute—although the pagodas had not yet closed. Monks were forced to perform manual labour, stripped of their robes and, if recalcitrant, sent to re-education centres. Some monks who refused to support Khmer Rouge policies were tortured to death. The practice of Islam—the religion of the Cham minority—was totally forbidden, and Chams were not allowed to practice various customs mandated by their religion.

Economically, the Khmer Rouge attempted to level the condition of the people. They confiscated mechanized transportation (motor scooters and motorized sampans, for example), along with material goods, houses, furniture, family heirlooms, and so forth. Anyone caught trading illegally was subject to stiff penalties. Finally, in a chilling presentiment of what was to come, Quinn reported that the Khmer Rouge were engaged in 'a program of population relocation and the creation of uninhabited buffers zones around areas they controlled.' All in all, Quinn's report foretold what would happen to the entire country when the Khmer Rouge took over in 1975.

In addition to being brutal, DK was one of the most isolated countries in the world, having serious relations only with China and North Korea. Despite the new regime's terror and its xenophobic outlook, the United States debated whether to try to establish contact. In September 1976 the Americans, urged by China, considered approaching the DK delegation at the United Nations to see if bilateral relations could be improved. These contacts eventually led to very limited, unacknowledged assistance in the form of DDT shipments to combat the spread of malaria. This probably reflected the whispered, scarcely articulated view that DK served American interests by containing a newly unified Vietnam, toward which the United States was hostile. Thus when in July 1976 the Australians reported that the Cambodians had approached them about establishing diplomatic relations, Kissinger was intrigued. 'Anything that would help to contain Vietnam would be good,' he stated.[28] Kissinger foreshadowed what would become American policy for the next fifteen years: supporting anti-Vietnamese elements in Cambodia, including the 'loathsome' Khmer Rouge. But for the time being, Cambodia largely disappeared from the American landscape. Worn out after years of war in Southeast Asia, Americans preferred not to think about developments there.

Nevertheless, Cambodia posed a dilemma for the incoming Jimmy Carter administration in January 1977. Given Carter's forceful defence of

human rights as the central feature in his approach to foreign relations, DK seemed to be an easy call: it was, as Carter would later put it, 'the worst violator of human rights in the world today.' But in fact Carter initially did not do or say much about Cambodia. Americans wanted to forget about Southeast Asia, there was little that the United States could actually do to change conditions there, and there were pressing concerns elsewhere in the world that engaged the new administration: negotiating a new Panama Canal treaty, trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian problem, responding to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and, later, dealing with the Iranian hostage crisis, for example. But in the final analysis old fashioned geopolitical considerations, in particular the desire to oppose the perceived expansion of Soviet influence in Southeast Asia at the expense of America's new friend, China, won out over human rights in Carter's Cambodia policy. In a final irony, after the Vietnamese drove the murderous Khmer Rouge from power at the end of 1978, the United States secretly supported efforts to resuscitate and sustain their remnant military forces. For this, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, with Carter's at least tacit approval, bears primary responsibility.

Calling attention to the genocide going on in Cambodia came mostly from Congress, not the administration. Stephen Solarz (D-NY) soon became the leading Congressional authority on Cambodia (as well as on Southeast Asia in general). What was now happening in Cambodia was 'one of the most monstrous crimes in the history of the human race,' he said. To stand by and say nothing betrayed 'a kind of implicit racism.' If the victims were white, he went on, the United States would not be talking 'about sending DDT to the offending nation in an effort to ameliorate the situation.' The situation was so horrendous and unprecedented, Solarz thought, that it required 'an exceptional and maybe extraordinary response on our part,' and he suggested looking at an international boycott or even an international police action.[29]

However, most of those who wanted stronger American action believed that the most effective way was to have the United States persuade the People's Republic of China, the Khmer Rouge's only real ally, to end Cambodia's reign of terror. In 1978 this seemed more realistic than in the past because the Carter administration hoped to establish full diplomatic relations with China. Could not the administration make Cambodia a part of the discussions aimed at normalizing relations with China? Pointing out that the United States had already indicated its willingness to cooperate

with the Chinese on regional problems, several legislators urged that China be asked to reciprocate by helping to ameliorate conditions in Cambodia.

The representatives' suggestion did not commend itself to Brzezinski. The National Security Adviser was fiercely anti-Soviet and a strong proponent of improving relations with the Soviet Union's bitter antagonist, China. Just as he would soon end talks on restoring relations with Vietnam because he feared normalization with Vietnam might complicate negotiations with China, so too he did not want to make China's intervention with Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot a condition of normalization.

To give first priority to the geopolitical advantages inherit in normalizing relations with China, however, belied the Carter's administration's insistence that concern for human rights was the primary determinant in its foreign policy. To many, the policy of seeking to normalize relations with China without calling on its government to pressure the Khmer Rouge seemed hypocritical. China was the only country in the world that might be able to influence a regime that Carter himself had accused of being the world's worst violator of human rights. By not linking the two issues, American policy appeared to be based purely on realpolitik calculations and, in particular, a desire to play the China card in the strategic battle with the Soviet Union. Even Carter found Brzezinski's fascination with China irritating at times. 'Zbig,' the President jotted on one of Brzezinski's papers advocating a delay in normalizing relations with Vietnam, 'you have a tendency to exalt the PRC issue.'[30] But Brzezinski held firm. He regarded the establishment of full diplomatic relations with China as his crowning achievement, but there was no respite for Cambodia.

Relief for Cambodia finally came in December 1978 when Vietnamese troops (along with some Cambodian defectors who had taken refuge in Vietnam) invaded Cambodia and drove the Khmer Rouge regime out of Phnom Penh. Soon Pol Pot controlled only a small part of the country near the Thai border, as well as some refugee camps inside Thailand. The Vietnamese installed Heng Samrin as the Prime Minister of the new government, the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK).

Vietnam's motives were mixed. They included a response to DK's inexplicable cross border attacks on Vietnamese villages that may have killed as many as 30,000 people. But regardless, Vietnam ended the murderous rule of the Khmer Rouge. Despite the distrust that most Cambodians historically had for the Vietnamese, on this occasion their hereditary enemy was their liberator. As Sihanouk himself put it many years later, 'If

they [the Vietnamese] had not ousted Pol Pot, everyone would have died—not only me, but everyone—they would have killed us all.'[31]

The Carter Administration did not see it that way, however. Only a couple of months before the invasion the Americans had been close to normalizing relations with Vietnam, only to have Brzezinski stop the process. After it was clear that the United States was backing away from normalizing relations, Vietnam signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union (something it had carefully refrained from doing up to that point) and prepared to drive the Khmer Rouge out. When Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December 1978, the United States condemned the act. Even the Khmer Rouge regime's 'unparalleled crimes,' the Americans told the Vietnamese, did not justify a 'military invasion violation of Kampuchean sovereignty and replacement of that government by force.'[32] To the Carter administration and especially to Brzezinski, the Vietnamese action had the deleterious effect of expanding Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. Pol Pot's regime was despicable but it was allied with China, which the United States now supported. When China retaliated by invading Vietnam in February 1979, the Carter Administration tacitly supported the action, even providing China with intelligence information.[33]

Meanwhile the plight of refugees continued to attract attention. Tens of thousands of Cambodians were fleeing to Thailand to escape the Khmer Rouge and the continued fighting in their country. Stories about their harrowing lives under the Khmer Rouge and traumatic accounts of escape through minefields into Thailand began to appear in American publications. Attention to the Khmers who remained in Cambodia soon increased dramatically when reports of imminent famine began to appear. It was estimated that tens of thousands, perhaps as many as 200,000, were starving every month. The Carter administration had largely ignored warnings of impending famine, including those from its own ambassador in Thailand as early as April 1979.

The failure to get US aid into Cambodia generated heated criticism. If the British development agency Oxfam and the American Friends Service Committee could manage to get some food into Cambodia, the critics charged, why could not the United States government do the same? Under pressure the administration then committed $7 million to address the food crisis, an amount soon increased to $30 million. Congress doubled this to $60 million. Even then, the administration was reluctant to distribute the funds within the country where the Vietnamese-installed

PRK, was in control. Eventually the United States did allow some aid to be distributed inside Cambodia, but not by the PRK government.

Anti-Vietnamese sentiments in the administration remained strong, and there were efforts, led by Brzezinski, to blame Hanoi for the famine; it was deliberately denying food to needy Cambodians, the Americans asserted—a transparently false charge. American policy to end Soviet military involvement in Vietnam, end Vietnamese military operations in Cambodia, and replace the Heng Samrin regime with one that, it said, represented the will of the people, took precedence over famine relief. The policy objectives failed to address how they could be accomplished without running the danger that the Khmer Rouge would reassert their terroristic rule over Cambodia.

American policy toward Cambodia was also reflected in favouring the Khmer Rouge over the PRK as the legitimate representative of Cambodia in the UN. There were bitter debates about this within the Carter administration. How could one justify allowing the perpetrators of one of the major genocides of the twentieth century to retain Cambodia's UN seat, particularly since they controlled virtually no territory within Cambodia? When the issue first arose in 1979, recalled Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, 'We made the only decision consistent with our overall national interests' and voted to seat DK. It was, however, an embarrassing posture clearly at odds with Carter's professed devotion to human rights. As NSC official Lincoln Bloomfield put it, 'the technical grounds for our role have proved extraordinarily difficult to explain to the concerned lay public.'[34] When the issue arose in 1980, there was even more objection within in the administration. 'There is just too great a gulf between our expedient policy [of supporting DK representation] on the one hand, and the moral posture frequently enunciated by the president, featuring frequent denunciations of the Pol Pot-Khmer Rouge as the most genocidal since Adolph Hitler,' Bloomfield wrote to Brzezinski. If Pol Pot actually controlled Cambodia, he went on, then 'we would have to hold our nose and accept its technical legitimacy.' But the Khmer Rouge controlled almost no territory and, according to US intelligence reports, had 'virtually no political support within Kampuchea.'[35] But again the Carter administration voted to seat the Khmer Rouge representative.

More than that, the administration supported Thai and Chinese efforts to provide military assistance to the Khmer Rouge remnants as a means of putting pressure on Vietnam and the PRK. The Chinese had determined to rebuild them almost from the moment they were driven out of Phnom

Penh. The fundamental orientation of the administration was geopolitical, as its critics charged. The United States was engaged in a worldwide struggle with the Soviet Union, which had raised international tensions to the boiling point by invading Afghanistan. Carter had responded with his boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games. The Soviet Union supported Vietnam, and thus the administration—and in particular Brzezinski—viewed the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia as an extension of Soviet influence detrimental of the interests of the United States and its allies. While piously condemning the Vietnamese invasion on the principle on non-interference, it was the geopolitical factors that really mattered.

From time to time and place to place, the defence of human rights was a significant feature of Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. But it was not a primary consideration for Brzezinski, and to the extent that Carter allowed Brzezinski to formulate foreign policy, the defence of human rights faded as a central administration concern. Nowhere was this more clearly seen than in Cambodia.

Under Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, the United States pursued an even more belligerently anti-Soviet policy. The Reagan Doctrine's single-minded approach almost required a lack of interest in, or even awareness of, regional realities; it disparaged nuance and displayed almost complete indifference to human rights (except insofar as this issue could be used to criticize the USSR), or any of the 'softer' elements that often are a part of foreign policy formation, even in 'realist' administrations. Thus in Cambodia the Reagan administration would continue the Carter-Brzezinski policy of supporting the Cambodian resistance groups, though perhaps in a more systematic way.

Attempts to create a non-communist resistance (NCR) to the PRK had begun under Carter, which provided diplomatic and other support to Norodom Sihanouk, who had broken with the Khmer Rouge, and to Son Sann, founder in 1979 of the Khmer Peoples National Liberation Front (KPLNF). Whether military aid was among the assistance provided prior to 1982 is a debated question. But in 1982 under pressure from China and the United States, the NCR joined with the Khmer Rouge to form the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). As the name suggests, the Khmer Rouge were, by this point, the most powerful of the opposition forces. Now the United States unquestionably provided military supplies, though covertly, to the NCR. The assistance was ostensibly nonlethal in nature, although it is may be that some lethal aid was supplied, either directly or indirectly.

By the mid-1980s some important figures were beginning to argue that what was really needed was more assistance, including lethal military aid. Surprisingly Stephen Solarz led the charge. Why, he wondered, could the United States provide military assistance to the Nicaraguan contras and the mujahedeen resistance in Afghanistan but not to the NCR? Military assistance, he thought, might help get the Vietnamese out of Cambodia, although the congressman was quick to add that he did not want the withdrawal of the Vietnamese to be followed by the return of Pol Pot. He argued that military assistance would help strengthen the NCR vis a vis the Khmer Rouge and thus help prevent a Khmer Rouge return whenever the Vietnamese left.

The Reagan administration responded to such ideas with a policy review, but in the end it did not change course. Despite its reputation as a 'Rambo' administration, intervening far and wide to stop perceived Soviet adventurism in the third world, the wounds of the Vietnam War were still too fresh to permit a more forceful policy in Indochina. The administration would continue to support the NCR politically and with limited covert, nonlethal assistance (thought to have been about $12 to $15 million per year).

Solarz wanted a more aggressive policy. He wanted the assistance to be open and to include lethal military aid. During the debate there was much criticism of Solarz's proposal. Solarz engaged in a vigorous public debate with Jim Leach (R-IA), who opposed lethal aid. Although the critics had louder voices, in the end Solarz's bill passed both houses. It provided for up to $5 million in overt aid to the NCR, and left the option of lethal aid up to the administration. Similar legislation passed during the next three years. But the Reagan administration determined to keep the aid nonlethal. The larger covert program, which the legislation did not affect, also presumably provided only nonlethal aid.

In the meantime, conditions were developing that would eventually lead to a negotiated settlement. Since 1985 there had been a number of contacts among the Vietnamese, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the CDGK, and the United States. None of these had produced significant progress. The Vietnamese refused to deal with the Khmer Rouge, for example, and insisted that negotiations take place with the PRK. But Vietnam was beginning to moderate its positions. Its occupation of Cambodia was costly, both in human and economic terms. The United States and ASEAN were blocking aid to Vietnam from international agencies. The Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist leadership, was no longer a certain

source of assistance, having announced in 1985 that it could no longer afford to support Vietnam at current levels. And finally, the PRK itself was increasingly in charge of Cambodia and demonstrating that it might be able to withstand an assault from the Khmer Rouge on its own, if it had to. Vietnam had already withdrawn some troops from Cambodia and announced early in 1988 that it would withdraw all of its troops by the end of 1990.

Serious negotiations began about the same time. In December 1987 Sihanouk met for the first time with PRK Prime Minister Hun Sen at the Prince's Paris residence; the two leaders met again in January 1988. This began the 'formula seeking' phase of the conflict, as the parties searched for a way to bring peace to Cambodia. In July 1988 representatives of the PRK and the three factions which constituted the CGDK met in Indonesia for what became known as the first Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM). No agreements were reached, but the issues were defined, and there was forward movement. Furthermore, Cambodia was the subject of serious discussions between China and the Soviet Union, as well as among the ASEAN states. In the United States some urged the United States to help facilitate an agreement between Sihanouk and Hun Sen's PRK as the best way to prevent a return of the Khmer Rouge.

As the George H. W. Bush administration took office in 1989, the pace of international diplomacy on Cambodia intensified. An important new element was Chatichai Choonhavan, a flamboyant general who in August 1988 had become the first elected Prime Minister of Thailand in a dozen years. Chatichai, intent on turning Indochina from a battlefield to a marketplace as he liked to put it, quickly softened his country's hard line approach to the PRK (which in 1989 changed its name to the State of Cambodia [SOC]) and Vietnam. On 25 January 1989 he invited Hun Sen to Bangkok for direct talks, thus giving a considerable boost to the PRK/SOC's claims of legitimacy. Chatichai's change of policy irritated the United States, which 'disparaged him and criticized his policies.'[36]

In February 1989 the parties gathered again in Indonesia. Again, no agreement was reached, although the points of difference were further defined. Shortly thereafter the PRK/SOC announced that Vietnam would withdraw its troops by the end of September, 1989—a year earlier than previously expected—even if a political settlement was not achieved.

These developments led to a series of important conferences. In June 1989 the Cambodian parties met in Paris with representatives of five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the Perm 5), the ASEAN

states, India and Canada (former ICC members), Zimbabwe (representing the Non-Aligned Movement), and UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar took part. Much to the distress of the organizers, the Paris conference failed to achieved a settlement, perhaps because the Bush administration, unlike its predecessor, wanted to supply lethal aid to the NCR—though in the end authorization was not approved. It is possible that the Bush administration's desire to support the NCR with lethal assistance was a factor in Sihanouk's unwillingness to back away from earlier assurances that he would break with his CGDK colleagues and work with Hun Sen to achieve a settlement. He needed American support to do that, and it was not yet forthcoming. Additional meetings in Jakarta and Tokyo did not result in any breakthroughs.

Meanwhile, domestic and foreign critics pummelled the Bush administration over its positions on Cambodia, and over time it became more open to a political solution. An ABC television documentary by Peter Jennings on 26 April 1990 that appeared to reveal close military coordination between the NCR and the Khmer Rouge, as well as the existence of an American intelligence unit in Thailand that appeared to have ties to the Khmer Rouge, bolstered the critics' case and arguably significantly influenced the policy making process. On 24 May President Bush, hinting that a change was coming, stated that he was 'uncomfortable' with a policy that assisted the Khmer Rouge in any way; the whole policy was under review.[37]

The State Department and the CIA were now urging direct US talks with Hun Sen and advocated encouraging Sihanouk to join with Hun Sen. A further indication that the administration was seriously considering a change came on 13 July when it accepted an offer from the SOC to cooperate in efforts to locate American MIAs from the Vietnam War. Although on the surface this was a humanitarian undertaking, it had important political implications. As Representative Chet Atkins (D-MA), a passionate critic, put it, 'I am just delighted they are sending over this team.'[38]

The seemingly dramatic shift finally came on 18 July 1990 when Secretary of State James Baker, apparently having overcome opposition from National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, announced that the United States would no longer recognize the CGDK, would open negotiations with Vietnam, and would provide humanitarian aid to the SOC. The primary goal now became to keep the Khmer Rouge from taking power, a goal which, Baker acknowledged,

the United States had not been able to achieve with its former policy. The United States would no longer defer to the ASEAN countries and China on Cambodian matters.

The reasons for the reversal were complex. At the highest level they reflected the ending of the Cold War and a tentative joint Soviet-American approach to third world problems. (Not insignificantly, Baker made the announcement in Paris where he was meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevernadze.) Closer to home the growing domestic criticism of the administration's policy threatened to result in legislation that would seriously constrain administration options. There was also fear that the United States would be blamed if the Khmer Rouge managed to regain power, which seemed a distinct possibility in 1990 because of recent battlefield gains. Peter Rodman expressed well the administration's dilemma. 'Our trying to ride two horses—opposing both Phnom Penh and the Khmer Rouge—was a risky gamble,' he recalled as he acknowledged the apparent contradictions in American policy. 'How could we possibly overthrow the one without removing the main barrier to the dominance of the other?'[39]

In effect the administration was acknowledging that the critics had mounted a persuasive attack on long standing American policy that stretched back to Brzezinksi, and perhaps to Kissinger. As the critics charged, the United States, while opposing the Khmer Rouge rhetorically, was in effect supporting them. From the beginning, American funds helped sustain them on the Thai border. The United States also supported Chinese and Thai efforts to resuscitate the Khmer Rouge militarily as a means of countering the Vietnamese and their Cambodian allies. The United States provided covert aid to the Khmer Rouge's non-communist allies, and possibly to the Khmer Rouge themselves; later it provided overt funds to the NCR and looked the other way when the NCR coordinated its military activities with the Khmer Rouge. On the diplomatic front, the United States followed the lead of ASEAN and China and always voted for Khmer Rouge representation at the United Nations. In terms of a peace settlement, the United States insisted that the Khmer Rouge have a role equal to the other 'factions'—in particular the PRK/SOC—in whatever governmental structure emerged. It demonized Hun Sen and the PRK/SOC to such an extent that, as one Asian diplomat put it, 'it came to the point that any move Hun Sen made, no matter how positive, was immediately discounted in Washington as a trick of the Vietnamese…. It has been obsessive and counterproductive.'[40]

Briefly stated, geopolitical reasons related to the Cold War and the desire to undercut Soviet influence anywhere in the world, explained most aspects of American policy. In pursuit of this goal the United States wanted to align with China against the Soviet Union and its perceived clients—Vietnam and the PRK. But there was also an emotional component. Successive American administrations found it hard to forgive Vietnam. As columnist William Pfaff put it, 'The United States government has been punishing Communist Vietnam's leaders for having defeated the United States in the Vietnam War.'[41]

Now, however, Baker was apparently repudiating a failed policy. But Baker's move did not represent a complete reversal of American policy. Although the administration had withdrawn support for the CGDK and was willing to talk to Vietnam, it still supported the NCR, wanted to see it prevail in any elections, and hoped to continue funding it. Thus Baker's move was, in part, a tactical change only. Consequently, the critics remained unconvinced of the administration's sincerity.

Intensive discussions to devise a framework for peace soon overshadowed other concerns. On 27 and 28 August 1990 the big powers drafted a framework document to serve as the basis for negotiations among the Cambodians. The fact that all Perm 5 powers could agree on the document was itself remarkable and, as the *Jakarta Post* put it, clearly showed 'that as far as the Cambodian conflict is concerned, the Cold War is definitely over.'[42] Shortly thereafter US diplomats in Laos met with SOC officials, and US Ambassador to Indonesia John Monjo shook hands with Hun Sen himself, the photograph appearing on the front page of the *Jakarta Post*. The Monjo-Hun Sen encounter symbolized how much had changed so quickly in American diplomacy.

At Jakarta in September the peace process advanced significantly when the parties accepted the Perm 5's framework document, agreeing on a Supreme National Council (SNC) headed by Sihanouk that would delegate to the United Nations 'all powers necessary' to implement the agreement and conduct fair elections.[43] Despite the important steps taken by the Perm 5 and at Jakarta, a ceasefire had not been achieved, and agreement on details proved difficult, including the precise powers of the United Nations, the SNC's composition, and under what circumstances Sihanouk could chair the new structure.

As for the United States, it continued to play a positive role by announcing that, for the first time in fifteen years, it would provide aid to Cambodia. Shortly thereafter the Khmer Rouge ambushed and murdered some fifty

persons on a train 100 miles south of Phnom Penh, reminding the world of the group's brutality and the probable consequences should they ever again regain power. To many (though not quite yet to the US government), backing Hun Sen's SOC seemed a reasonable alternative.

When the Cambodians proved unable to achieve a ceasefire or advance toward a political settlement, the Perm 5 again stepped into the process and in November proposed a comprehensive peace plan that gave the United Nations sweeping powers, including the right to take over Cambodian ministries. A large contingent of United Nations troops would also be sent to the country. It took several more weeks and concessions from various parties to reach a momentous agreement in October 1991 in Paris.

The final settlement resulted from years of discussions and negotiations among the Cambodian parties, the Perm 5, Indonesia, Australia, France, and Japan. No party got everything it wanted. Hun Sen thought the United Nations had too much power. On the other hand, American and Chinese efforts to dissolve the SOC were not successful. References to genocide were removed, and the Khmer Rouge remained a party to the peace settlement. But they did not have representation equal to Hun Sen's, and they, along with the other factions, were required to demobilize or disarm under UN supervision. The whole process, which concluded with the Paris accords, achieved a remarkable settlement.

The Americans played a role in bringing about the settlement and shaped it in important (and arguably negative) ways, but they were not the determining factor. The most important American contribution was the 'Baker shift' in July 1990, in which the United States withdrew support for the CGDK and made some gestures in support of Hun Sen and the Vietnamese. This reflected in part a new team in the state department that was not so wedded to the policies of the past. However, the shift also resulted from external pressure, and the Bush administration was not fully committed to the new course. Although it did put more emphasis on preventing the Khmer Rouge from returning to power, it still desired a solution that would also result in the dissolution of the SOC. Thus Baker himself acknowledged that what had changed were the tactics, not the goal. Partly one senses that the President and others in high positions in the administration had not gotten over the defeat in Vietnam. It was galling to them to reconcile with Vietnam and its supposed client in Phnom Penh. The administration was also uncertain of the domestic political ramifications of a rapprochement

with Vietnam. The changing international situation (as the Cold War ended and the Soviet-Chinese rift began to heal) was an important contextual factor in the final settlement, and the Cambodian parties themselves (including at crucial points Sihanouk himself), plus the Indonesians, crafted the compromises needed to bring about a settlement.

Many Americans, even those who had been critical of the American approach, hoped that the accords offered a chance to end Cambodia's suffering. But the agreement did not meet with universal praise. Many of those associated with non-governmental organizations that had worked for years in Cambodia or on the Cambodian issue, criticized the accords, primarily because they included the Khmer Rouge in a significant way. Those who shared such views soon founded the Campaign to Oppose the Return of the Khmer Rouge (CORKR). Such misgivings lingered for months and years.

A related criticism was that the accords were not fundamentally intended to advance the good of the Cambodians. As the respected Cambodian journalist and government official Khieu Kanharith put it, 'The UN plan was mapped out not for the Cambodian people but to please the superpowers.' A Hun Sen-Sihanouk alliance might have done that, for example, but the big powers, including the United States, had discouraged that prospect. Hun Sen remained resentful of the Perm 5's insistence on including the Khmer Rouge.[44]

In any event, with the settlement in place the United States proceeded to improve its relations with Cambodia. It promised to end its economic embargo against the country, support aid projects, and open a liaison office in Phnom Penh. Charles Twining opened the liaison office on 11 November 1991 (the same day that the first contingent of lightly-armed United Nations troops entered Phnom Penh). But the administration was slow to lift the embargo, resulting in congressional criticism, and scepticism remained about ultimate American intentions. In view of past American policy and the horrendous record of the Khmer Rouge, such scepticism of American policy was understandable. But it may be that over the long run the settlement and subsequent American policy contributed to the Khmer Rouge's eventual demise. 'What the Khmer Rouge feared most was contamination of their cadre and population with materialism and independent views,' Ambassador Quinn recalled. Thus by including language in the Paris agreement that all zones must be open, the parties may have put the Khmer Rouge on the road to ultimate extinction.[45]

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CHAPTER 8

Cambodia and the United Nations 1980–2000 (and Beyond)

Fergal Quinn and Kevin Doyle

It is fitting perhaps for a country characterised by the complexity and dysfunctionality of its interactions with the wider world for much of the twentieth century, that the relationship which best demonstrates this was with the foremost global agency for promoting international cooperation. During the 1980s and 1990s, Cambodia and the United Nations were in some ways mirrors of each other. Both were at the centre of churning geopolitical sands that at times threatened to consume them. Both can also lay claim to a degree of success in manoeuvring through that charged terrain, and both arguably ended the period on a more secure and defined footing than when they started. This chapter attempts to trace the different stages of that relationship, and the problems that lay at the heart of it. Organised in sections focusing sequentially on moments deemed most important in terms of UN and Cambodia relations, the narrative starts from the early days of Cambodia's relationship with the world body in the 1950s to the 1975–1979 Khmer Rouge period, which is covered extensively elsewhere in this book. It then examines the UN's fractious relationship with Cambodia during Vietnam's intervention from December 1978

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to 1989, which preceded the Paris Peace Agreement of 1991 and UNTAC mission (1992–1993), during which the UN was largely responsible for administering Cambodia as it attempted to transition from protracted civil war to a fledgling democratic state. From there, it follows the UN-organised election in 1993, and the brief but deadly factional fighting in 1997 and the consolidation of power by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). It then outlines how UN agencies have dealt with the difficult task of monitoring human rights, ensuring protection of refugees, and negotiating the establishment of the UN-backed tribunal to investigate and prosecute mass crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime. The section concludes with a consideration of the current state of relations between the Cambodian Government and the United Nations, and attempts to divine what the future may hold for their relationship.

The UN and Cambodia (1955–1975)

Interactions between Cambodia and the UN focused on in this chapter occurred during a time of extraordinary upheaval in the country's history. While the bloody purges of the ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s were seared onto the twentieth century's global historical narrative, it was only a portion of a particularly complex period of unrest and upheaval for a country that experienced governments ranging from constitutional monarchy to a republican presidential regime and radical Marxism-Leninism to Soviet-style communist party rule.[1] Estimates of the number of deaths during the Khmer Rouge regime are in the region of 2 million, and their mass crimes have long been described as an act of genocide.[2] Cambodia's tragedy was that for much of its modern history it has been a victim of both indifference and mistreatment by competing domestic political elites, foreign intervention, and a laboratory for competing ideologies and different forms of political structures.[3] The influence of international actors on events in Cambodia intensified after independence from France in 1953, but the role played by the UN from 1955 to 1970 may be described as limited and non-interventionist in nature. Primarily, the UN reacted to situations resulting from the rivalries of the US, China and Russia, usually via their regional proxies, as opposed to taking an active leadership role. The UN approach was perhaps a necessary and pragmatic response to the fact that it was largely focused on exploring the extent of its own remit and powers at a time when it was still in its relative infancy. Cambodia's problems were also not as high a priority

compared to other regional flashpoints, such as the war in neighbouring Vietnam.

Cambodia began to engage tentatively with the UN and its associated bodies in the early 1950s, becoming a member of UNESCO in 1951 and immediately establishing its own national commission. UNICEF's assistance to Cambodia began in 1952, while the World Health Organisation (WHO) began its involvement in the country in 1953, with a focus on projects related to malaria control, maternal and child health. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) (originally known as the Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance) established a presence in Cambodia in 1958. Having successfully disentangled Cambodia from its former French colonial overlord, Prince Norodom Sihanouk spent much of the post-independence period attempting to establish a modern state and underline its status as a sovereign entity. Sihanouk considered limited engagement with UN agencies to be a relatively safe means of Cambodia interacting with the West as an independent nation. Collaborating with the UN also provided a source of indirect financial support, particularly for the poorer parts of the country, which had declined during the somewhat neglectful years of French oversight. UN engagement was part of an overall strategy whereby the autocratic and unpredictable, but undeniably energetic and innovative Sihanouk led Cambodia through a post-independence period of relative peace and prosperity in the late 1950s and first half of the 1960s. Concerns for Cambodia during this period included several high-profile diplomatic skirmishes with Thailand. But it was the situation to the south, where the United States and its allies were engaged in an increasingly bloody war of attrition with Vietnamese communists that undermined the possibility of an independent, peaceful and stable Cambodia. Relations between the US and Sihanouk's government soured as the prince was put under increased pressure to abandon Cambodia's neutrality and support Washington's war efforts. Aggression by US-supported South Vietnamese armed forces in Cambodian border areas eventually led to a complete rupture in US-Cambodian relations by 1965. Seeking alternative support as a means of leveraging his precarious position, Sihanouk moved closer to China, even allowing arms to be supplied secretly to Vietnamese Communist forces through Cambodian territory, including through the seaport of Kompong Som. The US responded with devastating bombing raids on what they claimed were Vietnamese Communist sanctuaries inside Cambodian territory. The ferocity of the aerial bombardment on Cambodian border areas and villages not only

violated Cambodia's neutrality but it is also thought to have played a vital role in recruitment by helping to 'drive people into the arms' of the Khmer Rouge.[4] As well as killing and injuring tens of thousands of innocent Cambodians, the bombing reinforced the revolutionary movements claim that their main enemy was the United States, and that joining the Khmer Rouge was to wage war against American imperialism. 'The bombing damaged the fabric of prewar Cambodian society and provided the CPK (Communist Party of Kampuchea) with the psychological ingredients of a violent, vengeful, and unrelenting social revolution.'[5] The secret US actions in Cambodia remains highly contentious, and was a critical point of negotiation during talks with the UN in 1999 to establish a tribunal to prosecute crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime.[6]

As the escalating conflict in Vietnam continued to impact upon Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge consolidated in rural areas, a weakened Sihanouk found himself under pressure on all sides, and was toppled by the US-backed General Lon Nol in 1970. With Lon Nol's republican government in power in Phnom Penh, US bombing of suspected communist bases within Cambodia continued to escalate. By early 1975, the Khmer Rouge controlled much of rural Cambodia and was perfectly positioned to push for power as the US, whose military support the Lon Nol government was reliant upon, conceded defeat in Vietnam and began their chaotic withdrawal from the region. The Khmer Rouge, by now allied with the exiled Sihanouk, entered Phnom Penh and established the Democratic Kampuchea government on April 17, 1975.

The UN and Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1979)

UN inaction during the period in which the Khmer Rouge held power in Cambodia has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. The question looms large: Why did the UN do so little to stop the Khmer Rouge despite allegations that massive human rights violations were taking place? UN ineffectuality has been attributed to three main causes.[7] Firstly, the UN was paralysed by the likelihood of a Security Council veto by rival Communist powers, the Soviet Union and China, should it attempt to sanction Cambodia's new rulers. An example of this in action was on display in 1978 when a group of human rights organisations and five governments brought charges of human rights violations to the UN Commission on Human Rights. The UN failed to adopt the damning report by the UN Sub-Commission investigating human rights abuses and atrocities headed

by commission chairman, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, who described the atrocities in Cambodia as only comparable to the horrors of Nazism. Cynical claims by Cambodia's Khmer Rouge rulers that a UN resolution on its human rights record would impinge on national sovereignty found sympathetic ears among some at the General Assembly leading to the report being buried.[8] Democratic Kampuchea's Foreign Minister Ieng Sary responded in a telegram to the UN's findings by accusing UN investigators of supporting those who wished to undermine the country's legitimate government and 'whitewash' their own crimes against his country. The UN investigation of rights abuses, according to Ieng Sary, provided support to those who 'defame Democratic Kampuchea'.[9] The UN report was shelved owing to Cold War geopolitical machinations between the US, China and their allies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) who were now supporting the recently toppled Khmer Rouge, and the Soviet Union, through its ally Hanoi, which was now propping up the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) installed in Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese after the ousting of Pol Pot in January, 1979.

A second reason for the UN's apparent lack of urgency regarding Cambodia was the recent defeat of US forces in Vietnam. Washington and other Western nations were disinclined toward any activity that might lead them back into another confrontation in Southeast Asia. The US in particular took an obstructionist approach to any international initiatives against the Khmer Rouge that may have been to the advantage of Vietnam's new leadership and its protégés in Phnom Penh. This strategy was highlighted by Washington's condemnation of the Vietnamese intervention and overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in early 1979. Irrespective of Vietnam's motivations for invading and occupying their neighbour, Hanoi's decision to oust the Khmer Rouge is still regarded by many as an act of liberation in the context of the brutality of the regime their invasion displaced.[10] Thirdly, the strong anti-war movement that was associated with Vietnam did not mobilise to anything like the same degree around the unfolding tragedy in neighbouring Cambodia. Instead, Stanton describes many in the anti-war movement who were content to pick holes in the emerging evidence of Khmer Rouge atrocities, 'casting just enough doubt to cloud the truth [of KR atrocities], so that those who opposed the Vietnam War and the bombing of Cambodia and Laos did not mobilise'.[11] Added to these elements was the fact that there was a great deal of uncertainty about what was actually occurring on the ground in Cambodia, which was fundamentally cut off from the outside world after 1975 and

from where very little information was emerging that could be independently verified. Western journalists were not allowed to enter Cambodia until the 1978 visit of two reporters from the US and a British Marxist academic, Malcolm Caldwell, who was murdered in Phnom Penh shortly after he had a private discussion with Pol Pot.

Compounding the sense of UN inaction during the period when the Khmer Rouge were committing the worst of their human rights abuses, was the world body's actions after the fall of the regime. The UN's recognition of the Khmer Rouge as the legitimate holder of Cambodia's seat at the UN Assembly in the period after they had been removed from power is one of the more egregious examples of how politically compromised and ineffective the organisation is in the face of a humanitarian emergency. How, it must surely be asked, can a world body which was set up as an internationalist shield against violent and oppressive regimes end up propping up the Khmer Rouge leadership on the Thai-Cambodia border after it had fled Phnom Penh in January, 1979? While even the most ardent UN apologists will concede that this was a disastrous position for the UN to take, it must also be acknowledged by critics that the UN had been forced into a corner to a large extent. This was due to the 'realpolitik' approach to the situation in Cambodia by China, Russia, the US and ASEAN—best summed up as 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'—which meant that opposition to Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia, which was viewed as communist expansionism, took precedence over the danger of a Khmer Rouge return to power or justice for its mass crime.

It was this stance that led to what was described as chaos during two UN Security Council debates over the Vietnamese intervention in the first months of 1979[12] where the USSR vetoed council resolutions against its ally Vietnam. Beijing would later invade northern Vietnam to 'punish' Hanoi for overthrowing its Khmer Rouge allies, while US Secretary of State Harold Brown denounced Vietnam's so-called expansionism as 'minor league hegemonism'. It was the combination of the Chinese, US and ASEAN allying against the USSR that ultimately resulted in a vote being pushed through at the UN General Assembly in favour of granting the Cambodian UN seat to the Khmer Rouge as the 'legitimate' representative of the Cambodian people. With US backing and ASEAN support, Cambodia would continue to be represented by a Khmer Rouge diplomat until 1993.[13] While morally repugnant, US and Chinese motivation for supporting the Khmer Rouge was predictable given their antipathy to

Vietnam at that time. It was ASEAN's role, however, in Cambodia's affairs during this period that is often overlooked. As Roberts notes, ASEAN states fell in line behind the US and China to isolate the Phnom Penh government and to prevent perceived Soviet and Vietnamese expansionism on the doorstep of their pro-Western and capitalist bloc. ASEAN's position 'acted as a buffer against the perception of a Soviet threat.'[14] Thus, it fell to ASEAN to campaign each year at the General Assembly for the Khmer Rouge to keep Cambodia's UN seat, mobilising developing countries in the Assembly to the cause and canvassing for support of the Khmer Rouge over the 'puppet' People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) government installed in Phnom Penh by Vietnam. The rhetorical linkage of the Cambodian conflict to the UN Charter allowed ASEAN to claim that their stance on the Khmer Rouge retaining the UN seat was based on legal principle. It also prevented Vietnam's armed intervention from becoming a victory and allowed ASEAN to use the UN seat as a bargaining chip with which to try to negotiate a political settlement with Vietnam vis-à-vis Cambodia.[15] Whichever way you look at the ASEAN, Chinese or US positions at the time, the episode served as another example of the UN showing little agency of its own, instead being held hostage by constituent parts that were at odds with one another.

1980 to UN Intervention, Relationship with Vietnam

Vietnam defended its invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 as both a humanitarian mission and a pragmatic response to years of cross-border attacks by Khmer Rouge forces that had led to the destruction of Vietnamese villages and the slaughter of a large number of its citizens. Hanoi also characterised its continued presence in Cambodia throughout the 1980s as being less a military occupation than strategic support for a vulnerable neighbour too weak to defend itself against re-grouped Khmer Rouge forces on the Thai border. Regional and international critics, however, saw Hanoi's invasion and installation of a deferential regime in Phnom Penh as a territorial grab by an expansionist communist state backed by the USSR. Fears that the Cambodian intervention could threaten wider stability in Southeast Asia increased as Vietnamese troops deployed along Cambodia's border with Thailand—a key regional ally of the US—to battle Khmer Rouge forces.[16]

Motivations aside, Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia and the presence of the Khmer Rouge in the UN General Assembly placed intense pressure on the world body to formulate a solution to a highly complex conflict in a region where wars had raged for decades. While it is broadly accepted that a response was needed from Vietnam to Khmer Rouge forays over the border and the instability caused by tens of thousands of Cambodian refugees fleeing from the Khmer Rouge regime, the justification for the extent and length of Vietnam's intervention remains contested. The finer details of what precisely was occurring in Cambodia during the period between 1980 and the Paris Peace Agreements in 1991 remain somewhat scant, in part due to a general tendency toward secrecy on Hanoi's part, and also due to the chaotic nature of the ongoing fighting. The PRK government, with the support of the Vietnamese military, was nominally the most powerful player, but during this period the warring factions themselves were less important than the powers backing them. The non-communist Sihanouk (FUNCINPEC) and Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) factions were supported by the US and China. The Khmer Rouge factions were supported by China, Thailand and the US, while Vietnam's support for the PRK regime was underwritten to a significant degree by the Soviet Union, who required a strong ally in the region to counter Chinese influence. As MH Lao notes, the US 'closed its eyes on the Khmer Rouge's murderous record when they were China's allies and fighting Vietnam which was a Soviet ally.'[17]

While some narratives of the period view the Vietnamese in the classic context of an occupying power, the reality was more complex. The practicalities of trying to govern and rebuild Cambodia at a time when Vietnam was itself still rebuilding after the war with the US created demands that Hanoi could ill afford. The collapse of Vietnam's key ally the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the scale of the infrastructural rebuilding needed in Cambodia as well as the sustained, military and diplomatic opposition to their presence in Cambodia by the US, China and ASEAN convinced Hanoi by the end of the 1980s that their position in Cambodia was untenable. It was increasingly obvious to observers that a weary Vietnam wanted out of the conflict in Cambodia, albeit while not losing face, maintaining some degree of influence in Phnom Penh and, crucially, that any Vietnamese withdrawal would not hand an initiative for regional rivals to fill any subsequent power vacuum.[18] International actors assumed increasing importance, as they were key to bringing the main powers to the

negotiating table to achieving a settlement in Cambodia to everyone's satisfaction. While the UN was an obvious player in this regard, ASEAN's role as a counterpoint, sometimes even a rival to the UN in terms of regional influence, was critical in the negotiation process.[19] Though publicly communicating their desire to cooperate with one another, the response of the UN and ASEAN to the Cambodian conflict throughout the 1980s was often at odds due to conflicting geo-political priorities. While the UN was severely hampered in the Asia Pacific region by intense Sino-Soviet rivalry, ASEAN was establishing its own authority and the parameters of its power. The regional grouping also needed to tread particularly carefully given that neither Cambodia nor Vietnam were members, and amid concerns that a communist revolution would spread through the region. While ASEAN is generally characterised as being non-interventionist, the association's repeated interventions in Cambodia from 1979 onwards (discussed earlier in terms of lobbying for the Khmer Rouge to retain their UN seat and supplying belligerents) shows the grouping in quite a different light, and occasionally in direct opposition to the UN.[20]

Another thorny issue, which the UN struggled to grasp effectively during this period, was the issue of Cambodian refugee camps, which had swollen to huge numbers on the Thai border. The camps contained around 300,000 civilians and more at various times during the 1980s, and were mostly controlled by Cambodian armed factions, including the Khmer Rouge.[21] Thailand was also accused of manipulating the situation as a means of keeping military pressure on Vietnam.[22] Humanitarian aid, which the UN gave to the camps, was ultimately serving a political end.[23] A 'top UN official' was reported as admitting in 1987 that 'the border operation is a political operation. It's the UN system being used to keep the game going.' Another remarked, 'if the UN stopped feeding the soldiers' wives and families, the resistance would stop'.[24] An estimated 80 percent of Red Cross and UN food aid intended for Cambodian refugees was auctioned off as a means of supplementing Khmer Rouge coffers.[25] The contrast between the UN's provision of aid to the border camps and its lack of assistance to Cambodia under the Phnom Penh government could not have been more striking. For example, a 1989 UNICEF report that up to 20 percent of Cambodian children suffered from malnutrition resulted in a UNDP plan to send an assessment team to Phnom Penh on how best to respond. The UN plan, however, was cancelled after objections by the US and Japan.[26] A significant change in the balance of power occurred internationally and regionally following the fall of the Berlin Wall

in 1989 and the eventual withdrawal of the USSR from the Indochinese sphere. This provided the critical impetus for Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia and set the stage for the peace talks which resulted in the 1991 Paris Agreements.

Paris Peace Agreement and UNTAC (1991–1993)

The Paris Peace Agreements were undoubtedly a significant step in the right direction for Cambodia after years of unrest. However, the foundation on which they were built was somewhat shaky due to the contradictory impulses contained within them. While, the simple driver for the agreements was the hope that they would establish peace and a more sustainable and stable future for Cambodia via the establishment of a multiparty democracy. However, the framing of this agreement was also driven by the need to resolve numerous disagreements between several major international actors with profoundly different agendas. Which aspect of this formula ultimately took precedence in the final agreements remains contested.[27] The Paris peace talks included an invitation to the international community, in the form of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), to engage in a broad rebuilding programme and the creation of a neutral political environment to allow for free and fair elections.[28] UNTAC viewed the challenge of rebuilding Cambodia's physical and political infrastructure as having three main components: (1) Forging a new political culture (2) Reconstructing and developing the country's economy, infrastructure and human capital (3) Rejuvenating Cambodian society and developing a new state that would avoid, in particular, the practices of the recent past.[29] The scope of a remit that included UNTAC's involvement at a political, cultural and economic level in Cambodia necessitated a philosophical recalibration of the very idea of what the UN's role in the world should be. Given the sheer ambition of what was being attempted by UNTAC in Cambodia, it was little surprise that it ran into difficulties in a highly complex post-war political environment.

To fully appreciate the problems UNTAC encountered and assess fairly its legacy, it is important to understand the precise character of the agreements reached in Paris in 1991 and how they came to pass. Most observers are agreed on the fact that the proposal that the UN take a radically enhanced role in implementing any potential agreement in Cambodia gave critical impetus to what turned into the Paris breakthrough.[30] The five permanent members of the Security Council agreed on the merit of

the idea, drafting a compromise plan that allowed the UN to exercise direct supervision or control over the civilian administration of the country. UNTAC was thus the largest field operation of its kind in UN history and the first of the so-called 'second generation peacekeeping' efforts, described as defined political solutions to interstate or internal conflicts with the consent of the involved parties, and with a mandate that includes security, civil administration and election aspects.[31] UNTAC's security remit included having to verify the withdrawal of foreign forces, controlling and reducing arms of combatants and assisting with the release of all prisoners of war and civilian internees. Under the civil mandate, it was also responsible for Cambodia's civil administration, elections, human rights, policing, rehabilitations and information.[32] UNTAC was fundamentally different in this latter aspect to previous peacekeeping missions in that it moved from inserting personnel into the state's bureaucracy as a means of assistance and capacity building, to actually trying to take control of a state's civil administration.

As alluded to earlier in this chapter however, the actual implementation of such lofty ambitions proved difficult for the UN mission. Enforcement proved particularly ineffective in several key areas, including disarmament, demobilisation of troops, preventing ceasefire violations, ensuring access to all localities and the maintenance of a neutral political environment ahead of elections.[33] Assessment of all reasons contributing to UNTAC's failure to carry out its mandate is beyond the scope of this chapter, but we will focus on two primary, and particularly revealing contributory factors. The first main factor was simply that the scope of what was being attempted was too great. The difficult task of organising and conducting a fair and free election while simultaneously verifying the ceasefire, demobilising armed factions, protecting human rights and creating a neutral political environment, was quite unachievable.[34] This was particularly so, given the limitations of UNTAC's scope of authority. For example, there was a strong need for UNTAC to monitor and ensure peace given that factional fighting in Cambodia had been reduced, but not eliminated by the Paris Agreements. However, UNTAC was empowered only to verify the withdrawal of foreign forces and arms reduction but not to enforce peace.[35] When the Khmer Rouge first indicated its withdrawal from the peace process by June 1992, UNTAC was not empowered to act.[36] Similar problems existed in the fulfilment of UNTAC's civil administration mandate. The Paris Agreements placed all civil administrative responsibilities under the control of the UN mission, but it did not have sufficient authority or

resources to enact vital administrative reforms to ensure that they functioned properly in the longer term. In actuality, the objective may have been less to ensure long term functionality as much as to stop administrative incumbents from trying to influence the election outcome. However, the CPP's control of the country was already so formidable that UNTAC never achieved even this much.[37] Political violence was rife, according to Chandler, and in most cases perpetrated by the CPP, who launched a campaign of terror against recently formed opposition parties, while the Khmer Rouge targeted Vietnamese civilians in the country prior to the vote.[38] 'The government denied complicity—Hun Sen even blamed the opposition for killing some of its own supporters—but the UNTAC human rights component built up formidable dossiers implicating those in power.'[39]

Despite its size and the enormity of the role in Cambodia, UNTAC was not a 'sovereign government'[40] and was required to act in conjunction with the 12-member Supreme National Council (SNC), which was made up of representatives of Hun Sen's former PRK regime on one side and members of the three opposition armed factions on the other: the Khmer Rouge, royalist Sihanoukist forces, and the KPNLF. Though the SNC was presided over by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Hun Sen's faction actively obstructed UNTAC efforts to monitor and control governmental agencies and departments.[41] Under the terms of the Paris agreements, the main factions agreed to form the SNC and were responsible for exercising governmental functions in certain designated areas. The UN was to ensure that the factions exercised their limited powers in those areas in a neutral manner in order for free and fair elections to be feasible. However, the delicate power-sharing relationship between the SNC and UNTAC, which it was hoped would balance the need to respect Cambodian autonomy with the urgency of implementing the peace settlement, allowed factions to block UNTAC reforms.[42] Inevitable disagreements and stalemates developed which were in large part due to the complexity of the agreements and the nature of UNTAC itself. Though there was broad support among Cambodians for a peace plan, the provisions of the settlement were contentious, not least that the Khmer Rouge had a seat at the negotiating table despite being accused of committing genocide during its brutal regime.

One of the biggest problems facing the UN as it grappled to find a consensual agreement to the Cambodian conflict was that reaching the agreement in Paris was, as is outlined earlier in this section, as much the

result of pressure applied by sponsors of the warring factions from Russia, Vietnam, China and the US, as any true spirit of reconciliation in Cambodia. The Cambodian experience under UNTAC compared negatively to that of a similar peace building project in East Timor several years later, which had a broader consent base for its mission, as well as a more comprehensive transitional plan.[43] Consent, although it was never withdrawn in the case of the UNTAC mission, eroded quickly in a way that undermined the efficacy of the entire programme.[44] 'The smallest action by the UN against the interests of a party would be met with entrenched resistance, accusations of bias or violations of the accord, and impasse.'[45]

UNTAC achieved a reasonable level of success in several key areas, particularly the successful hosting of elections in 1993 despite threats against the democratic exercise by the Khmer Rouge. Thus, UNTAC's remit of ensuring free and fair democratic elections was achieved to an acceptable degree. While it cannot be said that the election environment was completely neutral (indeed the security situation declined in the weeks leading up to the vote), the elections could, in relative terms, be described as peaceful.[46] Some have even argued that the failure to implement the military provisions of the Paris Agreements were, in part, a calculated risk by the UN to ensure that the election could proceed in a relatively peaceful atmosphere.[47] Almost 90 percent of registered voters cast ballots, and the UN Security Council endorsed the election in which Prince Norodom Ranariddh's royalist party, FUNCINPEC, won the majority of seats.[48] Roberts described the elections as a 'magical success for UNTAC and initially succeeded in creating a pleasant illusion of democracy in Cambodia'.[49] In September 1993, UNTAC declared its mission complete and departed Cambodia. However, the peace they left behind was tenuous as best.[50] Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) immediately contested the results of the election, and amid threats of renewed civil war, a compromise was reached where power was to be shared through a first and second prime ministerial scenario.

Naming Prince Ranariddh the country's First Prime Minister and Hun Sen the nation's Second Prime Minister, did little to ease tension in the country where both civilian administration, military and police authority and loyalty was divided along political lines. In July 1997, forces loyal to second prime minister Hun Sen attacked forces loyal to Prince Ranariddh in what they claimed was a response to illegal importation of arms by the royalists.[51] The royalist forces were quickly defeated, and the uneasy power-sharing structure that had emerged after the UNTAC election

was finally discarded. Hun Sen's military victory in 1997 and the disintegration of the Khmer Rouge as a fighting force through defection to his government and re-integration within the national military, consolidated Hun Sen's rule and the power of the CPP, which continues two decades later.

Following the conclusion of the UNTAC operation, the Hun Sen administration did not hide its contempt for the UN mission's inability to confront the Khmer Rouge despite their delegates withdrawing from the peace process and their forces returning to armed conflict. UNTAC's weakness was demonstrated early in the mission during an embarrassing incident whereby the Head of UNTAC Yasushi Akashi was stopped and turned away while trying to visit a Khmer Rouge guerrilla headquarters by a single soldier guarding a makeshift roadblock comprising of a simple bamboo pole.[52] According to Ear Sophal, this demonstrated to the Hun Sen government the limits of UN authority and that the 'international community' was broadly a toothless entity, whose power was 'largely theoretical'.[53]

Despite the challenges highlighted by numerous observers in the period shortly after UNTAC's departure, the UN mission in Cambodia was for a time considered a poster child for affirmative international action in post-conflict societies. Time, however, has been less kind to that outcome of UNTAC, especially within Cambodia. Both Hun Sen and Sihanouk derided UNTAC's legacy as having contributed to a steep rise in the rate of HIV/AIDS and prostitution in the late 1990s.[54] Ear is particularly harsh on UNTAC's legacy, claiming that the form of interventionism which the UN operation personified was fools gold. 'Underneath the rhetorical terrain was a vacuum of resolve and credibility'.[55] Just as the much-vaunted UN success narrative did not reflect facts on the ground in Cambodia, an overly negative verdict on the UNTAC exercise would also be a distortion. While the peace did not hold in the aftermath of the 1993 elections, and the character of governance in Cambodia in the time since is significantly less democratic than had been envisioned by UNTAC, a certain groundwork was laid in the drafting and adoption of a new constitution that gives cause for hope in the future. A constitution had been promised under the Paris Agreements that would achieve a 'liberal democracy, based on pluralism'.[56] While there had been legitimate concerns about the lack of transparency and participation in drafting the constitution,[57] Marks argues that the final product contained 'a reasonable blueprint for democratic governance.'[58]

Post-UNTAC Era: Monitoring and Promotion of Human Rights

Respect for international standards of human rights was a key consideration of the UN's involvement in the peace process which culminated in the Paris Agreements. This issue became an increasing point of contention as talks progressed, due in part to factions on the Cambodian side seeking to underplay atrocities perpetrated during the Khmer Rouge regime and continuing abuses afterward, but also in large part due to the perceived hypocrisy of the UN on the issue, given that the UN ignored the Khmer Rouge's human rights record when allowing them to take a seat at the General Assembly.

By the 1990s however, the Cold War geopolitical winds which had overwhelmed human rights concerns in the late 1970s had changed, and the UN had a renewed focus on ensuring the maintenance and monitoring of human rights standards. While this stance was in part due to principle, it would be naïve to think it was not also due to expediency. In practical terms, human rights were an issue that could be agreed on by more elements within the UN and on the Cambodian side, as a valid path to peace than had been the case previously. It was with this in mind that the 1991 Paris Agreements contained an explicit recognition by the international community that UN monitoring of human rights would be required and sustained into the future. After the 1993 election, the UN established an office for the promotion and protection of human rights, while the position of a UN special rapporteur was created to monitor the rights situation and make regular reports. The post of rapporteur has been maintained to this day. However, it has proven to be a particularly demanding role in Cambodia, as typified by an incident in April 2017 in which the Royal Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a scathing 10-page document responding to what it described as a campaign by Western governments and allied institutions, including senior UN staff, to foment 'regime change in Cambodia'.[59] The alleged international campaign, according to the document released by the foreign ministry, was designed to discredit the government through lies, distortions of facts, and the amplification of minor issues that cast the country, and its legitimate institutions, in a negative light internationally.

The first individual identified by name in the document was the current UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Cambodia, Rhona Smith, who was accused of trivialising the deaths of Cambodians during the

Khmer Rouge regime and the devastating US bombings preceding it. Smith's transgression, according to the ministry, was stating that the poor human rights situation in contemporary Cambodia should no longer be blamed on the 'troubles' of the previous century. Smith might have chosen her words poorly, but the angry response to the comment was indicative less of the government's sensitivity to language than the current administration's antipathy toward the rapporteur position specifically. Officials of Prime Minister Hun Sen's CPP government have long evoked the Khmer Rouge regime, which was toppled almost 40 years ago, to explain many of the country's present-day problems: everything from endemic corruption to poor health care. While the foreign ministry said that Smith's 'reckless statement' demonstrated her 'sheer contempt towards Cambodia's reality', it was only one salvo of an attack whose real focus was the institution that had appointed her: the United Nations itself. The UN, the ministry reminded, had after the Khmer Rouge regime was toppled in 1979 exacerbated the suffering of Cambodians by imposing a punishing 12-year-long aid and trade embargo on the government installed in Phnom Penh. The foreign ministry's attack was also focused on the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Cambodia, which it claimed had encouraged witnesses to lie in court with the promise of UN-organised asylum overseas. Then-current Cambodia OHCHR Country Representative Wan-Hea Lee, according to the foreign ministry, had also acted prejudicially toward the government by expressing an opinion on the government's decision in 2016 to impose an official ban on opposition leader Sam Rainsy from returning to Cambodia.[60] The UN's Lee responded to the foreign ministry document noting that every country is challenged to 'find better ways to protect human rights, to remedy violations' and 'to institutionalise an effective human rights protection system', and called for discussion between the government and her office on ways to move forward regarding human rights.[61]

Constructive discussion, however, has rarely been a characteristic of relations between the government and UN rights officials in Cambodia post-UNTAC. The OHCHR mandate is governed by an annual resolution of the UN Human Rights Council and bilateral Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) with the Cambodia government. Renewing the OHCHR's MoU with the government, however, has been anything but a smooth process. The government has repeatedly delayed the MoU, which is renewed on a two-yearly basis, while Hun Sen explicitly threatened in 2010 to shut down the OHCHR office[62] if then-UN Secretary-General

Ban Ki-moon did not remove the UN rights office's then-country representative Christophe Peschoux.[63] Peschoux had drawn particular ire for his criticism of the government in 2010 regarding its possible breach of UN conventions in the summary deportation of two Thai nationals to Thailand without due legal process. The married couple had been accused of planting a bomb in Bangkok, but Peschoux argued that as Cambodia was a party to the UN convention on civil and political rights and the UN convention against torture, no one should be returned to a country where they were in danger of being tortured or sentenced to death.[64] This flashpoint was just one example of tension between the UN and Phnom Penh over their treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, despite Cambodia's ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which Cambodia ratified in 1992. Prior to the Peschoux row, which ultimately led to his removal, the government had threatened to expel then-UN Resident Coordinator Douglas Broderick for allegedly undermining the country's sovereignty after the UN Country Team issued a statement recommending that more time be allowed for civil society organisations and members of parliament to analyse a draft anti-corruption law being drawn up by the government.

Cambodia's rebuffing of UN officials such as Smith, Peschoux and Broderick are just some examples of UN representatives who have fallen afoul of the government as a result of reports considered too critical, comments considered unfavourable, or when the UN's mandate conflicts with the Cambodian government's geopolitical considerations. Rhona Smith's predecessors in the role of special rapporteurs on human rights, Nepal's Surya Subedi (2009–2015), Kenya's Yash Ghai (2005–2008) Austrian Peter Leuprecht (2000–2005) and Sweden's Thomas Hammarberg (1996–2000) all faced similar, and at times more vociferous, criticism from the government and Hun Sen. Then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson was also upbraided by Hun Sen during her visit to Phnom Penh in 1998. During Robinson's visit, the prime minister accused the local UN rights office of 'exaggerating' the number of victims of extra-judicial killings following anti-government protests in Phnom Penh that year.[65]

Hun Sen took also issue with Hammarberg for referring to the 1997 power grab by his forces as a 'coup', while Leuprecht, was called 'stupid' for describing Cambodia as a 'shaky façade of democracy' with an increasingly autocratic government.[66] Leuprecht's replacement, Yash Ghai, resigned in 2008 after multiple personal insults from Hun Sen, including being labelled a 'short-term tourist' and 'deranged'. In his resignation

statement, Ghai said he had seen little progress in the human rights situation by a government that 'showed little disposition to take any positive action.' His successor, Surya Subedi, did not fare much better, being advised by Hun Sen to return to his native Nepal to help write a constitution for his own country rather than comment on the human rights situation in Cambodia.[67] On his departure, Subedi echoed Yash Ghai and other UN human rights rapporteurs in lamenting the lack of progress toward ending serious violations in Cambodia.

The foreign ministry document that criticised Smith and other past and present UN officials argued that the government should be lauded for its successes, particularly the economic, including a sustained GDP growth rates in excess of 7 per cent annually, reduction in the poverty rate from 50 percent of the population in 1990 to 13.5 percent by 2014, successfully achieving many UN Millennium Development Goals, and holding five national elections, and maintaining peace, stability and development. Cambodia, the ministry continued, is a sovereign country and the UN Charter stipulates that no individual or country has any right to interfere in its domestic affairs: 'Democracy doesn't equate to denial of the legitimacy of constitutional institutions, indiscriminate defamation of political leaders, incitement to racial hate, violations of the law, constant instigation of political tension and stirring up a climate of civil war'.[68] The Cambodian government was demonstrating, once again, that it would only tolerate the UN on its terms, and such terms ruled out explicit criticism of how the ruling CPP wielded power, or sought to uphold or undermine international conventions to which it was a signatory.

UN and Refugees in Cambodia

Selective implementation of international law has also defined the government relationship with the UN refugee agency. Less than a decade after 370,000 Cambodians were repatriated from refugee camps along the Thai border it was Cambodia's turn to play host to refugees fleeing persecution in a neighbouring country. In 2001, hundreds of ethnic minority members, known as Montagnards, from Vietnam's Central Highlands fled into Cambodia's eastern border forests. The flight of the Montagnards followed protests in Vietnam over religious discrimination, loss of ancestral lands to lowland migrants, and political persecution for the Montagnards historic links to the US military during the war in Vietnam. Though a signatory to the UN refugee convention, deportations of Montagnard

asylum seekers by Cambodian police and military units to Vietnam were reported in 2001.[69] The Vietnamese government also mounted a diplomatic campaign to persuade Cambodia to return all asylum seekers and to class those who entered the country as illegal immigrants. Under pressure as the number of asylum seekers increased to several hundred, Phnom Penh was forced to choose between its long-time allies in Hanoi and its responsibilities as a signatory to the UN refugee convention. Following high-level interventions from UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) officials and the diplomatic corps in Phnom Penh, primarily the US, Hun Sen eventually agreed to allow the UN offer protection to the Montagnard refugees, but only on condition that they be re-settled in third countries as resettlement in Cambodia was out of the question. Deportations continued for those asylum seekers unlucky enough to be caught by local authorities before finding safety under UNHCR protection. During a second wave of Montagnards seeking asylum following renewed protests in the Central Highland in 2004, Phnom Penh was far more reluctant to align with international conventions and refugee protection. Again, the UNHCR was forced into a tense game of cat-and-mouse with local authorities in the east of the country where there were active attempts to thwart the UN's efforts to find and place Montagnard asylum seekers under protection. Asylum seekers discovered by the authorities were quickly deported before the UN could respond. Thus, in 2005, the UNHCR noted that the 'Montagnard refugee influx from Vietnam over the past four years … has seriously tested the country's commitment to refugee protection'.[70]

Despite the UNHCR's well-founded concerns over the Cambodian government's commitment to upholding the refugee convention, and the government's inconsistent treatment of politically-sensitive asylum cases such as the Montagnards and others, plans were in motion from 2001 for the UN's refugee agency to rally government and donor countries support for transferring full responsibility for refugee determination from UNHCR to Cambodian authorities. The UNHCR stated in a 2001 report: 'Ultimately, UNHCR aims to assist the RGC [Royal Government of Cambodia] on a more technical level to establish a refugee unit within the Ministry of the Interior through which all asylum claims can be fairly and competently processed.'[71] This long-term plan of handing over responsibility for refugee determination to Cambodian officials was finally achieved in 2008 with the establishment of a Refugee Office at the Ministry of Interior's Department of Immigration. On December 17, 2009, Cambodia

adopted new refugee legislation in the form of a sub-decree on procedures for recognition of refugees and providing asylum rights to foreigners. Two days later, however, Cambodian police deported 20 ethnic minority Uighur asylum seekers who had fled to Phnom Penh from China. The group, which included women and children, was swiftly returned to Beijing on a specially chartered flight sent by the Chinese government.[72] This was followed the next day by a massive $1 billion investment pledge from the Chinese government.[73]

In a submission as part of Cambodia's UN Universal Periodic Review in 2013, the UNHCR stated: 'Cambodia should be commended for its leadership in processing asylum applications',[74] yet the UN agency also noted in the same submission that in 2009 'contrary to its obligations under international law' Cambodia had deported the 20 Uighur asylum seekers.[75] The same submission pointed out that Cambodia's new Refugee Office was not overly burdened with work and, at the end of 2012 there were just 77 refugees and 24 asylum seekers resident in Cambodia.[76] Yet, some asylum seekers had waited for almost three years for a decision to be made on their applications for asylum by the Refugee Office, the UNHCR stated. Decisions on refugee protection were supposed to be issued by the Refugee Office within 90 days of a determination interview. A year later, in 2014, the UNHCR also issued a statement criticizing Cambodia's controversial refugee deal with Australia in which the government had agreed to accept asylum seekers that Australia was holding in detention facilities on the central pacific island of Nauru. In return, Cambodia was to receive a large injection of aid money from Canberra. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said the agreement was a 'worrying departure from international norms'.[77] While Australia's unwanted refugees were being welcomed by Cambodia—albeit with a price tag in terms of aid money—another influx of Montagnard asylum seekers saw UNHCR officials in 2014 once again face obstruction from local government officials in the east of the country. Provincial authorities again prevented the UNHCR from accessing areas where the asylum seekers may have been in hiding, and provincial police—who are under the authority of the Interior Ministry, as is the Refugee Office—were reportedly searching for the Montagnards, likely with a view to deporting them to Vietnam.[78]

Both the UNHCR and the UN Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued an 'appeal' to Cambodian authorities to abide by the 1951 Refugee Convention and Cambodia's own 2009 sub-decrees on refugees and asylum-seekers in its treatment of the Montagnards. However,

the situation had deteriorated to such a degree that by April 2017 Montagnard asylum seekers who had initially fled from Vietnam to Cambodia were now fleeing from Cambodia to Thailand. Though Thailand was not a signatory to the UN refugee convention, at that stage it also was not deporting the asylum seekers back to Vietnam.[79] Once again, the contradictory nature of Cambodia's relationship with the UN was brought to the fore with Phnom Penh unwilling to abide by UN conventions when they clashed with domestic political considerations or regional geo-political relations as demonstrated in the cases of Vietnam, China and Thailand.

UN Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal

In 2006, after years of negotiations, the first group of Cambodian and UN-appointed judges and prosecutors were sworn in at the long-awaited tribunal to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the 1975–1979 Khmer Rouge regime. The *International Herald Tribune*, the overseas edition of *The New York Times*, noted that the swearing in ceremony marked the beginning of what was expected to be a 'three-year process that many feared would never get off the ground'.[80] During the years of difficult negotiations with the UN to establish the war crimes tribunal, the government of Prime Minister Hun Sen had been accused of 'trying to derail' the process.[81] The *New York Times* was again reporting on the court in 2017, but in far less optimistic terms, noting that after more than 10 years of proceedings, which had cost close to $300 million, the Khmer Rouge tribunal's 'ungainly mix of Cambodian and international prosecutors and judges' had succeeded in convicting just three suspects. Resistance from Cambodian staff at the tribunal, as well as from the highest levels of the government, raised 'serious doubts' that investigations of three other war crimes suspects would proceed much further.[82] The court's 'hybrid' structure, Mydans wrote, where both Cambodian and international jurists must reach a degree of consensus on decisions ensured a sense of domestic ownership, it had also led to bitter disagreement between Cambodian and UN-appointed staff and claims of political interference in the judicial process. A leaked court document also revealed that investigating judges at the tribunal had informed parties involved in the three additional cases under investigation that due to lack of funding the judges were considering a 'permanent stay on proceedings'.[83] An anonymous source quoted in the *Phnom Penh Post* claimed the funding shortfall was exaggerated and

the move to stay the proceedings 'coincided with government wishes'.[84] While critics of the tribunal, officially known as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) question the value of so few convictions for so many victims of the Khmer Rouge regime, others argue that given the highly politicized environment in Cambodia, any prosecutions are better than none. In 1999, then Foreign Minister Hor Namhong told the UN Secretary-General that the initiative to bring Khmer Rouge leaders to justice should be cognizant of the country's hard won peace and the need for national reconciliation. According to Fawthrop and Jarvis, 'There was an understandable fear that if the trials were not handled with care and confining the prosecution to the top Khmer Rouge leaders, it could sow panic among rank and file defectors and even trigger a renewed guerrilla war'.[85] While such an argument may have been made in 1999, 17 years later such claims of potential insecurity were no longer credible. Government credibility and commitment to a robust and independent tribunal process was also tarnished by the fact that no senior member of the current government provided evidence to the court, despite requests to appear by investigating judges.[86]

In February 2017, two court cases in Phnom Penh appeared to epitomise the Cambodian government's ambiguous attitude to both human rights and international justice, areas that entwine the country with UN norms and conventions. The cases involved Im Chaem, one of the additional suspects at the UN-backed war crimes tribunal, who was accused of committing atrocities during the Democratic Kampuchea period. That month, investigating judges at the ECCC dismissed Im Chaem's case, brought against her by the court's international prosecutor, ruling that the 74-year-old former Khmer Rouge district chief was neither a senior regime leader nor 'one of the most responsible' for crimes committed between 1975 and 1979 when as many as two million Cambodians died. Though Im Chaem's rank within the regime was modest, the number of people who perished in the district she administered in the northwest of the country was substantial. The tribunal's international prosecutors, in confidential documents submitted to the court in 2008, accused the septuagenarian and another regime official, Yim Tith, of involvement in purges beginning in 1977 that may have resulted in as many as 560,000 deaths.[87] Historians and survivors who testified at the tribunal spoke of starvation, slave labour and executions in the district supervised by Im Chaem and regional commander Yim Tith.[88] Critics described Im Chaem's

dismissal as 'a farce' in a decade-long judicial process that was not independent and had long been 'limited by politics'.[89] Interviewed in the *New York Times* in April, 2017, Rutgers University-Newark anthropology professor Alexander Hinton said the tribunal was the product of an 'awkward compromise' between the Cambodian government and the UN, and its legacy would be tarnished if it failed to secure other prosecutions than the three convicted to date. Yet, for all its flaws, the court was important to Cambodia and by 'delivering a degree of justice' it had helped in the healing from the Khmer Rouge years. 'Bottom line, would you rather have the justice that was rendered here—this court, with all its problems—or have nothing at all?' Hinton told the *Times*.[90]

The UN-backed tribunal had originally charged five senior Khmer Rouge suspects though the regime's former Foreign Minister Ieng Sary died in pre-trial detention in March 2013, and his wife, former Social Action Minister, Ieng Thirith, was ruled unfit to stand trial owing to age-related dementia and was released under judicial supervision. She died in August 2015. By 2017, the ECCC had convicted just three suspects. The sole suspect in Case 001, Kaing Guek Eav (alias Duch), former commander of the Khmer Rouge prison S-21, was found guilty in 2010 of crimes against humanity and breaches of the 1949 Geneva Convention and sentenced to 35 years in prison, with five years reduced owing to his eight year prison detention, which was deemed unlawful, ahead of trial. Duch appealed his sentence and the ECCC Supreme Court Chamber in 2011 scrapped the original verdict and increased the original penalty to life in prison. In 2014, in Case 002/01, Nuon Chea, former deputy secretary-general of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), and Khieu Samphan, a member of the CPK Central Committee and President of the State Presidium, were found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life in prison. Following the dismissal of charges against Im Chaem, case files 003 and 004 were still ongoing by April 2017, and involved suspects Meas Muth, Yim Tith and Ao An.

One day after the dismissal of Im Chaem's case, the Phnom Penh municipal court sentenced Tep Vanny, a leading land rights activist, to two and a half years in prison for taking part in a protest near Hun Sen's residence. The case against Tep Vanny, which had been dormant for four years, was based on testimony by members of a government security unit known for violence against peaceful demonstrators. Two members of the 'para-police' unit[91] claimed they had suffered injuries at the hands of the

36-year-old Tep Vanny, a mother of two. Despite paltry inculpatory evidence, Tep Vanny was convicted, sentenced and returned to jail, becoming one of 26 people, described as political prisoners by civil society and human rights groups, jailed by the government in what appeared to be a renewed offensive against critics and activists ahead of local elections in June 2017 and national elections in 2018.

The absolution of Im Chaem, a suspect in 'crimes against humanity of murder, extermination, enslavement, imprisonment, persecution on political grounds, and other inhumane acts'[92] and the imprisonment of Tep Vanny sum up the limits of the UN-backed efforts to seek justice for historical victims of mass crimes and contemporary victims of human rights abuse. The dismissal of Im Chaem's case seemed to further reinforce Hun Sen's public vows that no more than five former Khmer Rouge officials would ever stand trial at the UN-backed court. During then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's visit to Cambodia in 2010, Hun Sen vowed that there would be no investigations at the tribunal beyond the cases known as 001 and 002 involving Duch, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith. Hun Sen said he would 'not allow' the additional investigation, known as cases 003 and 004, the latter of which involved Im Chaem.[93] Ki-moon also visited the tribunal following his meeting with Hun Sen where he was questioned by court staff regarding the UN's response to attempts by the Cambodian government to influence proceedings. The secretary-general's own response, according to one court official, amounted to an exercise in 'dodging the bullet' regarding the issue of Cambodian government interference in international justice. The Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) said in 2010 that political interference in the UN-backed war crimes tribunal represented 'an unacceptable attempt to strangle the independence of the court and to control who is investigated and charged'.[94] The OSJI noted 'evidence that Cambodian officials of the court are unwilling to participate in those investigations' which the government has not endorsed 'have gone largely unaddressed by the United Nations'. Silence on this seminal issue of independence of judicial proceedings, according to the OSJI, 'feeds the growing public perception that the Cambodian portion of the court cannot act independently of the prime minister's wishes'. In some ways, the UN-backed war crimes tribunal in Cambodia has experienced limitation on its work similar to other UN agencies, and reminiscent of the obstruction that UNTAC is said to have faced, and by some of the same political players.

Conclusion

What lessons then, can be drawn from the knotted tale of Cambodia's interactions with the UN during the period examined here? The nature of the kind of summary approach taken here, with its inevitable focus on flashpoints and crises, lends itself perhaps to a more negative overall conclusion than is fair. Cambodia has accomplished much in the past two decades, and it has achieved this for the most part in cooperation with, not antagonism toward, the UN.

The sustained peace since the late 1990s has seen Cambodia begin to experience the economic dividend of stability. This can be seen in foreign investment, a growing industrial sector, employment and a significant degree of poverty reduction. The Overseas Development Institute (2010) described Cambodia as 'one of the world's star growth performers in recent years', noting that the country had recorded double-digit GDP figures for the previous decade thanks mostly to garment and textile manufacturing, surging tourism, a booming construction sector and a modest increase in agricultural exports.[95] The global financial crisis of 2008–2009 had reduced growth considerably but the economy was back on track by 2017 with a projected GDP growth of around 7 per cent with a projected contraction to a still healthy 6.3 percent by 2021.[96] Cambodia, with the assistance of the UN, also had considerable success in implementation of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the reduction of extreme poverty; reducing child mortality rates, improvement to maternal healthcare; tackling the scourge of HIV/AIDs, malaria and other communicable diseases. Cooperation between Cambodia and the UN in the areas of heritage and cultural preservation has also borne fruit: with the Angkor Wat temple listed as a World Heritage Site in 1992 and Preah Vihear Temple joining the list in 2008, while both the Cambodian Royal Ballet and 'Sbek Thom' Khmer shadow theatre are inscribed on the UN's Intangible Heritage List. The Tonle Sap Lake and floodplain is an UN-recognised world biosphere reserve and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh was inscribed on the Memory of the World Register in 2009.[97] Alongside UN investment in Cambodia's development, Cambodia has increasingly contributed to the world body's global peacekeeping mission. Since 2006, when Cambodian troops first took part in UN peacekeeping operations, more than 4000 members of the military have participated in missions across Africa and the Middle East, with some paying the ultimate price during their service as blue helmets, including

four Cambodian soldiers killed in May 2017 in the Central African Republic.

Though successes have been many, Cambodia continues to face challenges in many critical areas, including improving access to post-primary education for girls, women's health and nutrition, gender equality, improved youth literacy, and environmental sustainability.[98] Growing inequality has also moved to the forefront of concerns. Cambodia has now signed up to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, once again, places eradication of poverty as a core focus of its 17 goals. With an estimated $260 million for projects in Cambodia between 2016 and 2018, the UN's focus is now on equitable growth and development for the country's youth, women and other vulnerable groups; access to quality social services for the poor and marginalised; and increased transparency and accountability in public sector reforms in the areas of rule of law, human rights, and increasing the participation of Cambodian citizens in democratic decision-making. The legacy of UNTAC, as has been outlined here in detail, is mixed, but the failures are understandable in the context of the time. The sheer ambition of the UNTAC operation in Cambodia, the demanding geo-political atmosphere within which it was implemented, and the bitter domestic conflict in which the agreement came into being, combined to leave it lacking in the kind of pragmatic, robust and binding detail which might have been capable of withstanding inevitable stress points. The Paris Agreements, as Trevor Findlay states, were based to large extent on premises of good faith and did not specifically provide for enforcement or sanctions in the event of non-compliance by the parties.[99] Those stress points were quickly tested as armed factions with a long history of violent enmity attempted to work together. In this context, it is perhaps less surprising that cracks began to show than it is that the fledgling democratic project did not break down entirely.

After more than 30 years at the helm of Cambodian politics, Prime Minister Hun Sen has defined the more fractious elements of the UN/Cambodia relationship more than any other figure. He is representative of a senior generation within the CPP who remember with bitterness the UN's recognition of the Khmer Rouge throughout the 1980s and the punitive aid and trade sanctions placed on the Phnom Penh government by the world body due to its Hanoi links. Many times during his decades in power, Hun Sen has demonstrated the limits of UN authority, both moral and physical, within the borders he controls, while the ratification of UN conventions appear often to be a convenient foil for international

legitimacy without the inconvenience of domestic adherence. Hun Sen's insults to UN rapporteurs, threats to close the UN rights office, limiting the scope of the Khmer Rouge tribunal, and casual non-adherence to the UN refugee convention sum up a relationship of political convenience in a state which Lee Morgenbesser argues should be reclassified from an authoritarian one-party state to a 'personalist dictatorship' helmed by Hun Sen.[100]

In almost all of the flashpoints between Hun Sen and the UN, the latter has blinked first. Yet, it would be a mistake to disregard the influence the UN continues to retain. Younger Cambodians, and the political opposition, look to the UN as a partner, and increasingly as a means of protection from the worst excesses of Hun Sen's authoritarian style of government. Indeed, it is to the small UN human rights office in Phnom Penh that the difficult task of monitoring abuses falls in a continuing contentious political environment that seems set to only become more hostile and less compromising as the decades-long power of the CPP and Hun Sen faces serious challenges in the 2018 national election. Based on political rhetoric and threats of renewed conflict from Hun Sen should his party lose power in 2018, it would seem that the UN's role in Cambodia is far from anachronistic, and could very well become central to support and protection of the democratic process once again.

Notes

1. See Stephen P. Marks, 'The Process of Creating a New Constitution in Cambodia', in Laurel E. Miller (ed.) with Louis Aucoin, *Framing the State in Times of Transition: Case Studies in Constitution-Making*, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), 207–244.
2. See Tom Fawthrop and Helen Jarvis, *Getting Away With Genocide: Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 5.
3. See Im Sothearith, 'A Public Broadcasting Model for Developing Countries: The Case of Cambodia', PhD Dissertation, Ohio University, 2011, 6, available at: https://etd.ohiolink.edu/.
4. See Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, 'Roots of U.S. Troubles in Afghanistan: Civilian Bombing Casualties and the Cambodian Precedent', *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Volume 8, Issue 26, Number 4, June 28, 2010, available at http://apjjf.org/-Taylor-Owen/3380/article.html.
5. David Chandler, *Facing the Cambodian Past: Selected Essays 1971–1994*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1996), 225.

6. Under pressure to accept a fully international tribunal, Prime Minister Hun Sen suggested that the scope of the proposed war crimes court not only included the 1975–1979 period, but events that occurred prior to the regime (and after it was toppled). Widening the court's remit would likely have placed the saturation bombing of the Cambodia countryside, ordered by US President Richard Nixon and then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, to the fore of investigations. As Fawthrop and Jarvis note, Hun Sen revelled in reminding the 'greater powers' of their complicity in the Cambodian tragedy as he negotiated for a court led by Cambodians and under Cambodia's sovereignty. Ultimately, a mixed, Cambodian and UN-backed court was agreed. See Fawthrop & Jarvis, *Getting Away With Genocide: Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*, 130.
7. See Gregory Stanton, 'The Cambodian Genocide and International Law', in Ben Kiernan (ed.), *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia: The Khmer Rouge, the United Nations and the international community*. Monograph series no. 41 (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 13–14, available at: http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/AboutGen_THE_CAMBODIAN_GENOCIDE_AND_INTERNATIONAL_LAW.pdf.
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10. See Gregory Elich, 'Who supported the Khmer Rouge?', *Counterpunch magazine*, 2014.
11. See Stanton, 'The Cambodian Genocide and International Law', 14.
12. Lee Jones, 'ASEAN intervention in Cambodia: From Cold War to Conditionality', *The Pacific Review*, 20 (4), 2007, 523–550.
13. Elich, 'Who supported the Khmer Rouge?'.
14. David W. Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia 1991–99: Power, Elitism and Democracy*, (Richmond, Surry: Curzon Press, 2001) 12.
15. Jones, 'Asean intervention in Cambodia: From Cold War to Conditionality', 523–550.
16. Jurgen Haacke, *ASEAN'S Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 83.
17. See Mong Hay Lao, *The Unfinished Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict*, (Phnom Penh: Khmer Institute of Democracy, 1994), 54.
18. Trisha Thomas, 'Into the Unknown: Can the UN bring peace to Cambodia?' *Journal of International Affairs*, 44 (2), 1991, 495–515.
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20. See Amitav Acharya, 'ASEAN and Asia-Pacific multilateralism: managing regional security', in A. Acharya and R. Stubbs (eds.), *New Challenges for ASEAN: Emerging Policy Issues*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995): 182–203.
21. See Michael Vickery, 'Refugee Politics: The Khmer Camp System in Thailand', in David A. Ablin and Marlowe Hood (eds.), *The Cambodian Agony*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1988), 293–331.
22. Jones, 'Asean intervention in Cambodia: From Cold War to Conditionality', 523–550.
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33. See Marks, 'The Process of Creating a New Constitution in Cambodia' 207–44; and John Marston, 'Cambodian News Media in the UNTAC

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36. Roberts, *Political Transition in Cambodia 1991–99: Power, Elitism and Democracy*, 64.
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38. Chandler, *Facing the Cambodian Past: Selected Essays 1971–1994*, 321.
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46. Berdal and Leifer, 'Cambodia', 32–64.
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54. See Keith Richburg, 'Spreading HIV Threatens Cambodia', *The Washington Post*, August 9, 1998.

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57. See Marks, 'The Process of Creating a New Constitution in Cambodia', 207–44.
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62. See Sidon Sok, 'Rights Office Will Close, Gov't Tells Ban', *The Cambodia Daily*, October 29, 2010.
63. See Thomas Miller, "Sometimes we have to speak out, we cannot remain silent': Peschoux', *The Phnom Penh Post*, March 25, 2011; also Douglas Gillison, 'UN Reassigns Officer Amid Hun Sen's Acrimony', *The Cambodia Daily*, March 23, 2011.
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